

## THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE PALESTINIAN SYNAGOGUE RECONSIDERED

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The Second Temple period witnessed dramatic developments in every sphere of Jewish life. This holds true not only for the later centuries, that is, the Hasmonean and Herodian periods, about which we are relatively well informed, but for the earlier ones as well. The so-called silent century of the late Persian period (i.e., the late fifth and fourth centuries BCE), and the only slightly more illuminated centuries that preceded and followed it, likewise witnessed far-reaching changes<sup>1</sup> that are clearly evident when we compare Jewish society of the late First Temple period with that of the later Hellenistic-Hasmonean and Herodian periods. When the curtain rises in the second century BCE and onwards—that is, when our sources become more prolific—leadership models, political institutions, literary genres, and religious ideas that were very different from those hitherto known are in evidence. Institutions such as the *gerousia*, religious doctrines such as resurrection and the Oral Law (at least as far as the Pharisees are concerned), ritual practices (i.e., the *miqweh*—ritual bath), burial customs, sectarian organizational forms, the genre of apocalypse, the institution of conversion, and more all crystallized during these centuries. Another important development at this time was the emergence of the ancient synagogue.

Tracing the origin and early development of the synagogue has presented modern scholarship with a seemingly insurmountable task. As often happens with institutions, movements, or ideas of revolutionary proportions, the forces at play in bringing about these new initiatives, and often their embryonic

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., the comments of P. Ackroyd, "The Jewish Community in Palestine in the Persian Period," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (ed. W. D. Davies and L. Finkelstein; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 1.130–61, esp. 135–36; L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 1.119–45.

stages, remain shrouded in mystery. Such new phenomena often germinate unobtrusively, only later to emerge in our sources in a relatively developed form. This, indeed, appears to have been the case with the ancient synagogue. Despite our understandable interest in knowing where and when such an institution first took shape, what factors were decisive in its development, who was responsible for it, and where exactly this "creation" took place, the sources at our disposal are simply oblivious to these issues. This may be attributed either to their not being as historically oriented as we would have wished or perhaps to the fact that these early formative stages were not important enough at the time to merit comment.

To expand somewhat on this latter alternative: In the first stages of any new phenomenon there is very often no one moment marking a dramatic change or innovation. The synagogue may not have resulted from a crisis or a specific decision by any one person or community to initiate something boldly new. We may well be dealing with a much more subtle and gradual process, one that took place over decades, if not centuries, and at different paces depending on the specific locale. Only at a later stage, when the synagogue had more or less fully crystallized, can one look back with the advantage of hindsight and say that a very novel institution had indeed been created.

In addressing the issue of the origin of the synagogue, scholars in the past have almost invariably tried to pinpoint the historical context or moment that led to the emergence of this institution. Given the state of our sources, or, more exactly, the lack of any solid evidence, such efforts clearly become exercises in studied guesswork; as a result, prevailing theories on this subject range over a period of almost eight hundred years!<sup>2</sup>

Some date the synagogue's origins to the First Temple period, as early as the eighth or seventh century BCE, basing their theories on either specific biblical references (1 Kgs 8:27–30; 2 Kgs 4:23) or a dramatic event, such as the Josianic reforms (2 Kgs 23:1–20). Most opinions, at least until the last generation, place the synagogue's origins in a sixth-century setting (as a response to the destruction of the Temple) or, alternatively, in a fifth-century setting related to the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, specifically the Torah-reading ceremony,

<sup>2</sup> For useful surveys regarding the various theories of the origins of the synagogue, see J. Weingreen, "The Origin of the Synagogue," *Hermathena* 98 (1964) 68–84; H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel: Its Form and Meaning* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967) 213–45; K. Hruby, *Die Synagoge: Geschichtliche Entwicklung einer Institution* (Schriften zur Judentumskunde 3; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1971) 19–30; J. Gutmann, "The Origin of the Synagogue: The Current State of Research," *Archäologischen Anzeiger* 87 (1972) 36–40; idem, "Synagogue Origins: Theories and Facts," in *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research* (ed. J. Gutmann; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981) 1–6; L. I. Levine, "The Second Temple Period Synagogue: The Formative Years," in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. I. Levine; Philadelphia: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1987) 8–10.

which culminated in the people's oath of allegiance to God (Neh 8:1–10:40). Still others posit either a fourth-century (the emergence of communal frameworks in Palestine after the return from exile), a third-century (in light of the earliest concrete evidence of synagogues, i.e., inscriptions from Ptolemaic Egypt), and even a second- or first-century date (resulting from developments in Judea) for the emergence of the synagogue. This spectrum of opinion relates not only to the dating of the synagogue's origin but also to its geographical setting. Some locate the first appearance of the synagogue in Babylonia, others in Egypt, and still others in a Judean setting.<sup>3</sup>

For all their diversity, the above theories, almost without exception, share at least two common assumptions—that the religious component of the ancient synagogue was primary and that dramatically new religious circumstances were what gave rise to the innovations in this area. Implicit in most of these theories is the view that some kind of liturgical activity, be it listening to God's word from a prophet, the recital of public prayer, or the introduction of scriptural readings, played a crucial and definitive role in the formation of the early synagogue.

Given the rather arbitrary nature of these approaches, it may be helpful to revisit this issue from a rather different perspective. Instead of combing the earlier sources for clues of the time and place of the synagogue's origin, we would suggest a different starting point, that is, from a period when we have some solid evidence about what the synagogue was and how it functioned. Armed with what we know about the synagogue when it appeared in the full light of history, we may then work our way backward and ask ourselves where those activities that were performed in the synagogue took place in earlier periods. We may then have some clue as to how, why, and from where the institution referred to in the first century as a synagogue (and as a *proseuchē* somewhat earlier in Egypt) first developed. We are thus suggesting a more sociological and institutional approach in trying to understand origins rather than searching for the moment of religious innovation that augured its creation.

The earliest available solid evidence that offers us some idea of what the synagogue was and how it functioned derives from the Hellenistic and early

<sup>3</sup> For some of the more recent theories not included in the above surveys, see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* (2 vols., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974) 1.79–82; J. G. Griffiths, "Egypt and the Rise of the Synagogue," *JTS* 38 (1987) 1–15; L. Grabbe, "Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Re-assessment," *JTS* 39 (1988) 401–10; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972) 44. Cf. also L. Landman, "The Origin of the Synagogue," in *Essays on the Occasion of the Seventieth Anniversary of the Dropsie University—1909–79* (ed. A. Katsh and L. Nemoy; Philadelphia: Jewish Quarterly Review, 1979) 317–25; H. Eberhard von Waldow, "The Origin of the Synagogue Reconsidered," in *From Faith to Faith* (Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 31; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1979) 269–84; J. D. Levenson, "From Temple to Synagogue: 1 Kings 8," in *Traditions in Transformation* (ed. B. Halpern and J. D. Levenson; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1981) 143–66; S. Talmon, *The World of Qumran from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1989) 204–9.

Roman periods, particularly from the first century CE. Although limited, the amount of data available at this time is far from inconsequential. Josephus and Philo mention the synagogue explicitly, although only on occasion. The former's allusions to diaspora communal activities (and indirectly to the building in which they took place) in the official documents he cites in books 14 and 16 of his *Jewish Antiquities* are especially noteworthy. While rabbinic material for this period is sparse and often legendary, the NT has preserved a number of references to both diaspora and Palestinian synagogues, including a number of invaluable traditions found in Luke-Acts.<sup>4</sup>

The archaeological evidence for this period is spotty in this regard. The buildings at Gamla, Masada, and Herodium are usually identified as synagogues, although the latter two date only from the very end of this period, that is, the first Jewish revolt against Rome (66–74 CE).<sup>5</sup> The Gamla building was con-

<sup>4</sup> See my "Second Temple Synagogue," 13ff. A more detailed treatment of these sources regarding the synagogue will be found in my forthcoming book, *The Ancient Synagogue: H. Keesler has recently denied the existence of a synagogue institution in the pre-70 period* ("The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 C.E.: Its Import for Early Christianity," *NTS* 36 [1990] 1–24; idem, "Early Christianity in the Galilee: Reassessing the Evidence from the Gospels," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* [ed. L. I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992] 10). This is not the place to refute many of his arguments; this task has already been effectively undertaken by B. E. Oster, Jr., "Supposed Anachronism in Luke-Acts' Use of ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ," *NTS* 39 (1993) 178–208.

<sup>5</sup> These synagogue finds have been summarized by F. Hüttenmeister and G. Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen in Israel* (2 vols.; Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1977) 1.173–74, 314–15, M. Chiat, *Handbook of Synagogue Architecture* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982) 204–7, 248–51, 282–84; *The New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. E. Stern; 4 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993) passim (henceforth *NEAEHL*). For specific studies, see C. Foerster, "The Synagogue at Masada and Herodium," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed* (ed. L. I. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1981) 24–29; E. Netzer, *Masada* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1991) 3.402–13; S. Gutman, "The Synagogue at Gamla," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 30–34; Z. Ma'oz, "The Synagogue of Gamla and the Typology of Second-Temple Synagogues," in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 35–41; idem, "The Synagogue in the Second Temple Period—Architectural and Social Interpretation" (in Hebrew), *Eretz Israel* 25 (1992) 331–44. Cf. also M. Chiat, "First Century Synagogue Architecture: Methodological Problems," in *Ancient Synagogues: The State of Research*, 49–60.

The certainty that the three buildings were synagogues varies. The Herodium structure is so identified only because of its close parallels with Masada—same time frame, same inhabitants, and same general changes made from previous Herodian structures. The Masada building is most assuredly a synagogue owing to the biblical fragments found therein, as well as a number of ostraca that seem to refer to required religious offerings (see Netzer, *Masada*). The Gamla building's identification rests on its being the only public building found in a city with many fervently nationalist religious inhabitants (at least at the time of the war).

Two other sites that were once identified as synagogues have not been included. In the early part of the century, J. Ory identified a second building at Chorazim (in contrast to the late Roman building visible today), which he claimed was a pre-70 synagogue; in subsequent surveys, however, this building was never located. See C. Foerster, "The Synagogues at Masada and Herodium," *Journal of Jewish Art* 3–4 (1977) 8–9.

structed several generations earlier, probably at the beginning of the first century. The Theodotus inscription from first-century Jerusalem is undoubtedly the most important archaeological find regarding the synagogue from Roman Palestine.<sup>6</sup> Synagogue buildings in the diaspora include that of Delos (second or first century BCE) and an early (first century BCE) stage of the fourth-century CE Ostia synagogue.<sup>7</sup> However, the most valuable evidence from the diaspora is epigraphical (for Egypt, the evidence is also papyrological) and includes a dozen references to the Egyptian *proseuchē*,<sup>8</sup> three major inscriptions from Cyrene,<sup>9</sup> numerous inscriptions from the catacombs of Rome,<sup>10</sup> and at least one of significance from first-century Asia Minor.<sup>11</sup> Taken together, the above evidence attests to the fact that by this time synagogues were to be found everywhere—in Palestine and the diaspora, east and west, in villages and cities.<sup>12</sup>

Not only were synagogues ubiquitous; they were also quite different from one another in their layout, architectural plan, and location. This was true not only when comparing diaspora evidence with that of Palestine, but even within Roman Palestine itself. Synagogues were called by different names; most often the term used was συναγωγή (“place of gathering”) or προσευχή (“place of

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The Franciscans excavated at Magdala, just north of Tiberias, and claimed to have discovered a first-century synagogue (P. V. C. Corbo, “Scavi Archaeologici a Magdala,” *Liber Annuus* 24 [1974] 19–28); Netzer, however, has demonstrated that the building was in fact a “fountain house” or nymphaeum (E. Netzer, “Did the Magdala Spring-House Serve As a Synagogue?” (in Hebrew), in *Synagogues in Antiquity* [ed. A. Kasher et al.; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1987] 165–72.

<sup>6</sup> L. Roth-Gerson, *The Greek Inscriptions from the Synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1987) 76–86; B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (Paris: Cabalda, 1967) 70–71.

<sup>7</sup> P. Bruneau, “Les Israélites de Délos et la juiverie Délienne,” *Bulletin de Correspondence Hellénistique* 100 (1982) 465–504; A. T. Kraabel, “The Diaspora Synagogue: Archeological and Epigraphic Evidence since Sukenik,” *ANRW* 2.19.1 (1979) 491–94; L. M. White, *Building God’s House in the Roman World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990) 69–71.

<sup>8</sup> V. Tcherikover, A. Fuks, and M. Stern, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (3 vols.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957–64) 3.139–44; E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (rev. ed.; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: Clark, 1973–87) 2.425–26 n. 5; W. Horbury and D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 276 passim. On Egyptian synagogues, see P. E. Dion, “Synagogues et temples dans l’Égypte hellénistique,” *Science et Esprit* 29 (1977) 45–75; Griffiths, “Egypt and the Rise of the Synagogue.”

<sup>9</sup> G. Lüderitz, *Corpus jüdischer Zeugnisse aus der Cyrenaika* (Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert, 1983) 147–59.

<sup>10</sup> H. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960) 135–66; D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 2.538–40.

<sup>11</sup> P. Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 58–60.

<sup>12</sup> Schürer, *History*, 2.423–47.

prayer").<sup>13</sup> However, it could also be called τὸ ἱερόν ("sanctuary"),<sup>14</sup> εὐχεῖον ("place of prayer"),<sup>15</sup> σαββατεῖον ("sabbath meeting place"),<sup>16</sup> διδασκαλεῖον ("place of instruction"),<sup>17</sup> *templum*,<sup>18</sup> and amphitheater.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, this plurality of names may indicate differing perceptions regarding the essential nature and functioning of the synagogue; it is conceivable that this institution served somewhat different purposes in different locales. It may be noteworthy that most of these names stem from the diaspora, with the term *proseuchē* being dominant. Interestingly, the name for this institution in Palestine, with but one exception, was always *synagōgē*.

The two most dominant terms, *proseuchē* and *synagōgē*, may indeed reflect two somewhat differing emphases. The former seems to clearly indicate that such diaspora synagogues featured a religious dimension and may have even acquired a measure of sanctity unknown in contemporary Palestine. This may have been due to its unique context, inter alia, being distant from the Jerusalem Temple and surrounded by pagan religious models. Moreover, the greater need of diaspora Jews to define themselves explicitly in religious-communal terms vis-à-vis their pagan surroundings undoubtedly also had an influence on the nature and emphasis of diaspora synagogues.<sup>20</sup> The Palestinian synagogue, on the other hand, was unique not only because it was referred to almost exclusively by one term<sup>21</sup> but also because this term—*synagōgē*—was bereft of any religious connotation. The synagogue in Palestine was described quite simply, then, as a place of gathering, a communal institution par excellence.

Given this wide-ranging diversity among first-century synagogues, what, then, was the common denominator among them? What characteristics or functions were regarded as basic? The answer is that, first and foremost, the synagogue served the full range of needs of a particular community. As documented in contemporary sources, such functions included political meetings, social gatherings, courts, schools, hostels, charity activities, slave manumission, meals (sacred or otherwise), and, of course, religious-liturgical functions.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *TDNT* 8.807–8.

<sup>14</sup> Josephus, *J.W.* 7.3.3 §45; 4.7.2 §408; 7.5.5 §144; 3 Macc 2:28.

<sup>15</sup> Tcherikover et al., *Corpus*, 2.223.

<sup>16</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 16.6.2 §164.

<sup>17</sup> Philo, *Special Laws* 2.62.

<sup>18</sup> Tacitus, *History* 5.5.4; M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974–84) 2.43.

<sup>19</sup> Lüderitz, *Corpus*, 151–55 no. 71.

<sup>20</sup> Levine, "Second Temple Synagogue," 21–22.

<sup>21</sup> With the one exception of Tiberias; see Josephus, *Life* 54 §§277, 280; 56 §293.

<sup>22</sup> See Levine, "Second Temple Synagogue," 14; *TDNT* 8.821–28. Cf. also Z. Safrai, "Communal Functions of the Synagogue in Israel during the Mishnaic-Talmudic Period" (in Hebrew), in

Defining the synagogue as primarily a communal institution is based on a number of factors. First, of course, is the simple fact that the full range of communal activities noted above is documented as having taken place there. Thus, even when a location is not specifically mentioned in other cases, it is more than likely that the venue of these activities was also a synagogue; no other public building or institution is ever mentioned in any of our sources as having played a similar role. Moreover, the very name *synagōgē* indicates that the building was primarily a meeting place that could and did serve many purposes. In fact, by the first century the synagogue had become the address of the Jewish community as a whole and was recognized as such by Jew and non-Jew alike. When pagans, for example, wished to attack the Jews or defile Jewish property, they invariably vented their wrath on the synagogue. Such was the case in Dor, Alexandria, and Caesarea in the course of the first century CE.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, archaeological remains likewise point in this direction, that is, that we are essentially dealing with a communal institution. Featuring benches along all or most of the walls, the focus of each building was the center of its hall, much as was the plan in contemporary Hellenistic and Roman communal buildings.<sup>24</sup> All those features that later came to be associated with the synagogue and reflected its predominantly religious character were absent from these earlier buildings; there was no clear-cut orientation toward Jerusalem, no place for a Torah shrine, no decorative element of religious significance, and no dedicatory inscription noting a special status accorded the building.

All this is not to deny that the Second Temple synagogue also played a significant role in the religious life of the community. This is clearly stated in practically every source at our disposal. While diaspora institutions appear to have also featured prayers (and hymns?), the Torah-reading ceremony and its accompanying activities—readings from the prophets (*haftarah*), recitation of targum, and sermons—were invariably highlighted. Nevertheless, such an emphasis seems

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*The Synagogue in the Mishnaic-Talmudic Period* (ed. Z. Safrai; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1986) 105–23. On the “secular” communal nature of the synagogue of Asia Minor as against the “sacred books” and “sacred monies” stored therein, see Josephus, *Ant.* 16.6.2 §164. Manumission is attested in a number of inscriptions from the northern littoral of the Black Sea; see *Corpus Inscriptionum Regni Bosporani* (Leningrad: Academia Scientiarum URSS, 1965) nos. 70, 71, 73, 1123, 1127; Schürer, *History*, 1.105–6.

<sup>23</sup> Dor: Josephus, *Ant.* 19.6.3 §§299–310; Caesarea: Josephus, *J.W.* 2.14.4–5 §§285–292; Alexandria: Philo, *Embassy* 20.132ff.

<sup>24</sup> Y. Yadin, “The Excavation of Masada,” *IEJ* 15 (1965) 78–79; N. Avigad, “The ‘Galilean’ Synagogue and Its Predecessors,” in *Ancient Synagogues Revealed*, 42–44. Suggestions relating these buildings to Dura Europos and Alexandria (via Jerusalem) have been offered by Foerster (“Masada and Herodion,” 28) and Ma’oz (“Synagogues in the Second Temple Period,” 334–37), respectively. See also Ma’oz, “The Synagogue in the Second Temple Period as a Reflection of Alexandrine Architecture,” *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 18 (1994) 5–12. Cf. Levine, “Second Temple Synagogue,” 10–13; Chiat, “First-Century Synagogue Architecture,” 55–56.

to have had more to do with each source's own agenda than with historical reality. Both Philo and Josephus, as well as the NT and rabbinic literature, were interested in depicting the synagogue as a uniquely Jewish institution; in most cases this meant focusing on its religious-liturgical dimension.

Moreover, even within the religious sphere our sources tend to highlight that activity which was most unique to the Jewish setting, that is, the regular communal reading of scriptures. This is perhaps the reason why the diaspora synagogue, no less than the Palestinian synagogue, is often mentioned with reference to Torah reading and study.<sup>25</sup> For Jewish authors, the unique feature of synagogue worship was not the recitation of prayers, hymns, or psalms—activities no less familiar in pagan religious settings—but rather the public recitation and expounding of Holy Scriptures. Thus, no matter what the context in which these sources refer to the synagogue, their authors tended to focus on its unique feature, which Momigliano has designated “a new departure in the religious life of the classical world.”<sup>26</sup>

Having determined that the first-century synagogue served as a center for a variety of communal functions and activities, including religious ones, we now are ready to look for the framework or institution that served the same (or similar) purposes in earlier centuries. When seen in this light, the answer is not difficult to determine. The setting for most, if not all, of these activities in previous eras was the city gate, the main communal setting in the life of every community in the First Temple and Persian periods.<sup>27</sup>

The role of the city gate as the focal point of communal activity is well attested in biblical and nonbiblical literature.<sup>28</sup> It served as a marketplace (2 Kgs

<sup>25</sup> See Levine, “Second Temple Synagogue,” 15–17.

<sup>26</sup> A. Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987) 90; see also A. I. Baumgarten, “The Torah as a public document in Judaism,” *SR* 14 (1985) 17–24.

<sup>27</sup> This suggestion was first broached by M. Silber in his doctoral thesis from the University of Denver and was summarized by the same author in a pamphlet entitled *The Origin of the Synagogue* (New Orleans: Steeg, 1915). Silber, however, dates this transition to the Solomonic period and further concludes that the synagogue was secular in origin, only later acquiring a more distinct religious character. Decades later, the city-gate thesis was further developed by S. B. Hoenig, “The Ancient City-Square: The Forerunner of the Synagogue,” *ANRW* 2.19.1 (1979) 448–76. Hoenig, however, confuses the town square of Greco-Roman times with the city gate of a Near Eastern setting (on this see J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Cities of Ancient Greece and Italy: Planning in Classical Antiquity* [New York: George Braziller, 1974] 12), while freely utilizing later rabbinic material to supplement what little is known on the subject from pre-70 times. Moreover, much of his argument rests on the very problematic reading of רחוב העיר in place of the not uncommon reference to העיר חצר in rabbinic literature. See also L. Löw, *Gesammelte Schriften* (5 vols.; Szegedin: A. Baba, 1889–1900) 4.5ff. On the city gate in biblical times, see the article in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1982) 8.231; R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1961) 152–53; and also L. Köhler, *Der hebräischen Mensch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1953) 143–71.

<sup>28</sup> *CAD*, A/1 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1964) 82–88. s.v. *abullu*; *CAD* B (Chicago: Orien-



7:1)<sup>29</sup> and as a setting where a ruler would hold court and where prophets would speak (1 Kgs 22:10; Jer 38:7).<sup>30</sup> As the gate was a popular meeting place for public gatherings, a variety of communal activities was conducted there. So, for example, Hezekiah “appointed battle officers over the people; then, gathering them to him in the square of the city gate (רחוב שער העיר), he rallied them” (2 Chr 32:6).<sup>31</sup> Those who came regularly to the gate were the populace at large (see Ruth 3:11) as well as the town’s elders and leaders. The transaction between Abraham and Ephron the Hittite took place at the city gate (Gen 23:10, 18), and a number of legal documents from Nuzi conclude with the formula, “the tablet was written after the proclamation at the gate.”<sup>32</sup> Announcement of a settlement at the gate afforded it maximum publicity as well as the assent of the entire community. Moreover, prophetic activity often took place here so as to reach the greatest number of people (Isa 29:21; Amos 5:10).

One of the primary functions at the city gate was judiciary.<sup>33</sup> City elders would assemble there to dispense justice: “His father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the public place [i.e., the gate] of his community” (Deut 21:19; 17:5; 22:24; see also Ps 69:13); and the prophet Amos advised: “Hate evil and love good, and establish justice at the gate” (5:15).

The importance of the city gate as a place for settling personal affairs in the presence of the community is reflected in Ruth 4:1–2:

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tal Institute, 1965) 19–20, s.v. *babu*; F. S. Frick, *The City in Ancient Israel* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977) 83–84, 114–27; *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, 8.232–36. C. C. McCown has summarized the phenomenon thus: “For the ancient Hebrew, the city gate was much more than a means of ingress and egress, much more than an important part of the city’s defenses. It was also the ‘center’ (even though at one side) of the city’s social, economic and judicial affairs” (*IDB*, 634). Much valuable material has been collected in this regard by G. Evans, “‘Gates’ and ‘Streets’: Urban Institutions in Old Testament Times,” *JRH* 2 (1962) 1–12: “A study of the texts in which the term appears shows clearly that the gate, together with the street which lay behind it, just within the walls, was a centre of political and legal activity, as well as of trade. . . . the gate was the scene of many activities which, in a western city, were carried on in a central square” (p. 1).

<sup>29</sup> On the communal significance of the city gate, see I. Eph’al and J. Naveh, “The Jar of the Gate,” *BASOR* 289 (1993) 59–65.

<sup>30</sup> Other references to rebuking the people at the gates include Isa 29:21; Amos 5:10.

<sup>31</sup> On the discovery of such a square between the main and outer gates at the biblical site of Tel Dan, see A. Biran, “Tel Dan: Five Years Later,” *BA* 13 (1980) 177; idem, “Dan,” *NEAEHL*, 1.325; and n. 36 below.

<sup>32</sup> See, e.g., R. H. Pfeiffer and E. A. Speiser, “One Hundred New Selected Nuzi Texts,” *AASOR* 16 (1935–36) 115. See also R. de Vaux, “Les patriarches hébreux et les découvertes modernes,” *RB* 56 (1949) 25 and n. 1.

<sup>33</sup> See D. A. McKenzie, “Judicial Procedure at the Town Gate,” *VT* 14 (1964) 100–104. For rabbinic interpretations of biblical references to judicial proceedings at the city gate, see D. Halivni (Weiss), “The Location of the Bet Din in the Early Tannaitic Period,” *PAAJR* 29 (1960–61) 181–91.

Meanwhile, Boaz had gone to the gate and sat down there. And now the redeemer whom Boaz had mentioned passed by. He called, "Come over and sit down here, So-and-so." And he came over and sat down. Then [Boaz] took ten elders of the town, and said, "Be seated here," and they sat down.<sup>34</sup>

These ten elders (referred to by Speiser as "city-fathers") undoubtedly convened there regularly to officiate as judges, arbitrators, and witnesses to business transactions.<sup>35</sup> They were the civil judiciary—as opposed to the sacred judicial framework of the Jerusalem Temple or the local sanctuaries presided over by the priests.<sup>36</sup>

The significance of the gate as the "heart" of a city is reflected also in the fact that a conqueror might place his throne there as a sign of subjugation. Nebuchadnezzar's officers did so (Jer 39:3) and thus fulfilled the prophet's dire prediction (Jer 1:15–16):

For I am summoning all the peoples of the kingdoms of the north, declares the Lord. They shall come and shall each set up a throne before the gates of Jerusalem, against its walls round about and against all the towns of Judah. And I will argue my case against them for all their wickedness. They have forsaken me and sacrificed to other gods and worshiped the works of their hands.<sup>37</sup>

A king might sit at the city gate to provide the people with the opportunity to address their complaints to him. So, for example, following Absalom's death, Joab urged David to terminate his mourning and to sit at the gate so that "all the people may come before the king" (2 Sam 19:8–9). On another occasion Ahab, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, sat at the gate of Samaria prior to a battle in Gilead, summoning the prophets to support their venture (1 Kgs 22:10). Similarly, according to 2 Chr 32:6, Hezekiah mustered the people at the city gate in order to strengthen their resolve in the face of Sennacherib's imminent attack; a century or so later we are told that Zedekiah also sat at a city gate called Benjamin (Jer 38:7).

Finally, the city gate served also as a place for performing religious func-

<sup>34</sup> The concept of "ten" as a quorum appears in Josephus's description of the Essenes (*J.W.* 2 §146) in Qumran literature (CD 13:1; IQS 6:3; 6:7; 10:14) and, of course, later on, in rabbinic literature (e.g., *m. Meg.* 4:3).

<sup>35</sup> As in the story of Abraham and Ephron in Genesis 23. See E. A. Speiser, "'Coming' and 'Going' at the 'City' Gate," *BASOR* 144 (1956) 20–23; H. Reviv, "Early Elements and Late Terminology in the Descriptions of Non-Israelite Cities in the Bible," *IEJ* 27 (1977) 190–91, as well as the dissenting opinion of G. Evans, "'Coming' and 'Going' at the City Gate—A Discussion of Professor Speiser's Paper," *BASOR* 150 (1958) 28–33.

<sup>36</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomical School*, 235. One of the gates of Jerusalem under Josiah was named after Joshua, governor of the city (2 Kgs 23:8).

<sup>37</sup> On the carrying out of corporate punishment against the city generally, see Deut 13:17.

tions. In the ancient Near East, people often gathered at the city gate to worship gods, as is evidenced by the cultic objects found near the gates of Megiddo Va, Beersheba IV, and Tel Dan.<sup>38</sup> Regarding Tel Dan, A. Biran, following R. D. Barnett, notes the following with respect to the city gate as a possible place for holding religious ceremonies in antiquity:

we may consider this to be also a ceremonial route. This could depend to a certain extent on the interpretation of the unique structure found in the square between the outer and main gates. This structure is rectangular with an open space where a throne or pedestal was set. Two decorated column-bases were found *in situ*, a third in the debris and of the fourth only an imprint was left. . . . Our suggested reconstruction shows a canopied structure which could have served the king when he sat at the gate (e.g., 2 Kings 22:10) or it could have served as a pedestal for the statue of a god.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of explicit biblical evidence, 2 Kgs 23:8 has the following to say about Josiah's reforms of 621 BCE:

He brought all the priests from the towns of Judah [to Jerusalem] and defiled the shrines where the priests had been making offerings—from Geba to Beer-sheba. He also demolished the shrines of the gates, which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua, the city prefect—which were on a person's left [as he entered] the city gate.

In the postexilic period, the area of the city gate was utilized by Ezra and Nehemiah: "The entire people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate, and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the scroll of the Teaching of Moses with which the Lord had charged Israel" (Neh 8:1).

Archaeological data confirm the fact that the biblical (i.e., Iron Age) gate served as the site of many communal functions. In contrast to the early Middle Bronze Age II gate, which appears to have filled an almost exclusively defensive role, the twenty or so Iron Age II gate complexes (ca. 1000–580 BCE) differed significantly.<sup>40</sup> Whereas in second-millennium gates, rooms next to the gateway

<sup>38</sup> See *NEAEHL*, 1.172 (Beersheba), 327–29 (Dan). On Megiddo, see Z. Herzog, *Das Staat in Israel und in den Nachbarländern* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1986) 164. On this subject generally, see W. Dever, *Recent Archaeological Discoveries and Biblical Research* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990) 128ff.

<sup>39</sup> A. Biran, "To the God who is in Dan," in *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (ed. A. Biran; Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College, 1981) 143; see also R. D. Barnett, "Bringing the God into the Temple," in *Temples and High Places*, 10–20; and most recently A. Biran, *Biblical Dan* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994) 238–45. The role of the city gate in religious processions and ritual may well be reflected in the words of Ps 24:7, 9: "Lift up your heads, O gates . . . so the king of glory may come in."

<sup>40</sup> The subject has been addressed over the past several decades by Z. Herzog in a series of studies, first in Hebrew (*The City-Gate in Eretz-Israel and Its Neighboring Countries* [Tel-Aviv:

served as independent units (usually separated by a wall), chambers of the Iron Age II opened onto the main passageway. These chambers were either two, four, or six in number,<sup>41</sup> of a large size (in one instance, reaching 9 m in length), and contained benches (often plastered) and stone water basins. Together with adjacent open spaces, usually within but at times outside the gate—in which case there was often another circumvallating wall—these areas fulfilled the many civilian functions noted above.<sup>42</sup> A striking example of a complex gate system may be found at Tel Dan, where three gates (an outer, main, and upper one) were preceded by a paved square, a courtyard, and a royal processional way, respectively. The latter two gates had four sentry rooms each. This whole system was built sometime in the ninth century BCE, presumably by Ahab.<sup>43</sup>

On the basis of the data presented above, it is quite evident that most of the activities that found expression in the synagogue at the end of the Second Temple period are already documented for the city-gate area in biblical times. When these functions were moved from the city gate or adjacent square to a building known as a synagogue is unknown. Presumably, it transpired sometime in the Hellenistic era, when many activities heretofore conducted at the city gate were moved into specific buildings (see below). It therefore may not be coincidental that precisely at this time the architecture of the biblical city-gate complex changed; from a center of urban activity, it was transformed into a simple, functional gate for entrance and exit.

The results of recent and not-so-recent excavations corroborate this change. Traditions that had held sway for centuries were gradually giving way, in part as the result of sustained and intensive contacts with the Hellenistic world.<sup>44</sup> From the data available—and here one must admit that the evidence is

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Tel-Aviv University, 1976]), then in German translation (see n. 38 above), and more recently in summary form ("Settlement and Fortification Planning in the Iron Age," in *The Architecture of Ancient Israel from the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods* [ed. A. Kempinski and R. Reich, Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1992] 265–74). See also E. Stern, "Hazor, Dor and Megiddo in the Time of Ahab and the Assyrian Period" (in Hebrew), *Eretz Israel* 20 (1989) 233–48.

<sup>41</sup> Six-chambered gates have been discovered at Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, Lachish, and Ashdod. Four-chambered gateways were found at Ashdod, Dan, Beersheba, Megiddo, and Dor, while two-chambered gateways have been excavated at Dor and Megiddo. On the controversial question whether there are any chronological implications to the differing numbered chambers, see n. 40 above. On the earlier Mesopotamian gate and its development in the third to first millennia BCE, see M. S. B. Damerji, *The Development of the Architecture of Doors and Gates in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Tokyo: Kokushikan University, 1987) 181–98.

<sup>42</sup> See also *Encyclopaedia Biblica* 8:237–43; and A. Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible: 10,000–586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 467–70.

<sup>43</sup> Biran, *Biblical Dan*, 235–53.

<sup>44</sup> E. Stern, "The Excavations at Tell Mevorakh and the Late Phoenician Elements in the Architecture of Palestine," *BASOR* 225 (1977) 17–27; idem, "The Walls of Dor," *IEJ* 38 (1988):

fragmentary at best—it is clear that Hellenistic gates had no accompanying rooms and probably no adjacent open area or square.<sup>45</sup> Instead, they were usually flanked by round or square towers set at fixed intervals. The gate itself was no more than a passageway between these towers. The change may have been inspired by developments in Greek fortification systems in general, which themselves may have been the result of technological advances in the art of warfare, particularly the introduction of ballistic missiles, catapults, and siege engines.<sup>46</sup>

While third-century BCE Marisa on the southern coastal plain still boasted a square with surrounding buildings adjacent to its gate (an area evidently used for assorted religious, administrative, and military activities),<sup>47</sup> gate areas from other Hellenistic-early Roman sites in Israel reflect a new “Hellenistic” look. So, for example, the gate at Dor changed dramatically, from the casemate wall type, which had been in vogue for five hundred years, to a simpler Hellenistic style, having no adjacent open areas, rooms, or separate buildings. Hellenistic building techniques likewise appear at Dor at this time<sup>48</sup> and are also evidenced in the Hellenistic town of Samaria-Sebaste.<sup>49</sup> In the first century BCE, Herod adopted the regnant Hellenistic pattern of a gate between two towers at Sebaste<sup>50</sup> as well as at Caesarea.<sup>51</sup> Although meagerly preserved, the “Ginat”

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11–14; idem, *Dor, Ruler of the Seas* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994) 206–8; I. Sharon, “The Fortification of Dor and the Transition from the Israeli-Syrian Concept of Defence to the Greek Concept” (in Hebrew), *Qadmoniot* 24/95–96 (1991) 105–13; see also idem, “Local Traditions and the Process of Hellenization and Dor—Archaeological Perceptions” (in Hebrew), in *Twentieth Archaeological Conference in Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1994) 5. See also G. and O. van Beek, “Canaanite-Phoenician Architecture: The Development and Distribution of Two Styles,” *Eretz Israel* 15 (1981) 70\*–77\*.

<sup>45</sup> R. Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine: Settlement Patterns and City Planning, 337–31 B.C.E.* (BAR International Series 485; Oxford: BAR, 1989) 159.

<sup>46</sup> See I. Shatzman, “Ballistra Stones from Tel Dor and the Artillery of the Greco-Roman World” (in Hebrew), *Qadmoniot* 24/95–96 (1991) 94–104; Sharon, “Fortification of Dor,” 105–13; and, more generally, F. E. Winter, *Greek Fortifications* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971) 222–33, 324–32.

<sup>47</sup> M. Avi-Yonah, “Maresha,” *NEAEHL*, 3.948–51. The transitional character of Hellenistic Marisa—with a heavy emphasis on its pre-Hellenistic oriental elements—is argued by G. Horowitz, “Town Planning of Hellenistic Marisa: A Reappraisal of the Excavations after Eighty Years,” *PEQ* 112 (1980) 93–111.

<sup>48</sup> Stern, “Walls of Dor,” 11–14; Sharon, “Fortification of Dor,” 105–13; idem, “Local Traditions,” 5.

<sup>49</sup> J. W. Crowfoot, K. M. Kenyon, and E. L. Sukenik, *The Buildings at Samaria* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1942) 24–27.

<sup>50</sup> Crowfoot, Kenyon, and Sukenik, *Samaria*, 31, 39–41; N. Avigad, “Samaria (City),” *NEAEHL*, 4.1307. For a round Hellenistic tower at Acre, similar to the one found at Samaria, see M. Dothan, “The Fortifications of Ptolemais,” *Qadmoniot* 9/34–35 (1976) 71–74.

<sup>51</sup> A. Frova, ed., *Scavi di Caesarea Maritima* (Rome: Lerma, 1966) 249–71.

gate in Jerusalem discovered by N. Avigad may also reflect a current Hellenistic model.<sup>52</sup>

What may be a fortuitous indication of this transition is found in the building at Gamla, which has been identified as the earliest known synagogue in Judea dating from the turn of the first century CE. This synagogue was located neither in the middle of the town nor on a particularly high spot, as was the case with many village synagogues in the centuries following the destruction of the Temple. Rather, it was situated at the town's eastern edge, next to the city wall and between two main streets, where a city gate undoubtedly existed and where a city-gate area would have been situated had it followed the biblical city plan.<sup>53</sup> Thus, this structure at Gamla may indeed reflect a stage in the transition from city gate to later synagogue building; it seems to have provided the setting for a continuation of the functions performed at the earlier, open city gate, but now these activities were housed in a "synagogue" building.

These data suggest, therefore, that the appearance of the synagogue was not due to any particular dramatic event or crisis. It was a gradual development, where continuity was more prevalent than any major revolutionary change. It is therefore impossible to offer any particular date for this change. All that can be said is that this process was a gradual one that occurred between the third and first centuries BCE.<sup>54</sup>

The Torah-reading ceremony, which was the central religious component of Second Temple synagogue ritual, must have also taken place initially at the city gate. When precisely this custom emerged as a common practice on the local scene is unknown. Although it seems unlikely that it dated back to the time of Ezra, there is simply no way of making this determination. No Greek author of the Hellenistic period nor any of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal

<sup>52</sup> N. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983) 50, 69; see also Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine*, 159.

<sup>53</sup> S. Gutman, "Synagogue at Gamla," 30–34; idem, "Gamala," *NEAEHL* 2.459–63.

<sup>54</sup> The assumption that the synagogue evolved from the biblical city gate may also explain the association of a *hazzan* with this institution—at least as attested in later rabbinic sources. In the ancient Near East the *hazzan* functioned as a city administrator, a chief magistrate or mayor; he is mentioned also in connection with religious functions in early antiquity such as the *hazzanu* of a temple, although this function appears to have been derivative. It is possible that the *hazzan*, who became a fixture in the later synagogal context, had formerly been associated with a village or town (i.e., city-gate) context, but there is no explicit connection between the *hazzan* or *hazzanu* and a gate area. On the *hazzan* in the ancient Near East, see D. Weisberg, *Guild Structure and Political Allegiance in Early Achaemenid Mesopotamia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) 93; S. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (Assyriological Studies 19; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) 55; B. Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel* (2 vols.; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981) 1.289; 2.232 nn. 3864–65. See the entry *hazzanu* in *CAD*, H, 163–65. For an example of the religious dimension of the use of the term, see L. Waterman, *Royal Correspondence of the Assyrian Empire* (4 vols.; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1930) 1.254–55 (Letter 366).

books of the last centuries BCE refer to such a practice. However, such an *argumentum ex silentio* is of limited value. Reference to institutional practices—even those of the Jerusalem Temple—are not all that numerous for the Persian and Hellenistic eras, and it is quite possible that a local practice of reading Torah at the city gate may not have merited comment.

There certainly are enough biblical passages that could have influenced the development of the Torah-reading custom (e.g., Deut 6:7; 31:9–13) or at least could have legitimized it *ex post facto*. Earlier theories have considered the emergence of the Torah-reading ceremony either as a polemic against undesirable foreign influences (Samaritans<sup>55</sup> or Hellenism<sup>56</sup>) or simply, following Deuteronomy, for the purpose of teaching the ordinary Jew about his tradition and religion.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, it has even been suggested that exposure to the Greek world and Greek models may have played some sort of role in crystallizing and strengthening the centrality of the communal Torah-reading ceremony (as may have happened particularly among diaspora Jews).<sup>58</sup>

Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, it has been suggested that the reading of scriptures originally may have been a substitute for (perhaps already in the exilic period?<sup>59</sup>) or, more likely, parallel to the sacrificial cult of the Temple. Indeed, the earliest reference to local Torah-reading ceremonies is that of the *ma'āmādōt*—when a region's priestly representatives officiated in the Temple during their assigned week. According to the Mishna, albeit a rather late source for our purposes but, in this instance, certainly reflecting Second Temple period practice, a portion of scriptures was read publicly in every town on each day of that week: “the ordinary Jews [non-priests and non-Levites] associated with each priestly division would gather in their towns and read [the scriptural section dealing with] the creation story” (Genesis 1–2:4).<sup>60</sup>

This source is valuable to our discussion in three respects: (1) It attests to the early practice of reading the Torah in a local setting.<sup>61</sup> (2) The reading was

<sup>55</sup> A. Büchler, “The Reading of the Law and Prophets in a Triennial Cycle,” *JQR* 5 (1893) 424. Similarly, Büchler regards the Hellenistic decrees referred to by Josephus as reflective of the Jewish-Samaritan controversy of the late Second Temple period; see Büchler's *Die Tobiaden und Oniaden im II. Makkabäerbucho und in der verwandten jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur* (Vienna: A. Hölder, 1899) 143–71.

<sup>56</sup> R. Leszyński, *Die Sadduzäer* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1912) 133ff.

<sup>57</sup> J. Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (reprint; New York: Ktav, 1971) 1.4.

<sup>58</sup> J. Kugel and R. Greer, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) 56.

<sup>59</sup> M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 113.

<sup>60</sup> *M. Ta'an.* 4:2 and comments by C. Albeck, *Six Orders of Mishnah* (in Hebrew) (6 vols.; Tel-Aviv: Bialik, 1958) 2.495–96.

<sup>61</sup> The division into *ma'āmādōt* was already known to the author of Chronicles in the fourth century BCE (1 Chr 24:1–18), and the customs described in the Mishna may well have crystallized

performed by those unable to participate in the Temple worship in Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> (3) A synagogue per se is not mentioned, but a general reference is made to gathering in "towns." Although later renditions of this tradition, as well as most commentators, freely introduce the notion that these scriptural readings took place in the local synagogue,<sup>63</sup> such assumptions are wholly gratuitous. The Mishna mentions only "towns," and given the apparent antiquity of the custom it is describing, a city-gate *Sitz im Leben* is not unlikely. That a more regular reading of the Torah was also conducted at the city gate on sabbaths and holidays at this time is possible but, for the present at least, unverifiable.<sup>64</sup>

Of particular interest in the source cited above is the fact that the local Torah-reading ceremony of the *ma'āmād* was clearly parallel to the Temple ritual, a substitute for those unable to be in Jerusalem. Often, in the past, the emergence or evolution of the synagogue during the Second Temple period has been viewed as a competitive development vis-à-vis the Jerusalem Temple. Many have characterized the synagogue as a "Pharisaic" institution that emerged in response to the Sadducean-run Temple.<sup>65</sup> In fact, however, the

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as early as this period. On this institution generally, see D. Sperber, "Mishmarot and Ma'amadot," *EncJud* 9.89–93; Schürer, *History*, 2.245–50.

<sup>62</sup> On the division into twenty-four courses of priests, Levites, and Israelites, see Schürer, *History*, 2.245ff.; S. Safrai, *Pilgrimage at the Time of the Second Temple* (in Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: 'Am Hasefer, 1965) 217–20; Sperber, "Mishmarot," 89–93. On the formative period of this institution, see also J. Liver, *Chapters in the History of the Priests and Levites* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1968) 33–52, esp. 49–52.

<sup>63</sup> So, e.g., *b. Ta'an.* 27b. See also Albeck, *Mishnah*, 2.341; Schürer, *History*, 2.293.

<sup>64</sup> Many scholars have viewed the *ma'āmādōt* ceremony as the setting in which the synagogue as we know it emerged. See, e.g., Hruby, *Die Synagoge*, 16–17; J. Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969) 9–10; S. Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Judean State* (3 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1962–78) 1.179; J. Petuchowski, "The Liturgy of the Synagogue," in *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy* (ed. J. J. Petuchowski and M. Brocke; New York: Seabury, 1978) 46.

Another early rabbinic tradition that may have a bearing on the status of the city-gate area in the Second Temple period is found in *m. Bik.* 3:2. There the following ritual of bringing firstfruits to the Temple is described: "How do they bring up [to Jerusalem] the firstfruits? All the villages in the [area of the] *ma'āmād* gather together in the *ma'āmād*'s city and lodge in the city square [plaza or gate area—*ברחוב של עיר*] and they would not enter the houses and early in the morning the person in charge would say, 'Let us arise and go up to Zion, to [the house of] the Lord our God' (Jer 31:5)."

<sup>65</sup> The list of scholars making this assumption is long indeed. For a sampling, see R. T. Herford, *The Pharisees* (reprint; Boston: Beacon, 1962) 88–109; R. M. Grant, *A Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963) 274–75; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1.82; idem, *The Pre-Christian Paul* (London: SCM, 1991) 57; J. Gutmann, "Synagogue Origins," 4; P. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986) 353. See, however, A. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Wilmington, DE: M. Glazier, 1988) 52–53; Grabbe, "Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine," 408–9.



Pharisees had little or nothing to do with the early synagogue; there is not one shred of evidence pointing to such a connection. No references associate the early Pharisees (the “Pairs”) with the synagogue, and there is nothing in early synagogue liturgy that is particularly Pharisaic. The synagogue functioned on a local, at times even *landsmannschaftlich* level (Acts 6:9; *t. Meg.* 2.17), and its religious activities were complementary to those of the Temple.

Likewise, viewing the synagogue in any way as a rival of the Temple is unfounded. Several sources in fact indicate the prominence of priests in a synagogue setting.<sup>66</sup> We could assume, of course, that such priests were renegades of their “natural” priestly Temple setting; however, it is more likely that there was no inherent conflict between these institutions and that priestly participation and leadership simply reflected their role as religious and communal leaders generally at the time. Finally, there is no evidence that the synagogue—even as late as the first century CE—was anything more than a community center; it was not endowed with any special sanctity or halakic importance that we know of.<sup>67</sup>

Early evidence connecting the judicial process at the city gate with the synagogue may be found in the book of Susannah. The focus of this story is a town meeting, attended by the elders and townspeople alike, for the purpose of adjudication. According to the Septuagint version; the trial took place in “the synagogue” (συναγωγή); the revised version of Theodotion simply states that “the people assembled.”<sup>68</sup> Scholars generally regard the Septuagint tradition as older and assume that it had a Semitic *Vorlage* of Palestinian provenience and was composed in the Persian or, more likely, Hellenistic period.<sup>69</sup> Thus, we may well have here an early attestation of the term “synagogue” referring to a separate building.<sup>70</sup>

A very different approach is adopted by P. V. M. Flesher, who maintains the basic dichotomy of Temple–synagogue as the above-noted Pharisaic proponents, but from a very different perspective; see his “Palestinian Synagogues before 70 C.E.: A Review of the Evidence,” in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* (ed. J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 67–81.

<sup>66</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief—66 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM, 1992) 170–82.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. S. J. D. Cohen, “The Temple and the Synagogue,” in *The Temple in Antiquity* (ed. T. Madsen; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1984) 151–74.

<sup>68</sup> R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (reprint; 2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1963) 1.649; C. A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions* (AB 44; New York: Doubleday, 1977) 101–4.

<sup>69</sup> G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (London: SCM, 1981) 25–26; Moore, *Daniel*, 91–92.

<sup>70</sup> The reference in Matt 6:5 to those who “pray in the synagogues and on the street corners” is intriguing. The use of a synagogue or, alternatively, the street corner, as a place of worship may reflect a stage of development between the city-gate era and that of organized, “housed” places of worship, where both locales were being utilized. Then again, the passage may only refer to private prayers.

The suggestion to date the city gate–synagogue building transition to the Hellenistic period may find indirect confirmation in other literary sources as well. Our argument here unfortunately, but of necessity, rests heavily on the absence of evidence, but it is worth making in any case. Had a synagogue building been a known and recognizable phenomenon in Palestinian Jewish life, one might well have expected it to be mentioned in the many works of the third and second centuries BCE.<sup>71</sup> Despite the numerous references to Jewish elites and religious institutions of his day, Ben Sira makes no mention of it. We might also have expected 1 and 2 Maccabees to have noted the impact of Antiochus's persecution on the functioning of the synagogue, had it existed; they do not. Purity laws, circumcision, the sabbath, festivals, and *kašrūt*, and, of course, the Temple, are all mentioned; not a word is said about the synagogue (1 Macc 1:41–64; 2 Maccabees 6). Compare this silence to first-century CE pogroms and anti-Jewish incidents, when the synagogue featured prominently in the writings of both Josephus and Philo.

The same silence exists with regard to the books of Tobit and *Jubilees*, the *Letter to Aristeas*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *Enoch*, and others. The synagogue as a place of worship or as a central institution in Jewish life is nowhere to be detected. Non-Jewish writers who describe the Jewish scene—particularly its religious component—in the third and second centuries BCE lack all reference to such an institution as well.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, when the word “synagogue” does, in fact, appear in late-second-century BCE works, it refers to a group of people, an assembly of Hasidim or pietists (συναγωγή Ασιδαίων, 1 Macc 2:42), an assembly of scribes (συναγωγή γραμματέων, 1 Macc 7:12), or the large “national” assembly of 141 BCE (ἐπὶ συναγωγῆς μεγάλης), which acclaimed Simon the Maccabee as ruler in 141 (1 Macc 14:28). In the Septuagint the term invariably refers to a congregation as a whole and not a meeting place.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the absence of any specific mention of a synagogue in second-

<sup>71</sup> For the literature dating to this period, see Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 71–160; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1.110ff.; M. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984).

<sup>72</sup> A point already noted on numerous occasions during the previous two centuries, at the very least from the time of G. L. Bauer, *Beschreibung der gottesdienstlichen Verfassung der alten Hebräer* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Weyand, 1805–1806) 2.125ff. The interpretation of Ps 74:8 (“they have burned all the assembly places of God”) as a reference to the destruction of synagogues during the Antiochan persecutions (of late, see J. Goldstein, *1 Maccabees* [AB 41; New York: Doubleday, 1976] 138 n. 208) is hardly accepted today.

<sup>73</sup> See “Synagogue,” *TDNT* 8.805. It may be precisely for this reason, that is, the association in Second Temple literature of the word “synagogue” with congregation, that the word became applied to a building that housed communal activities. That the synagogue building belonged to the community as a whole is clearly attested in early rabbinic tradition; see n. 75 below, as well as *t. B. Meš.* 11.23 (Lieberman 125); S. Lieberman, *Tosephta Ki-fshuta* (10 vols.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955–88) 9.320.

and first-century literary works would seem to indicate that the institution had not fully crystallized by this time and that, in any case, it was not viewed pre-eminently as a religious institution.

If there is merit to our hypothesis regarding the origin and early development of the synagogue, then we may conclude that this institution crystallized as a result of a confluence of factors. On the one hand, the original setting of this institution was well rooted in biblical society. City gates with their manifold functions existed throughout Palestine and other Near Eastern settings for centuries, if not millennia. In this regard, the Jews simply adopted existing models. On the other hand, the move to a separate building in place of the previous open-air setting was a well-known phenomenon of the Hellenistic age. Greek, and subsequently Hellenistic, tradition enveloped a variety of activities in either open-air or enclosed structures. Stoa became regular adjuncts of the agora and gymnasia, city councils met in a bouleuterion (of one form or another), and an ecclesiasterion served larger gatherings of citizens. Colonnades were introduced as standard features of Hellenistic streets, while the theater, hippodrome, and stadium provided an architectural framework for performances and competitions.<sup>74</sup> Thus, with the move from the city-gate area into a separate building, the Jews were patterning themselves after Hellenistic models; thus, the institution known as the synagogue was born.

Nevertheless, for all its borrowing, the synagogue was unique in its religious form of expression. Neither sacrifices nor idols nor ritual processions held sway, but rather the reading and study of scriptures. While the early synagogue may have been first and foremost a communal framework, it also had a religious component in which a unique Jewish stamp was clearly in evidence.

The city-gate setting as the precursor of the synagogue would likewise account for the early development of the Egyptian *proseuchē* and the considerable influence, for example, of Ptolemaic models on these local institutions. The Jews who settled in Egypt and elsewhere had no unique framework for communal activities, which in Judea had taken place at the city-gate. Thus, in adapting to a new environment and in seeking a setting for their communal functions, the Jews looked to the surrounding cultures for suitable frameworks and were, in turn, heavily influenced by contemporary models.

### *Beyond 70 CE: Continuity and Change*

It has sometimes been claimed that the ancient synagogue was a product of the post-70 era.<sup>75</sup> At first glance, such a claim appears strange, particularly in

<sup>74</sup> A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (4th ed.; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 332–74.

<sup>75</sup> See S. Zeitlin, "The Tefillah, the Shemoneh Esreh: An Historical Study of the First Canonization of the Hebrew Liturgy," *JQR* 54 (1963–64) 208–49; S. Hoening, "The Supposititious Temple

light of the evidence and the approach presented above. Taken simply and plainly, such a statement is patently wrong. Nevertheless, if there is a kernel of truth to this assertion, it lies in the fact that the synagogue did, in fact, undergo a number of major transformations after the destruction of the Temple. While the later institution in some ways resembled its Second-Temple-period predecessor, in others it was a significantly different institution.

The first distinctive feature, on the one hand, is that the synagogue of Roman Palestine continued to function as a communal institution par excellence. Rabbinic literature makes it eminently clear that the synagogue, in fact, belonged to the community; members of the town (בני העיר) managed its affairs (purchase, sale, etc.) and also hired and fired its officers.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the activities that took place in the synagogue of late antiquity (study, law courts, meals, charity, hostelry, etc.) were identical to those conducted in the pre-70 synagogue.<sup>77</sup> The synagogue continued to serve as an assembly place for the community for both urgent matters (*t. Ohol.* 4.2 [Zuckermann 600]) and for discussing issues of concern at regularly scheduled meetings on sabbaths and holidays (*b. Šabb.* 150a).

On the other hand, a second but distinctive feature of the post-70 Palestinian synagogue was its rapidly developing prayer liturgy. While there was a continuation of predestruction religious practices—that is, the reading of the Torah and its accompanying activities<sup>78</sup>—there was also dramatic development in the introduction of public communal prayer. The degree of standardization of the two central prayers in Jewish liturgy, the *Amidah* and the *Shema* with its

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Synagogue," *JQR* 54 (1963) 115–31; Kee, "Transformation of the Synagogue," 1–24; idem, "Early Christianity in the Galilee," 10; see also Oster, "Supposed Anachronism," 178–208.

<sup>76</sup> *M. Ned.* 5:5; *t. B. Meš.* 11.23 (Lieberman 125); *y. Meg.* 3.2.74c; 4.4.75b; *y. Yebam.* 12.13a; *Gen. Rab.* 81.1 (Theodor-Albeck 969–72).

<sup>77</sup> See my forthcoming *Ancient Synagogue*, as well as Safrai, "Communal Functions," 105–23.

<sup>78</sup> One activity that is more difficult to assess for the period before 70 is the recitation of the targum. There is no doubt that in the second century CE, according to the Mishna and the Tosefta, targumic activity was central to the Torah-reading ceremony, and we may assume that this activity was a continuation of what took place before the destruction of the Temple. But the truth of the matter is that we have little evidence for the existence of such translations except for a number of Qumran manuscripts. Nevertheless, it is difficult to believe that all the laws and rulings appearing in tannaïtic literature stem solely from the second century. It may therefore be assumed that the targum of the Torah found expression in the synagogue setting while the Second Temple was still standing. See M. McNamara, "Targums," *IDBSup.* 857–61; A. D. York, "The Dating of Targumic Literature," *JSJ* 5 (1974) 49–62; L. Smolar et al., eds., *Studies in Targum Jonathan to the Prophets* (New York: Ktav, 1983) XII–XIX; R. le Déaut, "The Targumim," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism* (2 vols.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 1989) 2.563ff.; P. S. Alexander, "Jewish Aramaic Translation of Hebrew Scriptures," in *Mikra* (ed. J. J. Mulder; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988) 247ff.

accompanying blessings, in the Yavnean period has engaged scholars since the nineteenth century. Most have opted for a middle-of-the-road position, claiming that some sort of public prayer had previously existed and that Rabban Gamaliel and his colleagues may have added some material during the editing process. What the nature of these prayers was beforehand and what exactly was his contribution to the process have never been agreed upon.<sup>79</sup> It has also been widely accepted over the last several decades, following J. Heinemann, L. Hoffman, S. Reif, and others, that the process of standardizing the liturgy into a relatively uniform text was long and complex, reaching its culmination only at the end of late antiquity or in the early Middle Ages.<sup>80</sup>

A third feature of the post-70 synagogue was its increasingly religious profile. If in its initial stages, as we have seen, the synagogue was primarily a communal institution that included liturgical functions, the religious component claimed a more dominant role in late antiquity.<sup>81</sup> Several second-century rabbinic sources allude to the sanctity of the synagogue by comparing it, *inter alia*, to the Jerusalem Temple;<sup>82</sup> other evidence is reflected in synagogue architecture from the third century onward, that is, the orientation of the building<sup>83</sup> and the presence of a Torah shrine with its sacred Torah scrolls.<sup>84</sup> That the syna-

<sup>79</sup> I. Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993) 37ff., 187ff.; J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977). Recent treatments of this question include N. Cohen, "Shim'on Hapaquli Fixed Eighteen Blessings" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 52 (1983) 547–56; E. Fleischer, "The History of Compulsory Prayer" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 59 (1990) 397–441; T. Zahavy, *Studies in Jewish Prayer* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990); S. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 53–87; and finally E. Fleischer, "Rejoinder to Dr. Reif's Remarks" (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 60 (1991) 685.

<sup>80</sup> See preceding note; and L. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 107.

<sup>81</sup> L. I. Levine, "The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, 201–21; *idem*, "From Community Center to a 'Miniature' Sanctuary: The Furnishings and Interior of the Ancient Synagogue" (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 60 (1991) 36–84; Z. Safrai, "From the Synagogue to 'Little Temple,'" in *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, B/II (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1990) 23–28.

<sup>82</sup> Cf., e.g., *m. Meg.* 3:2; J. Branham, "Sacred Space under Erasure in Ancient Synagogues and Churches," *The Art Bulletin* 74 (1992) 375–94; *idem*, "Vicarious Sacrality: Temple Space in Ancient Synagogues," in *New Perspectives on Ancient Synagogues* (ed. P. Flesher and D. Urman; Leiden: Brill, 1994) 1–27.

<sup>83</sup> F. Landsberger, "The Sacred Direction in Synagogue and Church," *HUCA* 28 (1959) 181–203.

<sup>84</sup> R. Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Land of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1988) 141ff. For literary evidence of these developments, see, e.g., *m. Meg.* 3:1–3; *t. Ber.* 3.15–16 (Lieberman 15–16).

Diaspora synagogues appear to have acquired this holy dimension at an earlier period, even prior to the year 70. See, e.g., with regard to Hellenistic Egypt, A. Kasher, "Synagogues as 'Houses

gogue began to be perceived as a holy place is shown by the following: (1) inscriptions referring to the building as a sacred place—*מזרח קדישא* (Beth Shean, Tiberias, Kefar Hananya, and Na'aran),<sup>85</sup> ἅγιος τόπος (Ashkelon and Gaza)<sup>86</sup> or ἁγίολ[τατος] τόπος (Gerasa);<sup>87</sup> and (2) depictions on mosaic floors of sacred religious objects such as the menorah, Torah ark, shofar, lulav and ethrog, or biblical figures and scenes such as the binding of Isaac.<sup>88</sup> *Targum Jonathan*, which was compiled in large part during late antiquity, uses the phrase *מקדשא דבין קודשא*, which probably refers to the synagogue.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, in *Targum Jonathan* to Lev 26:2 the word *מקדשיכון* is usually interpreted as “your synagogues.”<sup>90</sup>

As part of this process, during the course of late antiquity the synagogue became increasingly associated with the Jerusalem Temple—a *מקדש מעט*—a miniature or small sanctuary, in the words of the third-century R. Isaac (*b. Meg.* 29a). Moreover, from the third century to the seventh, a number of customs perpetuating the memory of the Jerusalem Temple were adopted.<sup>91</sup>

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of Prayer' and 'Holy Places' among the Jewish Communities of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt," in *Synagogues in Antiquity*, 119–32; perhaps the diaspora synagogue, which had already attained sacred status and had already integrated public prayer into its liturgy (to wit, the name *proseuchē*), influenced, in one form or another, its Palestinian counterpart. See, e.g., Josephus, *J.W.* 7 §45; *Ant.* 14 §258; 16 §164; Philo, *Flaccus* 48; *t. Sukk.* 4.5 (Lieberman 173).

<sup>85</sup> J. Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1978) 34, 48, 77, 95.

<sup>86</sup> Roth-Gerson, *Greek Inscriptions*, 25, 101.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 46. See also the references to the “holy congregation” (*קהילה קדישה*) at Jericho and Susiya (Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 104, 123) or to the “holy *havurah*” (*חבורה קדישה*) at Beth Shean (*ibid.*, 77), the latter perhaps referring to a scholarly rabbinic circle. See M. Beer, “On the *Havura* in Eretz Israel in the Amoraic Period” (in Hebrew) *Zion* 47 (1982) 178–85; *idem*, “On the *Hevraya*: On the World of the Palestinian Yeshivot in the Third and Fourth Centuries” (in Hebrew), *Annual of Bar-Ilan University—Studies in Judaica and Humanities* 20–21 (1983) 76–95.

<sup>88</sup> Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology*, 234ff.

<sup>89</sup> A. Shinan, “The Aramaic Targum as a Mirror of Galilean Jewry,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, 248–50; *idem*, *The Embroidered Targum—The Aggadah in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993) 113–15.

<sup>90</sup> See Levine, “The Sages and the Synagogue,” 217, and references cited there. The synagogue also merited the status of a recognized religious institution in Roman legislation of the fourth century. In a law from ca. 370 CE, promulgated by Valentinian I, the synagogue is referred to as a *religionum loca*, and it was therefore forbidden for soldiers to seize its quarters or confiscate the property therein. See A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987) 161–63.

<sup>91</sup> We have already noted the emphasis on the synagogue's orientation toward Jerusalem in all types of synagogues from the third century onward. Synagogue worshipers were similarly reminded of Jerusalem and its Temple through the reading of the *maftir* for festivals from the Order of Sacrifices as set forth in Numbers 28–29; the recitation of the ‘*Avodah* service (the Yom Kippur Temple ritual), and the standardization of the sabbath and festival additional (*Mussaf*) prayers, focus on sacrifices once offered on these occasions. See Elbogen, *Prayer in Israel*, 97–99;

What brought about these last-mentioned changes regarding the status of the synagogue? Undoubtedly, the events of the year 70—the destruction of the Temple and the vacuum created in its wake—had a significant influence on the status of the later Palestinian synagogue.<sup>92</sup> However, it is also likely that the rise of Christianity and its penetration into fourth-century Palestine, with emphasis on the sanctity of church buildings and other religious sites, were additional factors that stimulated Jews to define their place of worship more sharply in terms of a “holy” institution, a “small sanctuary.” The Jews clearly borrowed terminology and concepts from the Byzantine Christian world in emphasizing the sanctity of their institution, as they were concurrently doing with respect to the architectural and artistic components of their synagogue.<sup>93</sup>

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J. Hoffman, “The Surprising History of the Musaf ‘Amidah,” *Conservative Judaism* 42 (1989) 41–45.

Memories of the Temple priesthood have found expression on stone plaques affixed to synagogue walls. Fragments of such plaques, discovered in Ascalon, Caesarea, Kissufim, Yemen, and most recently in Nazareth, list the twenty-four priestly courses who once served in the Temple, as well as their places of residence of their “clans” in the Galilee. See the following: *Ashkelon*: E. L. Sukenik, “Three Ancient Jewish Inscriptions from Palestine” (in Hebrew), Supplement to *Zion* 1 (1926) 16–17; and Frey, *CII* 2.#962; *Caesarea*: M. Avi-Yonah, “The Caesarea Inscription of the 24 Priestly Courses” (in Hebrew), *Eretz Israel* 7 (1964) 24–28; *Kissufim*: Z. Ilan, “A Broken Slab Containing the Names of the Twenty-four Priestly Courses Discovered in the Vicinity of Kissufim” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 43 (1974) 225–26; *Yemen*: R. Degen, “An Inscription of the Twenty-Four Priestly Courses from Yemen” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 42 (1973) 302–4; and, in general, see Naveh, *On Stone and Mosaic*, 87–92, 140–43; *Nazareth*: H. Eshel, “Fragment of an Inscription of the Twenty-four Priestly Courses from Nazareth” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 61 (1993) 159–61.

At the same time, early liturgical poets (*paytanim*) wrote about the Temple and priestly worship in compositions commemorating the Ninth of Ab for recitation in the synagogue setting. See, e.g., Z. M. Rabinowitz, *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai* (in Hebrew), (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1987) 300–342; E. Fleischer, “Regarding the (Priestly) Courses in Piyutim” (in Hebrew), *Sinai* 62 (1968) 142ff.; idem, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1975) 202–6.

<sup>92</sup> See my comments in “From Community Center to a ‘Miniature’ Sanctuary,” 79–84. This subject is meticulously treated in the doctoral thesis by S. Fine, “Synagogue and Sanctity: The Late-Antique Synagogue as a Holy Place” (Hebrew University, 1994).

<sup>93</sup> R. A. Markus, “How on Earth Could Places Become Holy? Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994) 257–71. Influences of the Byzantine church on the synagogue are discussed by Y. Tsafir, “The Byzantine Setting and Its Influence on Ancient Synagogues,” in *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, 147–57; idem, *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest*, vol. 2: *Archaeology and Art* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1984) 165–89, 285–300; Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology*, 143–92; G. Foerster, “Decorated Marble Chancel Screens in Sixth Century Synagogues in Palestine and their Relation to Christian Art and Architecture,” in *Actes du XI<sup>e</sup> Congrès Internationale d’archéologie chrétienne* (Rome: École Française, 1989) 1809–20. See also A. Ovadia, “Mutual Influences of Synagogues and Churches in Byzantine Palestine” (in Hebrew), in *Between Hermon and Sinai* (ed. M. Broshi; Jerusalem: Yedidim, 1977) 163–70. See also G. Stroumsa, “Religious Contacts in Byzantine Palestine,” *Numen* 36 (1989) 21ff.

Thus, in the post-70 era the synagogue's communal dimension remained basic and central while significant changes took place in its religious dimension. These changes appear to have transpired over several centuries. While developments in the status of the Palestinian synagogue were already discernible in rabbinic discussions from the Yavnean and Ushan periods (i.e., late first and second centuries CE), an even stronger and more distinct stamp of sanctity and the forging of a clearly recognizable tie between the Temple and synagogue were evident only from the third century on. They came at a time when Jewish settlement in Palestine was being challenged by an emerging church: the Jewish people seem to have found in their memories of the Temple—its customs, symbols, and practices—religious, national, and psychological reinforcements deemed necessary for coping with their new reality.