

Jewish Women in Ancient Synagogues: Archeological Reality vs. Rabbinical Legislation

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Abstract

Several ancient synagogues, active from the fourth to the sixth century of the Common Era, contained images of women with exposed body parts, against which the Talmudic sages legislated and deemed licentious. This paper suggests that despite the rabbinic legislation requiring women to cover certain parts of their body, segments of the Jewish society held different views as to what was considered indecent. Moreover, the fact that these images were discovered in synagogues proposes an even bolder assumption, that is, that these women's images were tolerated during the services.

Introduction

In the field of ancient Jewish history, textual and archeological evidence are often the only sources of information that historians can access to describe the past. When these two sources differ in their presentation of the past, one needs to re-examine the literary evidence and question the historical accuracy and intention of the texts. In treating the Babylonian Talmud as textual evidence, one could question why the authors or editors of the texts decided to ignore the reality of the environment in which they lived. What can we learn from the differences, if they are apparent, between the texts and the archeological findings? To what extent was the rabbinical rulings actually implemented by ancient Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora? Erwin Goodenough, followed by Jacob Neusner, appropriately answer some of these questions by noting that in fact "rabbinic control had lapsed" by the third century CE.² This is evident when comparing the images of women in ancient synagogues to the dress code imposed on Jewish women. Various passages from the Babylonian Talmud describe the indecency of the female body, whereas prominent ancient synagogues candidly display female nudity. Nevertheless, one ought to be careful not to oversimplify the evidence from ancient synagogues and assume that all synagogues were in fact propagating the exposure of female body parts. The majority of synagogues in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora do not depict women in their art, nor do they have images preserved well enough to be analyzed. This perhaps may illustrate a variety of practices that were observed in ancient synagogues prior to becoming a more uniformed institution.³ Lee Levine expands on this point by stating:

This institution represented a wholly new concept of religious observance. Cultic practice was no longer confined to a small coterie of priests and professionals, and the masses of people ceased to be relegated to the outer courtyards of the Temple precincts. Leadership in the synagogue was open to all and the ceremonies there were conducted in full view of the participants.⁴

Consequently, many fundamental practices in ancient synagogues are still not comprehensible to scholars.⁵ For example, how active women were in ancient

synagogues.⁶ Another ambiguous issue would be the tradition of art in places of worship.⁷ More specifically, to what degree was nudity displayed in synagogues? If nudity was permitted in synagogues, were women allowed to expose parts of their body during the services? The depiction of women in synagogues, such as Beth Alpha, Sepphoris and Dura Europos, is different from the depiction of women by the rabbinic texts. The rabbinic laws, originating from the third to the sixth century of the Common Era, limited the exposure of female body parts, but these laws did not seem to trouble artists or architects of some ancient synagogues.⁸

Despite the fact that the Hebrew Bible forbids astrological study (Deuteronomy 4:19; Isaiah 47:13), the zodiac is mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q186, 4Q183, 4Q561) as early as the second century BCE.⁹ Some theories on how and why the zodiac made its way into Jewish culture suggest the influence of priestly literature and early mystical themes. This is evident in Enoch 1:72 and 75, where the central image of the *Merkavah*, chariot, on which Helios rides, may in fact symbolize a divine control of time.¹⁰ Philo of Alexandria describes the twelve stones on the breastplate of the high priest and their division into four sections as representative of the twelve signs of the zodiac and the four seasons.¹¹ Even though scholars are not sure exactly at what point the zodiac made its way into Jewish practice, by the second century CE astrological signs were referred to in Jewish literature and seemingly used for ritual and emblematic purposes.¹² Interestingly, it is precisely in Jewish depictions and discussions of the zodiac that Helios, the twelve sun signs and the four seasons are manifested.¹³ Whenever zodiacs were portrayed in ancient synagogues, female figures were illustrated revealing body parts that were forbidden to be seen in public according to the Talmudic accounts.

Two exceptions are found in the fourth-century zodiac of Hamath Tiberias and the sixth-century zodiac of Naaran.¹⁴ In the zodiac of Hamath Tiberias, Virgo is illustrated completely covered as opposed to her male counterparts, Aquarius and Libra, who are fully naked. All four female images of the seasons are also dressed according to rabbinic standards; their hair is either covered or fastened under a diadem. In Naaran as well Virgo is illustrated as completely dressed; however, according to Rachel Hachlili, who studies “Jewish iconoclastic activity” of Late Antiquity, the reason why the image of Virgo is fully dressed is still not clear.¹⁵ Similarly, in the ancient Sicilian synagogue of Mopsuestia a covered female image is partially depicted. Thought to be the biblical character of Delilah, she has not been fully preserved except for her left foot, wrapped by a long robe, stylistic of the female dress of the time.¹⁶ The difference between this synagogue and the synagogues of Hamath Tiberias and Naaran is that all human figures in Mopsuestia are fully dressed; thus, suggesting that the rabbinic rulings may have been observed in this region. In Mopsuestia¹⁷ as well as Gerasa, (present-day Jordan),¹⁸ scenes from the biblical Noah narrative are illustrated in full attire; but for the most part, it appears that human figures were not popular in Diaspora synagogues, where the majority of synagogues display animals and abstract motifs.¹⁹

This spectrum of images expresses a discrepancy in female images in synagogue art. Even so, many of the ancient synagogue images hardly comply with the stringency, imposed by the rabbis with regard to the public exposure of the female body. Tal Ilan rightfully points out that with the arrival of the Mishnah and Talmud “rabbinic Judaism tightened its control over women curtailing their freedom of movement and self-

expression.”²⁰ One example of a woman’s self-expression being suppressed is taking away her freedom to choose what and how she dresses in public, that is, in the presence of men. This article suggests that in contrast to rabbinic rulings, Jewish women’s nudity was more accepted in some ancient Jewish communities, as evident in the female images of Beth Alpha, Sepphoris and Dura Europos. To that end, the paper first presents the rabbinical legislation forbidding women from exposing parts of their bodies and then analyses the archeological findings of female depictions in the different synagogues

Rabbinical Sources: Legislation Against the Exposure of Female Body Parts

From the frequent discussions between the sages, scholars conclude that the former were well aware of the provocative images in ancient synagogues.²¹ They were somewhat tolerant of the images, especially the zodiac; however, in terms of female nudity, the rabbis were very strict. According to the rabbinic sources, Jewish men are not allowed to look at a woman’s naked body for fear that it would lead to sexual transgression. (When instances of exposure of the male body take place in rabbinic writings they often are used in terms of sodomy or castration.²² Besides, female sexual desire is not mentioned as being aroused because of viewing a man’s genitalia.) Michael Satlow describes the rabbinic attitude towards the female body:

The common understanding of female nakedness to the rabbis is that it arouses sexual passion in men and rabbis frequently exhort rather than prohibit outright with a legal ruling, men not to look at women in any state of dress or undress for fear that they will be led into sexual misconduct.²³

The choice to exhort rather than prohibit the viewing of female nakedness was possibly related to the fact that ancient Jewish communities in both Israel and the Diaspora exhibited different attitudes with respect to the female body. These rabbinic rulings could be found throughout the Babylonian Talmud, as the sages attempt to withhold men from looking at naked women. The body parts that a woman was restricted to show in public, and in some cases in private, were her breasts, hair, arms, genitalia and legs. The sources, used here to exemplify the restrictions placed on women’s nudity, are from the Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 45a, Nedarim 20a and Berachot 24a.

The constraints placed on woman’s breasts and hair, being shown in public, are found in Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 45a, where the sages conclude that a woman is not to be stoned naked when being punished for her transgression. Although some scholars have perceived this nakedness as a specific requirement of the *sotah* ritual, additional passages from the Babylonian Talmud are discussed here in order to demonstrate that a woman was indeed restricted to reveal her breasts and hair to men. The ordeal of the *sotah* (accused adulteress) could illustrate the sages’ point, namely that her nakedness would lead men to commit a sexual offense:

The priest seizes her garments and it does not matter if they are ripped or torn open, until he uncovers her bosom and unloosens her hair. R. Judah said: If her bosom was beautiful, he did not expose it, and if her hair was comely, he did not loosen it, Rabbah said: In the other case this was the reason: lest she should come forth from the court innocent and the young priests conceive a passion for her; but here she is about to be executed.

And should you object, but through her their passions might be inflamed for others. Rabbah said: We have it on tradition that evil inclination moves a man only towards what his eyes see. (Babylonian Talmud *Sanhedrin* 45a)²⁴

In this passage, Rabbah concludes that by simply looking at a woman's naked body a man could be tempted to carry out an "evil inclination or wrongdoing with another woman." As a result, a woman's breasts and hair are not to be revealed to men. The restriction on looking at a woman's breast is not specific to the *sotah* issue because elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud there is a discussion of lewdness concerning women's breasts. In *Shabbat* 64a a commentary is given by R. Eleazar and R. Joseph on Numbers 31:50. R. Eleazar identifies some of the loot taken by the Israelites when they fought against the Midianites. He describes two items in particular, the *agil* and *kumaz*, a cast of female breasts and a cast of the womb. Because the cast of a woman's breasts and womb are lascivious, the soldiers had to bring an atonement offering "because [as the text says] they gratified their eyes with lewdness." (*Shabbat* 64a-b). In this instance, like in *Sanhedrin* 45a, men looking at women's breasts were viewed by the sages as participating in indecent exposure.

Another female body part which is to be concealed from the eyes of men in addition to hair and breasts is the arms. The Mishnah states that a man could divorce his wife for showing her hair and arms in public, as well as speaking to men freely. "And what is deemed to be a wife's transgression against Jewish practice? -- Going out with an uncovered head, spinning in the street or conversing with every man." (Babylonian Talmud *Ketuboth* 72a) R. Judah explains that the law prohibiting spinning in the streets, or weaving in public, is based on the fact that in doing so women "exposed her [their] arms in public." (Ibid.) Female genitalia are also to be concealed from men, even from spouses as noted in *Nedarim* 20a.

R. Aha of the school of R. Josiah said: He who, gazes at a woman, eventually comes to sin and he who looks even at a woman's heel will beget degenerate children. R. Joseph said: This applies even to one's own wife when she is a *niddah*. R. Simeon b. Lakish said: 'Heel' that is stated means the unclean part, which is directly opposite the heel. (Babylonian Talmud *Nedarim* 20a)

The heel of a woman is considered to lead men astray because it is situated opposite her genitalia. More so, as a result of looking at a woman's heel, men might perform a sexual transgression that results in the birth of a physically or mentally disable child.

Other body parts, which are to be covered, in particular while praying, are the legs. In this context, there is fear of distraction during the recitation of the bedtime *Shema*:

R. Hisda said: A woman's leg is a sexual incitement, as it says "uncover the leg, pass through the rivers," and it says afterwards, "thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen." Samuel said: A woman's voice is a sexual incitement, as it says, "for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely." R. Shesheth said: A woman's hair is a

sexual incitement, as it says, “thy hair is as a flock of goats.” (Babylonian Talmud *Berachot* 24a)

This passage expresses the rabbis’ concerns that a man would lose full intention in praying because female body parts might distract him. So in addition to the previously discussed female body parts, legs must be covered. Paradoxically, it is during the services in ancient synagogues that paintings of women’s breasts, hair, arms, genitalia and legs, were openly displayed to the public. This conflict emphasizes the dichotomy between the rulings of the rabbinic sages and the actual setting in several ancient synagogues.

Images of Women in Ancient Synagogues

Archeological excavations have uncovered quite a few images on the floors and walls of ancient synagogues, both within the Land of Israel and the Diaspora. Because these images were found inside the synagogues, many scholars believe that specific Jewish meaning was attached to them or perhaps they were in some way correlated to Jewish prayer.²⁵ By the middle of the sixth century CE a move towards aniconic art is noticed by Rachel Hachlili:

During the mid-sixth century CE synagogue art in the Jordan Rift Valley and in Judea seems to have taken an aniconic turn. For instance, at Ein Gedi no figurative zodiac appears. Rather a list of zodiac signs appears in floor inscriptions. Similarly, the Rehov inscription, with twenty-nine lines of text, is by definition aniconic. This is in marked contrast to the nearby Beth Alpha floor, and it reflects the sensibilities of a very different community.²⁶

One explanation for the choice of motifs rather than iconic art would be the canonization of the Babylonian Talmud (ca. 6th century CE). As these synagogues were developing, so was rabbinic law which, as seen earlier, prohibited much of the images depicted in the synagogues. This again raises the question of rabbinic authority from a historical point of view.²⁷ As Goodenough points out, "even if some rabbis tolerated such an image, the implication is that they were far from taking the initiative in introducing anything of this kind."²⁸ Therefore it is reasonable to assume that iconic art existed in the synagogues before the introduction of rabbinic restrictions. If so, the question of rabbinic authority is undeservedly raised.

During the Byzantine period an added emphasis was placed on decorative details and colorful mosaics, but human figures were still present in certain synagogues.²⁹ This resulted in a great diversity of synagogue art, ranging from representational art of humans and animals to pagan motifs, observed in various zodiacs. Some scholars suggested that the sages may have imposed their theological beliefs, namely that man was created in God's image, even with pagan motifs present in their houses of worship.³⁰ (Nonetheless, they did not offer an alternative identity for a woman created in God's image, but rather a premise on the vulgarity of her body as demonstrated earlier.)

The color of body parts determine whether or not female figures were covered since the artist only used the necessary colors to distinguish between different aspects of the body.³¹ The female figures that this paper examines are those found at the Beth

Alpha, Sepphoris, and Dura Europos synagogues; all portray female body parts, prohibited to be exposed in public by the rabbinical sages.

Hamath Tiberias: Centre bottom of the zodiac with Virgo and Libra



Hamath Tiberias: Autumn



Hamath Tiberias: Virgo



Beth Alpha

Beth Alpha is an example of a Byzantine synagogue in the Land of Israel. With Constantine's takeover in 324 CE, transformation and change began to occur.³² One of the changes was the inclusion of zodiac signs in synagogue art.³³ From the fourth to sixth century CE, zodiacs were designed with inner and outer circles, contained by a larger rectangular frame.³⁴ Helios, the Greek sun-god, is always in the centre circle. The astrological signs are in the outer circle and the seasons appear at the four corners of the frame.³⁵ Hachlili believes the zodiac to be central in these synagogues as the annual priestly rites were most likely replaced by the astrological calendar and new holiday traditions.³⁶ Beth Alpha's synagogue (sixth century CE) portrays human figures in its

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zodiac as well as in its image of the *Akedah*, the Binding of Isaac.³⁷ Both of these mosaics contain images of women baring body parts.

Beginning with the image of Virgo, one may immediately note her bare arms and emphasis on the breasts. The bareness of her arms is noticed from the usage of similar colours to define her hands and feet. Although her name denotes her female gender, her jewelry, bracelets, earrings and a necklace, also indicate that she is a woman.³⁸ The artist designed the breasts of Virgo by employing uniform, singular lines.³⁹ The usage of singular lines is seen throughout the mosaic's figures in their eyes, noses, eyebrows and mouths.⁴⁰ Continuing the same line from her body outline, the artist split the line in both of her shoulders, down the front of her chest and ended the lines by drawing two circles indicating the breasts. This emphasis on the breasts is also present in the Winter image and in what is believed to be one of the servants in the *Akedah* image. Rather than a servant, this human figure could be the biblical Sarah who according to the Midrash, was present at the *Akedah*.⁴¹ All other female figures, including the seasons Autumn, Spring and Summer, also have two circles in the area of their chests to indicate breasts. Like Virgo, Sarah's arms are bare as seen by the flesh coloured stones used to show her arms. In comparison, none of the male figures contain circles on their chests. Thus, the female images in Beth Alpha differ from the rabbinic restriction placed on viewing female body parts, namely that a woman's arms and chest should not be exposed to any man, especially during a time of prayer.



Beth Alpha: Virgo



Beth Alpha: Winter

Beth Alpha: Winter, top right corner and Virgo, top left of the zodiac outer circle.



Below: Beth Alpha and “Sarah” at the *Akedah* (second from the right)



Sepphoris

Like at the Beth Alpha synagogue, an elaborated zodiac is found at Sepphoris. Each picture in the zodiac is identified by their Hebrew name and month.⁴² The female images in the Sepphoris’ mosaic display rabbinic-restricted body parts. Interestingly, the redactor of the Mishnah, R. Judah Ha’Nassi, moved to Sepphoris in the early part of the third century CE.⁴³ This is precisely where he prescribed the laws restricting the exposure

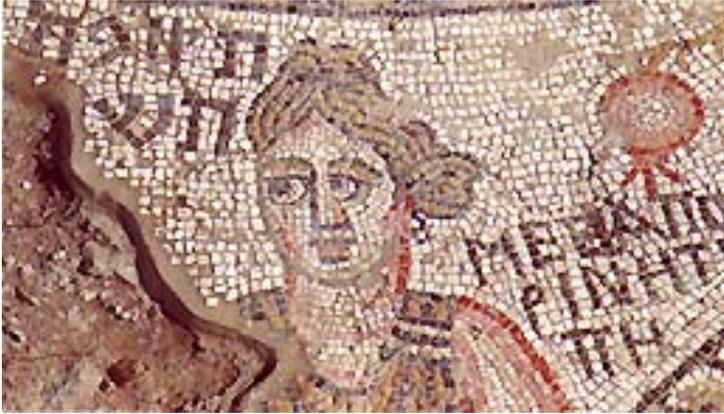
Sepphoris: Spring is at the bottom left corner with Autumn at the top right corner



of the female body. Yet ironically, in the fifth century CE, a few centuries after his move to Sepphoris, the zodiac in its synagogue would depict images of women's nudity.⁴⁴

On the mosaic floor of the Sepphoris synagogue two of the female season-images, Spring and Autumn are illustrated with bare arms and hair. Both of these women, sitting opposite each other on the zodiac, are wearing a Greek-style peplos fastened with a clasp at the shoulders. Furthermore, both of the seasons have their hair uncovered. The depiction of Summer has been destroyed; therefore what exactly she was wearing cannot be determined. Although her hair is covered by a hat, this may be understood as the common dress worn by women in the summer to provide shade from the sun. Similarly, Winter is covered by long sleeves and a hood. Most probably, this is not because of rabbinic restriction against a woman's display of hair and arms in public, but rather a typical dress for the cold winter. Like the mosaic at Beth Alpha, only the busts of the seasons are shown in the zodiac; however, in Sepphoris their arms are bare and their hair is uncovered. The images of Spring and Autumn at Sepphoris also portray women's prohibited body parts of arms and hair despite the rabbinic rulings that were established centuries before the synagogue was built. It seems that the Jewish community of Sepphoris consisted of people who did not abide by the laws of the sages. On the other hand, some scholars strongly contest this view and believe that the art of the Sepphoris' synagogue reflects the exegetical nature of rabbinic thought. Regarding the mosaic of Sepphoris, Zeev Weiss states that there is a "centrality of Talmudic literature and the scope of its influence in shaping the details and iconographic layout of the synagogue mosaic."⁴⁵ As an opposing view, one may suggest the influence of the non-canonized

Sepphoris: Autumn (*Tishre*)



books, namely the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Still, Weiss does not address the nudity of the females in the images.

Dura Europos

Outside of ancient Palestine another well preserved synagogue that depicts women exposing body parts is found in Dura Europos, present-day Syria. This city was first established as a caravan city for tradesmen and eventually transformed into a walled city, in which a synagogue was built for its Jewish community; however, no one tradition dominated the city.⁴⁶ The ornately designed synagogue bears an inscription dating the site back to the year 556 of the Seleucid era, or 244/45 CE, ten years before it was destroyed by a Persian attack.⁴⁷ Dura Europos contains floor to ceiling biblical images of the rabbinic restricted body parts, including an almost fully naked woman. Some scholars have suggested that the paintings in Dura Europos illustrate the “high points in biblical history, when the hand of God was evident in guiding the destiny of the Jewish people.”⁴⁸ Others have proposed a potentially didactic usage of the frescoes, similar to the mosaics found in the synagogues in Palestine.⁴⁹ But the prominence of female nudity cannot be ignored.

In the scene portraying the narrative of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, the widow is depicted twice. In the first painting she is shown with bare breasts and arms. In the Esther’s fresco, Esther is sitting behind Mordechai, baring her arms. One of her maidservants is also painted with bare arms. In the mural depicting the birth of Moses, Pharaoh’s daughter is shown almost naked, baring her breasts, arms, belly, hair and genitalia.⁵⁰ Her handmaids, standing behind her, have their arms uncovered. Finally, the Ezekiel image contains a woman believed to be Psyche, whose thighs, arms and hair are all revealed, as she has been seen in Greek and Roman art.⁵¹ One should note that in many of the murals at Dura Europos, women are shown fully clothed with their arms, legs and hair covered; for example, Miriam and Jocheved in the birth of Moses and the second illustration of the widow in the Elijah fresco. Possibly the artist felt that some of these women were more righteous than others, and thus depicted them more modestly. In

any case, the illustrations of women baring some body parts are present on the wall paintings of Dura Europos in contrast to rabbinic laws.

Dura Europos, Elijah and the Widow: The naked widow is the first figure on the left. The clothed widow is on the extreme right of the picture.



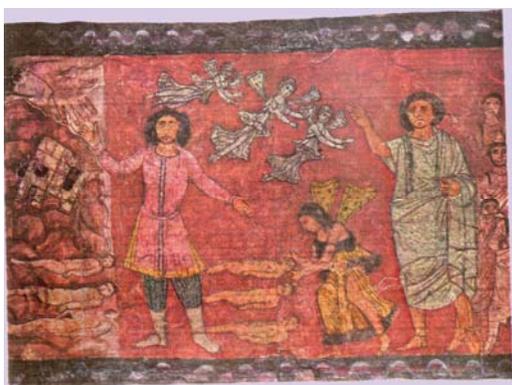
Dura Europos: Esther is illustrated on the extreme right with her handmaid behind her



Dura Europos: Pharaoh's daughter is seen in the centre of the image, holding a baby. Her handmaids stand behind her. The two women on the left are Miriam and Jocheved.



Dura Europos: Psyche is the central female figure.



Conclusion

Ancient synagogues generally differ in their approach to the portrayal of the female body in both the Diaspora and the Land of Israel. A number of ancient synagogues contain mosaics of ritual objects, i.e., the *Menorah*. Others, like Hamath Tiberias, illustrate naked men but not naked women. Variably, a number of synagogues depict female figures with exposed body parts, prohibited to be seen in public by rabbinic law. And yet, despite the canonization of the Talmud, mosaics and paintings of exposed women still appear in synagogue art. This may answer the question posed at the beginning of the article, namely, to what extent were rabbinical regulations actually observed by the ancient Jewish communities in Israel and the Diaspora. The mosaics and frescos in the synagogues of Beit Alpha, Sepphoris and Dura Europos have demonstrated that at least several Jewish communities might have not adhered to the rabbinic laws on

chastity. The specific body parts that the rabbis forbade to be revealed include women's breasts, hair, arms, genitalia and legs. As noted earlier, several scholars have suggested that this phenomenon may have been common in non-rabbinic communities, i.e., priestly communities that used zodiac signs for time reference. The identity and nature of these communities is difficult to ascertain; however, after examining the images in their synagogues one may categorically note that their perception of the female body was to a great extent dissimilar than that of the rabbis.

¹ The author would like to thank Prof. Shalom Sabar for his comments and suggestions.

² See Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1968); and Jacob Neusner "Jewish Use of Pagan Symbols after 70 C. E." *The Journal of Religion* 43/4 (1963): 285-294.

³ For a survey of the numerous synagogues in Israel and the Diaspora see, Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

⁴ Lee I. Levine "Ancient Synagogues: A Historical Introduction" in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* ed. Lee I. Levine (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For the activity of women in the ancient synagogue, see Bernadette Broton *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (California: Scholars Press, 1982).

⁷ For some theories on the usage of art in the synagogue, see Warren Moon "Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from Dura Synagogue" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60/4 (1992): 587-658.

⁸ Interestingly, Moon believes some artists of these synagogues have been Romans and not Jews. See Moon, 589.

⁹ For an analysis and overview of astrology in Judaism, see James H. Charlesworth "Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Period" *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 20/2 (1987): 926-950.

¹⁰ For a Jewish mystical understanding of the zodiac, see Rachel Elio "Mashma'uto ha-mishtaneh shel ha-monote'izm ba-dat ha-Yehudit be-shilhe ha-'et ha-'atikah" in *Sheloshah panim le-ehad* ed. G'on Gudnik Veštenholts (Yerushalayim: Muze'on artsot ha-Mikra, 2006): 10-13. For Helios as a representation of the power of God in ancient Jewish culture, see Zeev Weiss and Ehud Netser *Havta'ah u-ge'ulah: pesefas bet-ha-keneset mi-Tsipori* (Yerushalayim: Muze'on Yisra'el, 1996): 38.

¹¹ *On the Life of Moses* II 24: 123-124

¹² Azaria Beitner "ha-Demut she-be-merkaz galgal ha-mazalot be-vate ha-keneset: ha-im hi demuto shel Ya'aqov" *Derekh agadah* 10 (2007): 54.

¹³ Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 308.

¹⁴ Rachel Hachlili "The Zodiac in Ancient Jewish Art: Representation and Significance" *Bulletin of the American School of Oriental Research* 228 (1977): 66.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ernst Kitzinger "Observations on the Samson Floor at Mopsuestia" *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 27 (1973): 140.

¹⁷ M. Avi-Yonah "The Mosaics of Mopsuestia- Church or Synagogue?" in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* ed. Lee I. Levine (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 186-190. 186

¹⁸ Leonard V. Rutgers "Diaspora Synagogues: Synagogue Archeology in the Greco-Roman World" in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* ed. Stephen Fine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 78.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Tal Ilan "Women's studies and Jewish studies - When and Where do they meet?" *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3:2 (1996): 171-172.

- ²¹ Yehoshuah Rais "Galgal ha-mazalot be-vate ha-keneset le-or halakhot avodah zarah" in 'Al derekh ha-avot: sheloshim shanah le-Mikhlelet Ya'aqov Hertsog : kovets ma'amarim be-nos'e Torah ye-hinukh 535-550 ed. Amnon Bazak, Shemu'el Yigodah, Me'ir Munits (Alon Shevut : Hotsa'at Tevunot, 2001):549
- ²² Eric Kline Silverman, *From Abraham to America: A History of Jewish Circumcision*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006): 46.
- ²³ Michael L. Satlow, "Jewish Constructions of Nakedness in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116: 3 (1997): 440.
- ²⁴ The Soncino Press' English translation of the Babylonian Talmud is used throughout the article. Isadore Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud: Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices*. 34 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1935-48).
- ²⁵ Rozenon, Yisra'el "Bet-Alfa - pesefas shel agadot: 'al agadah ye-'al arkhe'ologyah - mabat le-'olamam shel Hhakhme ha-agadah" *Derekh Eefratah* 3 (2003): 85-117; and Yosef Yahalom "Galgal ha-mazalot bapiyut ha-Erets-Yisre'eli" *Meḥkere Yerushalayim be-sifrut Ivrit* 9 (1986): 313-322.
- ²⁶ Rachel Hachlili "Synagogues in the Land of Israel: The Art and Architecture of Late Antique Synagogues," in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* ed. Stephen Fine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 115.
- ²⁷ Abraham Cohen *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), lv.
- ²⁸ Goodenough, IV, 15.
- ²⁹ Eric M. Meyers "An Archeological Introduction," in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* ed. Stephen Fine (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 17.
- ³⁰ Ya'ir Lorberboim *Tselem Elohim: halakhah ye-agadah* (Yerushalayim: Hotsa'at Shoken, 2004): 13.
- ³¹ Hachlili, "Zodiac," 76.
- ³² Yoram Tsafrir "Byzantine Influence on the Synagogue" in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* ed. Lee I. Levine (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987), 148.
- ³³ Rachel Hachlili "Zodiac," 61.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 65.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 67.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 61.
- ³⁸ Hachlili *Ancient Jewish*, 308.
- ³⁹ Hachlili, "Zodiac," 67.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Louis Ginzberg, ed., *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), 274-275.
- ⁴² Weiss and Netzer, 26.
- ⁴³ Eric M. Meyers, Ehud Netzer and Carol L. Meyers "Sepphoris: Ornament of All Galilee" *The Biblical Archaeologist* 49:1 (1986), 6.
- ⁴⁴ Hachlili, "Zodiac," 61.
- ⁴⁵ Zeev Weiss, "The Sepphoris Synagogue Mosaic and the Role of Talmudic Literature in its Iconographical Study," *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. I. Levine and Z. Weiss, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, Supp. 40 (Portsmouth, RI: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000): 28.
- ⁴⁶ A.T. Kraabel "Diaspora Synagogues" in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* ed. Lee I. Levine (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987), 51-52.
- ⁴⁷ Lee I. Levine "The Synagogue of Dura-Europos" in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* ed. Lee I. Levine (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 172.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 176.
- ⁴⁹ Moon, 588.
- ⁵⁰ For a comparison between the images of Pharaoh's daughter and Aphrodite, see Moon 596.
- ⁵¹ Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein "The Conception of the Resurrection in the Ezekiel Panel of the Dura Synagogue" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 60:1 (1941), 43.

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