

## Sacred Space in Judaism after the Temple

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It is almost impossible to overstate the singular importance of the Jerusalem Temple to ancient Judaism. Its predecessor, the tabernacle, dominates the latter half of the book of Exodus, while the priests who officiated there and the sacrifices which took place there are the subjects of much of Leviticus and portions of Numbers (see especially chs. 28–29).

As one reads through the rest of the Bible, especially from the time of Solomon onward, the temple looms large. The construction of the temple (1 Kgs 6–8) is the focal point of the description of Solomon's reign (1 Kgs 3–11).<sup>1</sup> Other portions of the book of Kings center on the temple as well. For example, when young Joash was spirited away by his aunt Jehosheba to escape certain slaughter at the hands of Athaliah, he was hidden in the temple for six years until he could rightfully be placed on the throne of Judah (2 Kgs 11). The selfsame king organized a major renovation and refurbishing of the temple (2 Kgs 12). At a later time, the temple served as the locus for Hezekiah's prayer (2 Kgs 19:14, with the words of the prayer recorded in vv. 15–34). Still later, more renovations of the temple were ordered by Josiah (2 Kgs 22:4–7), during the course of which a *sefer hattora* "scroll of the Torah" was found (2 Kgs 22:8). This crucial discovery, in turn, prompted Josiah to purge the temple of all the pagan elements and influences that had been introduced by his grandfather Manasseh

1. Radday, "Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative," 62–63; and Frisch, "Structure and Its Significance," 3–14.

and his father Amon (2 Kgs 22–23). Not surprisingly, when the book of Kings ends with the destruction of Jerusalem, the loss of Judahite independence, and the beginning of the Exile (2 Kgs 25), among the topics which receives the most specific attention is the burning of the temple and the looting of its appurtenances (2 Kgs 25:13–17).

The three major prophets are all connected to the temple. It was in the innermost sanctum of the temple that Isaiah first heard the call of God (Isa 6); it was at the gate to the temple that Jeremiah delivered one of his most famous speeches (Jer 7); while Ezekiel living in Babylonian Exile dedicated the last nine chapters of his book to a vision of the rebuilt temple (Ezek 40–48).

When the temple was rebuilt in 516 BCE, it once again played a prominent role in the life of the people, as reflected in biblical literature. The temple plays a central role in Haggai and Zechariah, in many Psalms (see, e.g., Ps 5:7; 23:6; 27:4; 29:9; 138:2; etc.),<sup>2</sup> and in Ezra–Nehemiah. Most prominently the temple dominates the retelling of Israel’s history embodied in the book of Chronicles, in a much more significant way than is present in the earlier and parallel material in Samuel–Kings.<sup>3</sup>

Within post-biblical literature, we see the importance of the temple in the books of Maccabees, especially regarding its desecration by Antiochus IV and its rededication by the Maccabees (1 Macc 4:41–59; 2 Macc 10:1–4); while the book of Ben Sira (ch. 50) includes a glorious description of the role of the high priest. The Qumran community, with its priestly orientation, was very much devoted to the temple, as witnessed by the fact that the largest scroll at Qumran (by far) is the Temple Scroll (11QT)<sup>4</sup>—even as the community withdrew from Jerusalem and did not participate in the cult, due its disagreements with Sadducees and Pharisees alike over the proper administration thereof.<sup>5</sup>

2. Many of these Psalms, especially the lower-numbered ones, are pre-exilic compositions, but the use of Psalms increased with the passage of time, especially during the Second Temple period, and hence I mention them here. See my essay, Rendsburg, “Psalms as Hymns in the Temple of Jerusalem,” 95–122.

3. Japhet, *I and II Chronicles*, 39–40; Williamson, “Temple in the Book of Chronicles,” 15–31.

4. On the Temple Scroll, including its vision of a utopian and enormous temple, see Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 257–71. Note, however, that Schiffman sees the Temple Scroll as less directly connected to the Qumran community, whereas I see a greater linkage between 11QT and the other Qumran sectarian writings.

5. For a general survey, see Goodman, “Qumran Sectarrians and the Temple,” 263–74.

And all of this emphasis occurs before the major reconstruction of the temple by Herod (21–14 BCE), which raised the prominence of the structure and the institution even more so, not only amongst Jews, but also amongst non-Jews.<sup>6</sup> The Herodian Temple is the setting for the Gospel accounts of Jesus in the temple. It is important to note that, contrary to some misguided views, Jesus was not anti-temple. Rather, he did what every other first-century CE Jew would have done: he journeyed to Jerusalem in advance of Passover to celebrate the festival there (John 2:13, etc.).<sup>7</sup> Alas, the Jerusalem Temple as expanded and beautified by Herod lasted less than a century, for the Romans sacked and burned the structure in 70 CE.

In light of this survey, which demonstrates the centrality of the Jerusalem Temple in the religion, culture, and mindset of the Jewish people—for approximately one thousand years (!)—one can imagine the loss (emotionally, religiously, etc.) felt upon its destruction. Indeed, one may justly ask the question: how could Judaism even carry on without the temple? And yet persist it did. While this is not the place for an extended discussion, suffice it to say that one of the most significant traits of the Jewish religion is its ability to adapt to changing times, places, and circumstances. The watershed marked by the destruction of Jerusalem and the devastation of the temple in 70 CE is clearly one of the most exemplary testimonies thereto.<sup>8</sup>

With the foregoing as introduction, included here to set the stage for what follows, we move to the subject adumbrated in the title of this essay: the issue of sacred space in Judaism *after* the destruction of the temple. To be sure, there is nothing that accedes to the level of “sacred space” akin to the temple, which belongs to a singular time and place, that is to say, the central structure in Jerusalem during the biblical and immediate

6. Our main source is Josephus, with further information forthcoming from the New Testament and from rabbinic recollections, especially in Mishnah tractate Middot, lit. “measurements.” For a summary of the evidence, with liberal citation of specific passages from these sources, see Safrai and Avi-Yonah, “Temple,” 19:612–16 (within the section entitled “Second Temple”).

7. Charlesworth, “Jesus and the Temple,” 145–81.

8. For further reading, see the essays collected in Schwartz and Weiss, *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History*. While traditionally the year 70 CE has been understood as a watershed year, as I myself have just indicated, the very fact that this book was published with this title demonstrates that some scholars have revisited the question. To cite just one essay in the volume relevant to the treatment herein, see Michael D. Swartz, “Liturgy, Poetry, and the Persistence of Sacrifice,” 393–412.

post-biblical periods. Not even the emergent synagogue (more on this institution anon), the ever-increasing locus of Jewish ritual worship in the centuries immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem (and to this day), reached the level of sanctity ascribed to the temple. In sum, the temple is unique, full stop.

But the lack of the temple did not bring an end to its centrality in Jewish religion, culture, and mindset (to repeat the phrase from above). For while the temple ceased to exist, the *memory* of the temple persisted—and not in a minor way, but in manifold major ways.

We begin our survey with Rabbinic Judaism, if only because it is the best known and best recorded post-temple Jewish movement. Most scholars, myself included, understand the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism from the early Pharisee movement.<sup>9</sup> The earliest Rabbinic text is the Mishnah, dated to 200 CE, which serves as guidebook to Jewish law, custom, ritual, etc. The text was compiled by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi (“the Prince”),<sup>10</sup> who organized the various subjects into six orders (Heb. *sefer*), each of which in turn is divided into tractates (Heb. *maseket*) (between seven and twelve, depending on the order), for a total of sixty-three tractates. For guidance, see the appendix at the end of this essay.

Now the interesting thing about the Mishnah is that it is compiled at a distance of 130 years, perhaps four generations or so, after the destruction of the temple, and yet it includes so much information about

9. The subject requires a treatise, but for the nonce note the three following points. (1) Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.10.6, refers to the “traditions of the fathers” observed by the Pharisees, but not by the Sadducees, because they “are not written down in the law of Moses.” This sounds remarkably similar to the later Rabbinic notion of the Oral Law. (2) Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.5.9, reports that the Pharisees took the middle ground on the question of free will vs. predetermination: “Now for the Pharisees, they say that some actions, but not all, are the work of fate, and some of them are in our own power, and they are liable to fate, but are not caused by fate.” This middle ground appears in the famous dictum of Rabbi Aqiba, as recorded in Mishnah Avot 3:15: הכל צפוי והרשות נתונה *hak-kol safuy wə-ha-rəšut nətuna* “All is foreseen, but the authority [i.e., free will] is given.” (3) In two passages Paul identified himself as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6, Phil 3:5), and in another passage (Acts 22:3) he informs us that he was a student of Gamaliel. The selfsame Gamaliel is identified as a Pharisee independently in another passage (Acts 5:34). On the Rabbinic side, note that the later Rabbis traced their legal teachings and religious outlook back to Gamaliel, who bears the title Rabban, and to Gamaliel’s grandfather, Hillel. To my mind, these three pieces of evidence converge to demonstrate that the Pharisees of the pre-70 CE era emerged as the Rabbinic movement several generations after the destruction of the temple.

10. At least according to the traditional view. The Mishna itself makes no comment regarding authorship, redaction, compilation, etc.

the temple. At least one-third of the Mishnah is clearly related to temple ritual. The most obvious material is to be found in the fifth and sixth orders, Qodašim, lit. “holy things,” related to sacrifices, and Ṭohorot, lit. “purities,” which by and large appertain to the temple. Now the sacrifices had not been offered, to repeat, for 130 years; and the purity laws fell by the wayside without the temple as an anchor. First, the purity laws were less and less relevant, since the only real thing that a state of purity allowed one was entrance to the temple.<sup>11</sup> Second, the final act required for the formal transition from a state of impurity to a state of purity was a sacrifice (as outlined in Lev 12–15; Num 19), now impossible to perform without the temple.<sup>12</sup>

In light of these changes during the late-first century CE and throughout the second century CE, it is rather remarkable that so much of the Mishnah is devoted to temple matters. Furthermore, it is not just in the last two orders of the Mishnah, but in all manner of other tractates, especially in the order Mo‘ed, lit. “festivals,” where temple rituals are evoked and described. Thus, for example, Pesaḥim, “Passover,” describes the Passover ritual not only as it existed in the post-temple world c. 200 CE, but also as it was observed in the temple; Yoma, “Yom Kippur,” describes in great detail the Day of Atonement ritual as it existed in the Temple; Ḥagigah, “festival sacrifices,” deals with the special offerings made in the temple on festival days; and Sheqalim, “shekels” recalls the temple accounting ritual.<sup>13</sup> Or, to cite an example from the first order Zera‘im, lit. “seeds,” which deals with agricultural laws, see Bikkurim, “first fruits,” with its elaborate description of the bringing of the first fruits to the temple.<sup>14</sup> Here again I must reiterate that by the time of the compilation of the Mishnah, the temple had not been in existence for 130 years, or approximately four generations.

11. That said, we know that many Jews continued to cling to observance of the purity laws, even without the temple. See Miller, *At the Intersection of Texts and Material Finds*.

12. There are two exceptions to this procedure: removal of impurity after emission of semen, and removal of impurity caused by menstruation—for neither of these is a sacrifice required (see Lev 15:16–18; 15:19–24, respectively). The reason for this, most likely, is the regularity of sexual intercourse (in the case of the former) and the similar regularity of a woman’s menstrual period (in the case of the latter), in contrast, for example, to more singular events such as childbirth, contact with the dead, etc.

13. For a comprehensive list of temple rituals embedded within the Mishnah, see Cohn, *Memory of the Temple*, 123–25 (appendix A).

14. *Ibid.*, 4–7.

This point raises the question: why is so much of the Mishnah devoted to an edifice and an institution that no longer existed in Judaism? We may answer this question in three different ways, with none of the answers mutually exclusive. First, we may posit that Rabbi Judah felt the need to retain the cultic and ritual traditions for the time when the temple would be rebuilt. Jewish history and Jewish experience had taught the people that, in fact, the temple once before had been destroyed and rebuilt: destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE; rebuilt following the decree of Cyrus the Great, the great Persian emperor, in 538 BCE; and then dedicated in 516 BCE, seventy years afterwards, thus inaugurating (what we now call) the Second Temple period. In light of this history, with a lesson that the Jews knew well, they had every reason to believe that the temple would be rebuilt yet again. True, by the year 200 CE, more time had passed than the historical rebuilding which followed the destruction of the First Temple, but the scenario outlined here would be one reason why Rabbi Judah included all this information about the temple and its rites in the Mishnah.

Second, without the temple standing, and without the ability to enact the sacrifices, as Jewish law and liturgy developed during this time period, the *memory* of the temple, just the memory alone, could serve to replace the actual ritual. One cannot execute the Day of Atonement ritual, the basics of which are outlined in Leviticus 16 and then expanded upon in the tractate of Yoma, but in the very least one can *virtually* perform the old temple rituals, by reciting what transpired in days of old.<sup>15</sup> In the words of Akiva Cohen, “The task undertaken by the redactors of the Mishnah was to fashion a way whereby the Jewish people could re-enter God’s city and the temple courts.”<sup>16</sup>

Third, as the rabbis of old stated, even the *study* of the sacrificial laws constituted a ritual act in itself. Obviously, there is some overlap here between this third point and the preceding second point. But to stress this point further, let me quote the actual passage, from the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Ta’anit 27b. There the rabbis actually place into the mouth of God the following statement, regarding those who study the ancient rituals: כּאִילוּ הַקְּרִיבוּם לְפָנַי וְאֲנִי מוֹחֵל לָהֶם עַל כֹּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵיהֶם *ka-’illu*

15. Indeed, this ritual act remains part of traditional Judaism down to the present day, as the ‘Avodah (“worship”) service incorporated into the Musaf (“additional”) service recited on Yom Kippur in the early afternoon. One may wish to consult the traditional Maḥzor (prayer book for the holidays) to peruse this portion of the liturgy.

16. Cohen, *Matthew and the Mishnah*, 404.

*hiqrivum lifanay wə-ʿani moḥel lahem ʿal kol ʿawonotehem* “it is as if they offered them [i.e., the sacrifices] before me, and I absolve them of all their sins.” Now, to be sure, this statement comes from a later time, say, two or three or even four centuries after the redaction of the Mishnah, but it goes a long way to understanding the rabbinic mindset.<sup>17</sup>

All of this, I trust, helps explain the inclusion of so much material concerning the temple in the Mishnah, a document compiled at some considerable remove from the year 70 CE. These numerous temple references notwithstanding, I also need to stress that in the entire Mishnah, a text which approaches 190,000 words (that is, about 60 percent the size of the Hebrew Bible), there are only three explicit statements about the rebuilding of the temple. Which is to say, while the Mishnah evokes and recalls and transmits the ancient temple rituals throughout, the actual rebuilding of the temple, with the concomitant restoration of the applicable rituals, is a topic barely mentioned.<sup>18</sup> The explanation for this is rather clear. The Rabbinic program led by Rabbi Judah, (most of) his predecessors and (all of) his successors, is very much a non-eschatological one. The reasons for this, in turn, are twofold.

First, while the Jewish community in the preceding centuries was captured by apocalyptic fervor, that fervor apparently informed the two revolts, the Great Revolt of 66–73 CE (even if we have less information about this), and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt of 132–135 CE (with more information forthcoming). Given the devastations caused by the two revolts, the Rabbinic movement steered clear of anything that might smack of nationalist aspirations, apocalyptic or otherwise, including the rebuilding of the temple.<sup>19</sup> Second, the emerging religion of Christianity had picked up the banner of apocalypticism, so that Judaism moved further away

17. Yet a fourth explanation is offered by Cohn, *Memory of the Temple*; indeed it serves as the main thesis of his book. According to Cohn, the rabbis attempted to gain control of the temple *post facto*, as it were, by demonstrating that their system of the temple rituals (as opposed to, for example, that of the Sadducees) was the ‘correct’ one, thereby according the rabbinic movement a sense of power and authority. See especially chapter 4, “Constructing Sacred Space” (pp. 73–89), with the most succinct statement on pp. 88–89.

18. For the three passages and analyses thereof, see Cohen, *Matthew and the Mishnah*, 413–15, 483.

19. Collins, “Apocalypse: Jewish Apocalypticism to the Rabbinic Period,” 1.414–19, esp. p. 418, the section entitled “The Rabbis and Apocalypticism.”

from such tendencies, as an element in the “parting of the two ways,” if that term still has resonance.<sup>20</sup>

We now turn our attention to the synagogue.<sup>21</sup> The origins of the synagogue are to be found in the third century BCE, hence, while the temple still was standing. Many people are under the misconception that the temple was destroyed on such and such a date in the year 70 CE, and the next day the Jews built the first synagogue and voilà, the whole transition from temple to synagogue took place.<sup>22</sup> This is incorrect, however. The synagogue starts in the Diaspora, specifically in Egypt, in the middle of the third century BCE. From this point forward, for the next two and a half centuries, we have about a dozen dedicatory inscriptions of an institution known as the *proseuche*, literally “prayer” or “prayer-house,” the forerunner of the synagogue.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know what these *proseuche* or early synagogue buildings looked like, for all of the stone inscriptions were found in secondary use.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, we can attest to the fact that the Jewish community of Ptolemaic Egypt created the institution of the synagogue for different kinds of ritual acts, including both prayer and the reading of the Torah. For at such a distance from Jerusalem, they could not visit the temple to offer sacrifices there (though they did send fiscal contributions, as we know from Philo and others), and thus parallel or replacement ritual acts developed.<sup>25</sup>

20. Gordon, “Jewish Reaction to Christian Borrowings,” 685–90, esp. p. 687.

21. For all that follows, see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*. I could cite this book on virtually every point to be raised in the ensuing treatment, though were I to do so, I would over-encumber this essay with too many repetitive footnotes. Accordingly, I cite the book below only occasionally, though as implied, for every subject regarding the synagogue raised herein, I direct the interested reader to Levine’s *magnum opus* for further details. My page citations derive from the first edition, though see now also the second edition published in 2005.

22. I realize, of course, that I oversimplify here, which is to say, I oversimplify even the misconception.

23. The material, including images, is conveniently collected by Donald D. Binder at <http://www.pohick.org/sts/egypt.html>. For further details, see his co-authored book (which extends beyond Egypt) Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *Ancient Synagogue from Its Origins to 200 C.E.* Again, for the most information, with even greater geographical and chronological scope, see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*.

24. That is, the stones were reused in later construction projects.

25. Though we should mention the existence of a Jewish temple at Leontopolis, built by Onias IV, c. 150 BCE, after his exile from Jerusalem. Details are provided by Josephus, while the structure appears to have been found by the great Sir Flinders Petrie. For the former, see the references provided by Rosenberg, “Onias, Temple of,” 15.432–33. The work of the latter is summarized in his book, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, 19–27.

In time, even as the temple stood, synagogues spread to other Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Two well-known examples are at Berenice in Cyrenaica (= modern-day Benghazi in eastern Libya) and at Ostia, located at the mouth of the Tiber River and which thus served as the main port of Rome (30 km [19 miles] upstream). A lengthy inscription found at the former site lists the donors who assisted in the repairs of the synagogue, dated to year 2 of Nero, that is, 55 CE, and hence we may posit the construction of this building sometime during the first century BCE. Incidentally, the inscription also refers both to the building and to the community as *synagoge* (as opposed to *proseuche*).<sup>26</sup>

At Ostia the preserved remains date mainly to the fourth century CE, but the excavations also revealed two earlier phases of the building, the first of which dates to the mid-first century CE.<sup>27</sup>

Yet another important Diaspora synagogue was found on the island of Delos, in the Aegean Sea. The structure dates to the second–first centuries BCE, though most likely this was a Samaritan synagogue, as opposed to a Jewish one.<sup>28</sup>

In time, the institution of the synagogue (a Diaspora creation, as noted above) spread to the land of Israel. Examples of excavated synagogues from the period while the temple still stood include Gamla, Masada, and Magdala.<sup>29</sup> Literary sources provide evidence for synagogues in other locations. The New Testament refers to synagogues in Capernaum (Mark 1:21) and Nazareth (Matt 13:54); while Josephus mentions synagogues in Tiberias (*Life*, 54 [280]), Dor (*Antiquities*, 19.6.3), and Caesarea (*War*, 2.14.4).<sup>30</sup>

This brief survey of the early synagogue does not do justice to the topic, but it sets the tone for the subject at hand. After the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, we see a burgeoning of synagogue buildings, both in

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Though not everyone accepts Petrie's interpretation of the archaeological findings, for which see Hayward, "Jewish Temple at Leontopolis," 429–43, especially p. 431, n. 20 (with references).

26. For details, go to: <http://www.pohick.org/sts/cyrenaica.html>.

27. For details, go to: <http://www.pohick.org/sts/ostia.html>.

28. For details, go to: <http://www.pohick.org/sts/delos.html>.

29. For an important find from Magdala, see the coda at the conclusion of this essay.

30. Synagogues have been found in the excavations at Capernaum, Tiberias, and Caesarea, but these date to the later Byzantine period. Presumably they were built on the spots of the older synagogues dated to the first century CE.

the land of Israel and in the Diaspora.<sup>31</sup> Most importantly for our present discussion, these later synagogue structures evoke the temple in manifold ways.

The most striking evidence, to my mind, is the artwork which adorns these synagogues. Such artwork takes different forms, and while we cannot do justice to this important topic in the space allotted here, we shall try nonetheless. The single artistic design which repeats again and again in these synagogues is the menorah, whose “original” stood in the inner sanctum of the temple.<sup>32</sup> Thus, for example, one finds the menorah atop the columns at the Ostia Antica synagogue,<sup>33</sup> as a self-standing marble artifact (about one meter high) at the Sardis synagogue,<sup>34</sup> on the mosaic floors of the synagogues at Bet Alfa, Tiberias,<sup>35</sup> Sepphoris, Na‘aran, Susiya, and elsewhere,<sup>36</sup> and on the wall frescoes at the Dura Europos synagogue.<sup>37</sup> From such an array, and from other evidence,<sup>38</sup> we know that the menorah became the defining feature of Jewish art in late antiquity—indeed, one should say, the Jewish symbol par excellence.<sup>39</sup> Given the Menorah’s central place in the Jerusalem Temple, one must imagine that the artistic representations of this important relic in synagogues both throughout the Diaspora and in the land of Israel helped Jews everywhere recall what once was.

Let us remain, for the moment, with the mosaic floors on the aforementioned Galilean synagogues: Bet Alfa, Tiberias, and Sepphoris. All

31. For synagogues in the land of Israel, see the map in Magness, “Heaven on Earth,” 3. For synagogues in the Diaspora, see the map in Fine, *Sacred Realm*, vii.

32. The actual menorah, which presumably we should capitalize as “the Menorah” was taken away by the Roman soldiers who despoiled and destroyed the temple. It is displayed prominently on the Arch of Titus in Rome, constructed in 82 CE: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch\\_of\\_Titus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Titus) (with images).

33. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostia\\_Synagogue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostia_Synagogue) (with image).

34. <http://www.sardisexpedition.org/en/essays/about-synagogue> (see especially figs. 33–34).

35. Scholars typically refer to this structure as the Hammat Tiberias synagogue, because it was built right next to the hot springs (Heb. *hamma*) of Tiberias. For simplicity’s sake, however, I will call it simply the Tiberias synagogue.

36. For images of the *mānorot* on the floors of the Tiberias and Sepphoris synagogues, see below, figure 1 and figure 2.

37. <http://users.stlcc.edu/mfuller/DuraSynagogue.html> (with image).

38. See Fine, *Menorah*.

39. The six-pointed *magen dawid*, lit. “shield of David,” though often called the Star of David, did not develop as a specifically Jewish symbol until the Middle Ages.

three mosaic floors include an upper register, which was closest to the visual focal point of the synagogue, that is, the spot where the Ark (which housed the Torah scrolls) stood.<sup>40</sup> The central feature in the upper register is the depiction of the Ark; while on each flank of the Ark is a large menorah. Filling in the remaining space, especially on the Tiberias and Sepphoris synagogue floors, are visual reminders of the temple and its rituals.<sup>41</sup> In figure 1 below, with the upper register of the Tiberias synagogue floor, one sees three objects associated with the temple, again on either flank of the Ark: the *lulavim*, or palm fronds, used in the celebration of Sukkot (Feast of Booths), for which see Lev 23:40; the *maḥtot*, or incense shovels, for which see Exod 27:3; 38:3, along with the key role that these objects play in the story of Korah's rebellion in Num 16–17; and the *šofarot*, or shofar-horns. These last items are not associated with the temple rituals *per se* in the Bible (unless one accounts Ps 150:3), but rabbinic tradition records the use of the shofar horn for various ritual acts, especially on Rosh ha-Shana, the New Year festival (see, for example, Mishnah tractate Rosh ha-Shana, especially ch. 3). Any congregant gazing at these images, especially the incense shovels, would be transported to the temple of old, now destroyed, but still alive within the communal memory.

40. For the Leviticus scroll found at the corresponding spot in the Ein Gedi synagogue (burnt c. 700 CE, but with the text now revealed through a CT-scan), see Segal, et al., “Early Leviticus Scroll from En-Gedi,” 1–30.

41. Some of the items are present in the upper register of the Bet Alfa synagogue floor as well, but the largest items there, after the two lampstands are two lions and two birds, with the temple accoutrements much smaller. For images, go to: <http://synagogues.kinneret.ac.il/synagogues/beth-alpha/>.



Figure 1: A portion of the mosaic stone floor at the Tiberias synagogue, c. 500 C.E. (photo by author)

In figure 2 below, with a large portion of the Sepphoris synagogue floor visible, one sees even more of the temple rituals. While the images alone would suffice in identifying the various objects, we are aided by the Hebrew and Greek labels which accompany each item. Thus we see such items and read such Hebrew words as *solet* “fine flour,” *šemen* “oil,” and *ḥašoṣrot* “trumpets” (all in the bottom left square), the large table with the twelve loaves of bread (in the bottom center square), and the basket of first fruits, with accompanying Greek inscription (in the bottom right square, only partially visible in figure 2)—in addition to the two large *mānorot* in the upper register (with the one to the right much better preserved).<sup>42</sup>

42. For further details on the ritual objects, see Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 28–30. One does not typically think of trumpets in conjunction with the cult, though see Num 10:10. The use of the trumpets appears to have increased with time, as witnessed by the fact that sixteen of the twenty-seven occurrences of the word *ḥašoṣra* “trumpet” in the Bible occur in the book of Chronicles. They also are mentioned, alongside the shofar, in m. Rosh ha-Shana 3:3–4. Finally, note the inclusion of the trumpets along with other temple treasures taken as booty by the Romans, as depicted



Figure 2: A portion of the mosaic stone floor at the Sepphoris synagogue, c. 400 C.E. (photo by author)

The date of this mosaic floor is at least several centuries after the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, and yet here are Jews still recalling the temple cult in a building devoted to a wholly different set of ritual practices (prayer, Torah reading, etc.).

These two examples of Galilean synagogues demonstrate to serve the point, though I hasten to add that many other synagogues in the region (and elsewhere) evoke memories of the temple in similar fashion and with similar artwork (Bet Alfa, etc.). I also wish to stress that one should not automatically conclude that these synagogues are connected to rabbinic Judaism. For while today we associate the two words “rabbi” and “synagogue” very closely,<sup>43</sup> the rabbinic “control” of the synagogue may not have been established by the Byzantine period. Rather, these synagogues simply may be establishments of the Jewish community generally. This would explain, for example, why some of these structures include exquisite representations of Helios and the zodiac in the center of the mosaic floors, in clear violation of the rabbinic interpretation of the

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on the bas relief on the Arch of Titus.

43. For example, in a word association game, were I to say “rabbi,” you might say “synagogue,” and vice versa.

prohibition against images (*peṣel*) and likenesses (*tāmuna*) in Exod 20:4 || Deut 5:8.<sup>44</sup> The best preserved examples of this artwork are to be found at Bet Alfa, Tiberias, and Sepphoris (see figure 3), the same synagogues under discussion here, where they appear alongside the evocations of the temple appurtenances.



Figure 3: A portion of the mosaic stone floor at the Sepphoris synagogue, c. 400 C.E., depicting Helios in the center circle and the twelve signs of the zodiac in the outer circle (photo by author)

Eventually, the rabbinic influence over the synagogue did take hold, as witnessed best of all at Rehov, where the mosaic floor is comprised entirely of citations of rabbinic literature (Tosefta, Talmud of the Land of Israel, etc.),<sup>45</sup> but one should not simply assume the presence of rabbinic Judaism in the Roman- and Byzantine-era synagogues. By and large, the rabbis were in the *bet midraš* “study hall,” and not necessarily in the *bet kəneset* “synagogue.”<sup>46</sup> Judaism post-70 CE remained as variegated as Judaism in late Second Temple times, with rabbinic Judaism as one stream,

44. See Mishnah tractate ‘Avodah Zarah, lit. “foreign worship,” especially ch. 3, and the Talmudic discussions thereon (in both the Talmud of the Land of Israel and the Babylonian Talmud).

45. For further information, go to <http://synagogues.kinneret.ac.il/synagogues/rehov/>.

46. This may explain why there is no tractate in the Mishnah devoted to the synagogue. For a list of occurrences of the term *bet kəneset* “synagogue” in the Mishnah and related literature, see Meyers, “Problem of the Scarcity of Synagogues,” 448.

but clearly there were non-rabbinic streams as well.<sup>47</sup> If anything, one may wish to countenance priestly influence over the synagogues under discussion here,<sup>48</sup> a proposal which would explain, for example, the presence of reminders of the temple in synagogue mosaic floors. Or perhaps, and this may be the preferred approach, these synagogue buildings served the general Jewish community, comprised of the people who adhered to what scholars call Common Judaism.

Regardless of who prayed, gathered, and worshipped in these synagogue buildings, let us return now to our main focus—for it is not just a matter of the artwork on the floors and on other parts of synagogue buildings, but also what transpired in the worship service. We learn from the Mishnah and from later Jewish texts, and indeed from Jewish liturgy down to the present day, that many ritual acts associated with the temple were transferred to the developing liturgy in the synagogue in a post-temple world.

For the priestly blessing, whose source is Num 6:22–27, see m. Sotah 7:6, m. Tamid 5:1.<sup>49</sup> For the blowing of the shofar, whose source is Num 29:1, see m. Rosh ha-Shana, chs. 3–4.<sup>50</sup> For the lulav, whose source is Lev 23:40, see m. Sukkah 3:12, m. Rosh ha-Shana 4:3.<sup>51</sup> In fact, we read in these passages of a very conscious reminder of the temple ritual: “Beforetime the *lulav* was carried seven days in the temple, but in the provinces one day only. After the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai ordained that in the provinces it should be carried seven days in memory of the Temple.”<sup>52</sup>

One also may point to the use of the *ner tamid* “perpetual lamp,” even if this item represents an extension of the biblical source. According to Exod 27:20–21; Lev 24:1–4; the Menorah was to burn through the night, *me-‘erev ‘ad boqer*, “from evening until morning” (Exod 27:21;

47. Goodman, “Sadducees and Essenes after 70 CE,” 347–56.

48. See Magness, “Heaven on Earth,” 1–52; and Magness, “Priests and Purity in the Dura-Europos Synagogue,” 421–33.

49. For a possible biblical reference, see 2 Chr 30:27. It is true that the Mishna passages here cited do not identify the locus of the priestly blessing in post-temple times, though later sources clearly indicate the synagogue as the venue for this practice.

50. See especially m. Rosh ha-Shana 3:7 for mention of the sounding of the shofar in the synagogue.

51. See m. Sukkah 3:13 for mention of the *lulav* ritual within the synagogue liturgy.

52. Adapted from the translation of Danby, *Mishnah*, 177, 192. Note that the rabbinic authority quoted here, Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, lived during the Great Revolt and, according to tradition, witnessed the destruction of the temple.

Lev 24:3), on a regular basis. By late Second Temple times, however, the lamp was understood to be one that burns perpetually, as noted, for example, by Josephus, *Contra Apion*, 1.199.<sup>53</sup> For rabbinic recollections of this item in the temple, see, for example, m. Tamid 3:9; 6:1. This item, too, found its way into the synagogue, as evidenced by both figural and architectural evidence (especially in the Nevoraya synagogue),<sup>54</sup> and it remains a fixture in synagogue design down to the present day.

An additional, and to some extent more important, liturgical act which shifted from temple to synagogue, is the recitation of psalms, including both the daily psalms and the Hallel series (Pss 113–18) recited on festivals.<sup>55</sup> The Mishnah recalls their use in the temple rituals: for the former, see the list (one for each day of the week) in m. Tamid 7:4; for the latter, see m. Pesahim 5:7 (as well as m. Sukkah 3:9, though only Ps 118 is mentioned there). These, too, become a key feature of the synagogue liturgy, as indicated in various Talmudic references.<sup>56</sup>

Before we move to the next major theme, let us refer one more time to the Mishnah. While the memory of the temple may be seen in numerous places (see above for examples), we also should call attention to the very opening of the Mishnah. M. Berakhot 1:1 asks, “From when may one recite the *Shema*’ prayer in the evening?” Which is to say, how dark must it be before one can actually recite the evening prayer? When the sun is ready to dip below the horizon (in which case there is still some visible daylight)? When there is total darkness? At some (defined or undefined) point in between? The answer which the rabbis provide is actually somewhat surprising: “from the time when the priests would enter [i.e., the temple] to eat their *təruma*-offering?” Now, this is a useful answer *if and only if* one is able to recall at what time the priests would

53. Whether this change in the burning of the lamp was due to the semantic shift of the word *tamid* from “regularly” (Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2–3) to “perpetually” (as in Rabbinic Hebrew), or whether the meaning of the word shifted based on the practice of burning the lamp in the temple perpetually, is unclear. Either way, the practice developed, and hence the temple included the *ner tamid* “perpetual lamp” as one of its key appurtenances. Note, incidentally, that in the relevant biblical passages, the *ṭəʿanim* indicate that *ner* “lamp” and *tamid* “regularly” do not constitute the combination of noun + adjective. Rather, the equivalent of a comma should follow the noun, so that Exod 27:20; Lev 24:2 should be rendered “for the lighting of the lamp, regularly” (and similarly in Lev 24:3).

54. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 223–24, 332–33.

55. See Rendsburg, “Psalms as Hymns in the Temple of Jerusalem.”

56. See “Hallel,” 8.279–80.

enter the temple to partake of the *təruma*-offering (see Num 18:8–32 for the biblical basis of the rabbinic discussion). The question is: at a chronological remove of about 130 years, from 70 CE, the date of the destruction of the temple, to c. 200 CE, the approximate date of the redaction of the Mishnah, did anyone really know the precise moment in the late afternoon or early evening when this daily occurrence had transpired?<sup>57</sup> At a distance of almost two thousand years, no one today knows how to judge this question, but somehow this formerly daily priestly ritual continued to serve as a time marker for Rabbi Judah and his colleagues as a means to determine when the evening *Shema'* could be recited. This is, to be sure, a very fine point of Mishnaic law, though it speaks volumes to the subject at hand, the manner in which the memory of the temple and its rituals continued to reverberate amongst Jews for generations afterwards.

We now turn to an element of synagogue architecture, though first let us once more recall the temple. Most visitors to the temple entered via a set of triple gates at the southern end of the large complex (outside of which many *miqwa'ot* “ritual baths” have been found). These gates led to an underground passageway, under the Stoa, which eventually granted visitors access to the large plaza which surrounded the temple. Of the three gates, the middle one was larger, with smaller ones on either side (see figure 4).<sup>58</sup>

57. I rendered the participle above with modal force, “would enter,” but truth be told, the participle typically refers to the present tense in Rabbinic Hebrew, in which case the passage should be rendered “from the time when the priests enter [i.e., the temple] to eat their *təruma*-offering.” This is an even more striking reading, since in the year c. 200 CE the remembered ritual took place in the ever increasingly distant past, and yet m. Berakhot 1:1 refers to the practice as occurring in the present. For the grammar, see Pérez Fernández, *Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*, 108, 133–35. And indeed this is how Pérez Fernández renders the passage, “From the moment the priests enter to eat their offerings” (p. 99). For additional treatment, see Cohn, *Making of the Rabbis*, 6–8, 62 (the latter within the context of general verb usage, pp. 60–65).

58. The sealed triple gate entranceway, with its three gates of identical size, visible today in the southern wall, dates to the Umayyad period, and is thus not relevant to the present discussion.

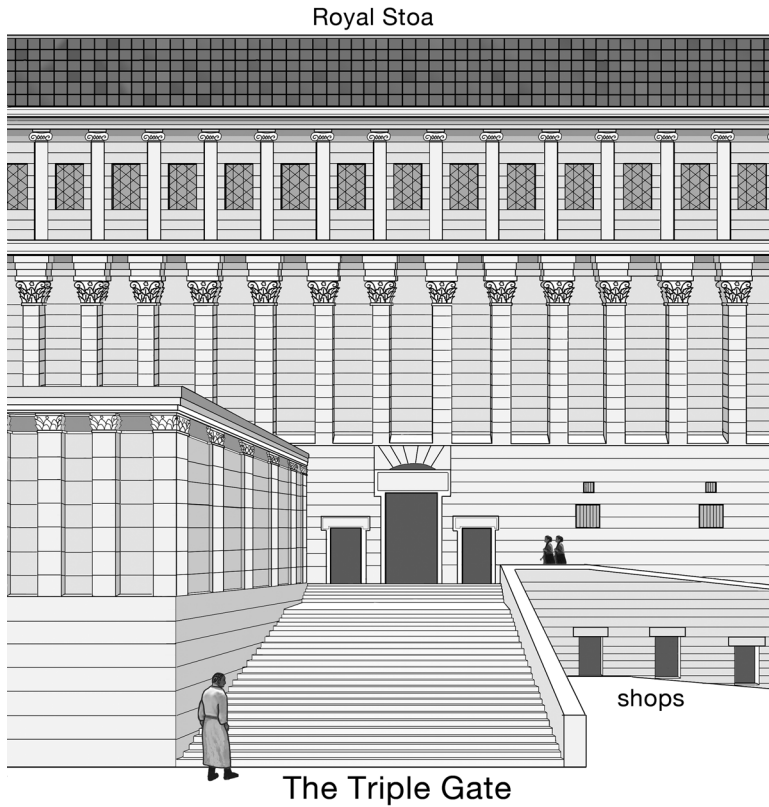


Figure 4: Rendering of the Triple Gates, at the southern end of the Jerusalem Temple complex, after its great expansion by King Herod  
(© Ritmeyer Archaeological Design)

Similarly, in order to proceed from the large plaza into the temple itself, one passed through a set of three gates. Again, the middle gate was larger, with smaller ones on either side (see figure 5, at the very bottom).<sup>59</sup>

59. The reconstructions by Leen Ritmeyer and by all others who have produced similar models are based mainly on Josephus, *Antiquities* (15.11.5) (near the very end of book 15), and on Mishnah tractate Middot, lit., “measurements.”



Figure 5: Rendering of the temple courts, after the great construction project by King Herod, with the triple gate entranceway seen at the bottom of this image  
(© Ritmeyer Archaeological Design)

Once more, at a distance of several centuries, the Jews recalled these two sets of triple gates either by depicting them in the wall frescoes at Dura Europos or more commonly by erecting synagogue façades with entranceways comprised of triple gates, with the middle one larger than the two flanking ones.

At Dura Europos we have two portrayals of the temple, one to the upper left of the Torah niche and one to the upper right thereof (see figure 6 and figure 7). In both of these vignettes, the triple gates are visible, with the middle one larger than the other two. In the former panel, one also sees visitors to the temple bringing various sacrificial animals (bovines, etc.), along with a depiction of Aaron the high priest, with his name in Greek written above. In the latter panel, one sees the temple only, with just the architecture, devoid of human activity.<sup>60</sup>

60. As an aside, note further that in the former scene (figure 6) the three gates have rounded tops; while in the latter scene (figure 7) the large middle gate has no design above it, with the two smaller flanking ones bearing triangular tops. Either different sets of gates are portrayed (see above, the discussion surrounding figure 4 and figure 5), or possibly different artists are responsible for the two panels. This observation constitutes a minor and tangential point, but one worth noting nonetheless.



Figure 6: "Consecration of the Tabernacle." Depiction of the temple on the Dura Europos synagogue wall frescoes, to the upper left of the Torah shrine (Yale University Art Gallery, Dura Europos Collection)

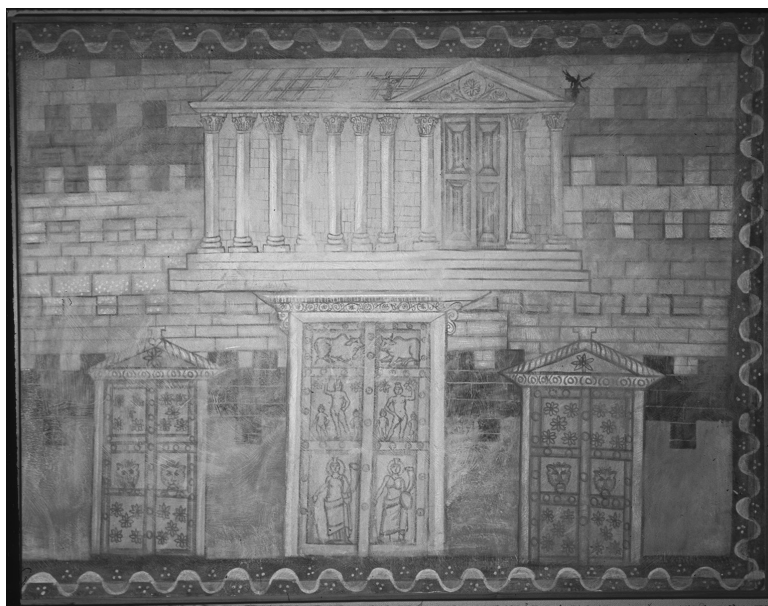


Figure 7: "Temple of Solomon, Jerusalem." Depiction of the temple on the Dura Europos synagogue wall frescoes, to the upper right of the Torah shrine (Yale University Art Gallery, Dura Europos Collection)

The triple gates are seen in synagogue architecture as well. In a number of cases, the entire front façade has been preserved, so that we can see the triple gates *in situ*. In other instances, we can reconstruct the presence of triple gates based on thresholds and other archaeological remains at the entranceways to the synagogue buildings.<sup>61</sup> The best preserved façade is at the Bar'am synagogue in the far north of Israel, close to the present-day Israeli-Lebanese border (see figure 8).



Figure 8: Bar'am synagogue, front façade, c. 300 C.E. (photo by author)

Though such can be seen elsewhere as well, including, quite impressively, at the Capernaum synagogue.<sup>62</sup> Again, by the time these synagogue buildings were constructed, in the early Byzantine period, and as they persisted into the late Byzantine period, one must assume that those who passed through these portals understood their significance. The temple was no longer, but evocations thereof were to be found in “minor sacred spaces” such as the synagogues which served the local Jewish communities.<sup>63</sup>

61. For details, see Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 131–33. These pages include table IV-1 (b), which lists all synagogues and the kind of entranceway each one has (triple gate, single gate, etc.), along with the ensuing discussion.

62. See especially the aerial views available at <http://synagogues.kinneret.ac.il/synagogues/capernaum/>—even if, in these images, the large central portal is difficult to ascertain, since the view of it is blocked by the large palm tree (!) standing just outside the building.

63. The term “minor sacred spaces” is my rendering of *miqdaš mə'at* “a minor

The triple gates are found in one other important location in the land of Israel, namely, the necropolis at Bet She'arim, situated in the Lower Galilee, which prospered during the third and fourth centuries CE. According to rabbinic tradition, Rabbi Judah himself was buried at Bet She'arim (y. Kil'ayim 9:4 [32b]; y. Ketubbot 12:3 [35a]; Qohelet Rabba 7:12), so that the site developed over the course of the ensuing centuries as a burial ground for thousands of Jews. The necropolis is a series of several dozen caves, cut into the mountainside, into which were placed the deceased, either in sarcophagi or in tombs hewn into the rock itself. Jews not only from the land of Israel, but from as far away as Antioch in the north and Yemen (Ḥimyar) in the south were buried there. Presumably these (mainly wealthy?) individuals arranged for the conveyance of their deceased bodies and their subsequent burials in Bet She'arim while yet alive. Here, too, the main catacomb recalls the triple gates of the temple, with the central gate larger than the two side ones (see figure 9). As such, the "holy space" of the necropolis conjured up memories of the temple, even at a distance of several centuries, by people who obviously experienced the temple only as an *objet de mémoire*.



Figure 9: The entrance to the main catacomb at Bet She'arim, with the central gate larger than the two on either side (photo by author)

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sanctuary." The term appears in Ezek 11:16, and is then used in rabbinic texts (e.g., b. Megillah 29a) to refer to the synagogue.

One final element relevant to our discussion is the presence of lists of the twenty-four priestly courses, based on the details given in 1 Chr 24:3–19, long after the destruction of the temple. According to this biblical passage, various priestly families rotated in weekly shifts for service in the temple. To be more accurate, the Chronicles passage does not mention the duration of each shift, but the weekly rotation may be deduced from later sources. Josephus, *Antiquities* (8.14.7) mentions this explicitly; while rabbinic sources such as m. Ta’anit 4:2; m. Sukkah 5:8; t. Sukkah 4:11 imply such. So, what happened when the temple was destroyed in 70 CE?

One might think that this kind of “record-keeping” may have fallen by the wayside, since it had no more practical use in the everyday lives of post-temple Jews. Remarkably, however, various Jewish communities recalled the names of the twenty-four priestly families, and in different ways. Three locations in the land of Israel—Caesarea, Ashkelon, and Kis-sufim—have yielded inscriptions which record the list of the twenty-four priestly courses. And while all three epigraphs are in a fragmentary state of preservation, based on the repetitive nature of the wording of these lists, we are quite confident in their total reconstruction. For example, in the Caesarea inscription, made of gray marble, we have only three small fragments, but as a whole they include the beginning and the end of the word *mišmeret* “guard, watch, course, rotation,” a numeral, and the names of known priestly families (see figure 10 and figure 11 below).<sup>64</sup> Presumably, “these fragments once formed tablets which were affixed to the walls of synagogues in the places in which they were found.”<sup>65</sup>

64. For the *editio princeps*, see Avi-Yonah, “List of Priestly Courses from Caesarea,” 137–39.

65. Thus Miller, *Studies in the History and Traditions of Sepphoris*, 125, n. 360.



Figure 10: Two of the three fragments of the Caesarea inscription of the 24 priestly courses (courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society)



Figure 11: Line drawing of the “complete” Caesarea inscription of the 24 priestly courses, reconstructed from the three extant fragments (courtesy of the Israel Exploration Society)

One might think that it was only in synagogues in the land of Israel, given their relative proximity to the temple of yore, where such documentation was retained. It was quite a striking discovery, accordingly, when Walter W. Müller, working in far-off Yemen (specifically at Bayt Ḥāḍir, 15 km east of Ṣan‘ā’) in 1970, discovered a similar registry of the priestly courses.<sup>66</sup> This plaque, moreover, was found relatively intact (see figures 12 and 13), making it the largest extant example of this type of Hebrew inscription. The inscription includes thirteen lines of text, recording eleven individual priestly courses, numbered as no. 4 through no. 14. Furthermore, of the eleven names recorded, nine are known from 1 Chr 24. While it is difficult to date a text such as this one, with very little comparative material available, Rainer Degen, who published the inscription, suggested the fifth or sixth century CE.<sup>67</sup> Regardless, this inscription serves as remarkable evidence for the continuity of Jewish tradition in this regard, not only across time but also across space.<sup>68</sup>

66. The plaque was found in secondary use, in the village mosque, actually. Presumably, its original home was a nearby synagogue, c. fifteen hundred years ago.

67. For the *editio princeps*, see Degen, “Ketovet mi-Teman ‘al 24 Mišmerot ha-Kohanim,” 302–3. See also the follow-up survey by Urbach, “Mišmarot u-Ma‘amadot,” 304–27. See now most recently Gorea, “Les classes sacerdotales,” 297–329.

68. For the reader unfamiliar with the Jewish community in Yemen at such an early period, see the superb syntheses of the relatively rich (and relatively surprising!) documentation from the pen of Christian Robin: Robin, “Le judaïsme de Ḥimyar”;



Figure 12: The Hebrew inscription of the priestly courses found at Bayt Ḥāḍir, Yemen (© Christian Robin, used with kind permission)

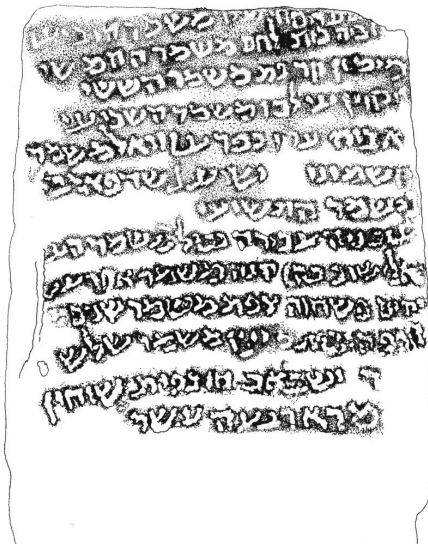


Figure 13: Line drawing by Maria Gorea, based on Robin's photo (© Maria Gorea used with kind permission)

and Robin, "Ḥimyar et Israël." More recently see the collection of essays in Robin, ed., *Le Judaïsme de l'Arabie Antique* (one of which is cited in the previous note).

Finally, I note that such lists of priestly courses served as the basis for intricate liturgical poems (known collectively as *piyyuṭ*) written by Jewish poets such as Eleazar Qillir (c. 570–c. 640). These poems, which were recited in the synagogue, in some cases regularly on the Sabbath, are one more indication of how the memory of the temple—where these priestly families once had served—remained alive for half a millennium and then some.<sup>69</sup>

This essay has surveyed a variety of data—from the Mishnah, from synagogues (both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora), from the necropolis at Bet She‘arim, from the realm of art and architecture, and from the realm of ritual and liturgy—all of which points to a sustained effort to keep the memory of the temple alive. No “sacred space” replaced that of the temple. The synagogue may have been considered a “minor sanctuary” in some circles (see n. 63), and attributions of sanctity to the synagogue may have grown over time, especially as the temple became more and more of a distant memory—but in the end, and to repeat, no “sacred space” ever truly replaced the temple.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, and quite remarkably, the temple, or at least the memory thereof, lived on in the minds of Jews in manifold ways, for a half-millennium and well beyond.<sup>71</sup>

69. See further Sperber, “Mishmarot and Ma‘amadot,” 14:318–19.

70. Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 597–98.

71. I am grateful to my former students Joshua Blachorsky (New York University) and Charles Loder (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) for their comments on an earlier draft of this article, and to the former in particular for several bibliographic references.

### Coda: The Magdala Stone

During the preparation of the oral presentation of this paper, news reports reached scholars concerning the discovery of the Magdala stone, found in the synagogue at Magdala, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, dated to the first century CE.<sup>72</sup> There is still some debate concerning the function of this large stone object, but the artwork which adorns its sides is unmistakable: a menorah, two jugs of olive oil, and what appear to be grain offerings. These images all evoke the temple and its rituals—and yet this object was created while the temple still was standing, in the first century CE, at least according to the archaeological context of the building and the smaller finds.

Isabel Kershner's report in the *New York Times* is apt:

Experts have long believed that in the period before Herod's Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, synagogues were used as a general place of assembly and learning, something like a neighborhood community center. The more formal conception of a synagogue as a sacred space reserved for religious ritual was thought to have developed later, in the Jewish Diaspora after the Temple had been destroyed. But the Magdala Stone was found in the center of the old synagogue, and Ms. Talgam [sc. Rina Talgam, Professor of Art History at the Hebrew University] said it might have been intended to give the space an aura of holiness "like a lesser temple" even while Herod's Temple still existed.<sup>73</sup>

Possibly, the Jews of Magdala already felt a distance from the Jerusalem temple, not in time, since the temple was still standing, but in space, given the location of the former in the Galilee and the latter in the south

72. The stone was discovered in 2009, and in fact was announced to the scholarly world at that time through various outlets (including the Agade listserv). To the best of my knowledge, though, its existence did not become widely known until 2015. (Or at least my words here include a self-admission, since I for one did not become aware of the stone, or at least its significance, until six years after its discovery.) For a press report, see Isabel Kershner, "A Carved Stone Block Upends Assumptions about Ancient Judaism," *New York Times*, December 8, 2015, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/world/middleeast/magdala-stone-israel-judaism.html>. The stone was mentioned by Corbett, "New Synagogue Excavations In Israel and Beyond," 24–36, though as one of a number of finds in a survey article. An article dedicated to the Magdala synagogue, with an especial focus on the Magdala Stone, appeared only very recently: Zapata-Meza and Sanz-Rincón, "Excavating Mary Magdalene's Hometown," 37–42.

73. See the article cited in the previous footnote.

of the country,<sup>74</sup> or in character, given the controversy surrounding the control of the temple throughout this period.<sup>75</sup>

In sum, the main conclusions of my essay remain, but this curious find from the excavations at Magdala certainly provides fodder for some further evaluation and for some continued discussion.

74. Even if the distance is only c. 155 km.

75. I refer here to differences of opinion between the Sadducees and the Pharisees concerning the purity laws, how to proceed with the sacrificial rituals, etc.; the radical step taken by the Essenes (Qumran community, etc.) not to participate in the temple rites; and presumably other issues for which we have less evidence.

**Appendix: The orders and tractates of the Mishnah  
(c. 200 CE), and the presence or absence  
of discussion in the two Talmudim**

<b>Order</b>	<b>Mishnah Tractate</b> <i>(with number of chapters and topic)</i>	<b>Talmud of the Land of Israel</b>	<b>Baby- lonian Talmud</b>
Zera'im	<i>Agricultural Laws</i>		
	1. Berakot (9)—Benedictions	X	X
	2. Pe'ah (8)—Gleanings of the Field	X	–
	3. Demai (7)—Doubtfully Tithed Produce	X	–
	4. Kil'ayim (9)—Forbidden Mixtures	X	–
	5. Shevi'it (10)—Sabbatical Year	X	–
	6. Terumot (11)—Priestly Portions	X	–
	7. Ma'aserot (5)—Tithes for Levites and the Poor	X	–
	8. Ma'aser Sheni (5)—Second Tithe	X	–
	9. Hallah (4)—Dough Offering	X	–
	10. 'Orlah (3)—Fruit of Young Trees	X	–
	11. Bikkurim (3)—First Fruits	X	–
Mo'ed	<i>Festivals and Sacred Times</i>		
	1. Shabbat (24)—Sabbath	X	X
	2. 'Eruvin (10)—Sabbath limits	X	X
	3. Pesahim (10)—Passover	X	X
	4. Sheqalim (8)—Half-Shekel Offering	X	–
	5. Yoma (8)—Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)	X	X
	6. Sukkah (5)—Festival of Sukkot	X	X
	7. Beṣah (Yom Tov) (5)—Festival laws	X	X

	8. Rosh ha-Shanah (4)—New Year Festival	X	X
	9. Ta'anit (4)—Fast Days	X	X
	10. Megillah (4)—Purim	X	X
	11. Mo'ed Qatan (3)—Intermediate Days of Festivals	X	X
	12. Ḥagigah (3)—Festival Sacrifices	X	X
Nashim	<i>Women</i>		
	1. Yevamot (16)—Levirate Marriage	X	X
	2. Ketubbot (13)—Marriage contracts	X	X
	3. Nedarim (11)—Vows	X	X
	4. Nazir (9)—Nazirites	X	X
	5. Giṭṭin (9)—Divorce	X	X
	6. Soṭah (9)—Suspected Adulteress	X	X
	7. Qiddushin (4)—Marriage	X	X
Neziqin	<i>Torts / Damages / Civil Law</i>		
	1. Bava Qama (10)—Damages	X	X
	2. Bava Meši'a (10)—Civil law	X	X
	3. Bava Batra (10)—Property law	X	X
	4. Sanhedrin (11)—Courts	X	X
	5. Makkot (3)—Punishment of flogging	X	X
	6. Shevu'ot (8)—Oaths	X	X
	7. 'Eduyyot (8)—Attested Legal Teachings	-	-
	8. 'Avodah Zarah (5)—Idolatry	X	X
	9. 'Avot (5)—Sayings of the Fathers	-	-
	10. Horayot (3)—Erroneous Court Decisions	X	X

Qodašim	<i>Sacrifices</i>		
	1. Zebaḥim (14)—Animal Sacrifices	–	X
	2. Menaḥot (13)—Meal Offerings	–	X
	3. Ḥullin (12)—Slaughter of Profane Animals	–	X
	4. Bekorot (9)—Firstborn Animals	–	X
	5. ‘Arakḥin (9)—Vows of Valuation	–	X
	6. Temurah (7)—Substitution of Offerings	–	X
	7. Keritot (6)—Penalty of Extirpation	–	X
	8. Me’ilah (6)—Misappropriation of sacred offerings	–	X
	9. Tamid (7)—Daily Sacrifices	–	X
	10. Middot (5)—Dimensions of the Temple	–	–
	11. Qinnim (3)—Bird Offerings	–	–
Ṭoharot	<i>Purities</i>		
	1. Kelim (30)—Impurity of Vessels	–	–
	2. ‘Ohalot (14)—Impurity of Tents	–	–
	3. Nega‘im (14)—Scale-disease	–	–
	4. Parah (12)—The Red Heifer	–	–
	5. Toharot (10)—Ritual Purification	–	–
	6. Miqva’ot (10)—Ritual baths	–	–
	7. Niddah (10)—Menstrual Impurity	X	X
	8. Makshirin (6)—Liquids susceptible to Impurity	–	–
	9. Zavim (5)—Genital fluxes	–	–
	10. Ṭevul Yom (4) –Immersion before Sunset	–	–
	11. Yadayim (4)—Impurity of the Hands	–	–
	12. ‘Uqšin (3)—Impurity of some Plant Parts	–	

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# *Sacred Space, Sacred Thread*

Perspectives across Time and Traditions

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