6-1-1956

The Synagogue as the Center of the Sabbath Worship at the Time of Christ

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THE SYNAGOGUE AS THE CENTER OF THE SABBATH WORSHIP AT THE TIME OF CHRIST

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

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by

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June 1956

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The question which the writer has posed and has endeavored in some degree to answer in this study is: What was the synagogue like as a house of worship at the time of Christ? By way of shedding light on this question the study includes a brief survey of the origin and historical development of the synagogue, an examination of synagogue architecture in the early centuries of the common era, and a study of the Sabbath worship service as it probably took place at the time of Christ. The writer is fully aware that for want of exact historical and archaeological evidence much of the material presented herein is in the area of theory or conjecture. As much as possible the writer has endeavored in such instances to give all or at least most of the more acceptable opinions involved.

This study is not intended to present the synagogue in its many sided services to the Jewish people at the time of Jesus Christ. The writer recognizes that the synagogue at that time was not only the center of worship for the people, but an important educational and communal agency as well. This paper will, however, be confined to a study of the synagogue as the house of worship, with exclusive emphasis on the Sabbath morning worship observance.

It should hardly be necessary to stress the value of such a study for the Christian teacher, whether lay or professional. One need only recall that the synagogue was the house of worship for our Lord while on earth, for the disciples and apostles, and for most of the first

century Christians. It can be truly said that Christianity spent its early years within the walls of the synagogue. As a result the synagogue is referred to some twenty or more times in the Acts and Epistles. An understanding of the synagogue as it was at that time is vital to a full understanding of much of the New Testament.

In presenting the material of this paper the writer in as many instances, as it was deemed helpful and advisable, included the original Hebrew designations for the various aspects of the architecture and liturgy. It should be noted, however, that due to the many different methods of transliterating Hebrew into English the transliterations of the various authorities frequently do not agree. In general the writer followed the practice of using that transliteration which was most generally found and yet remained closest to a phonetic reproduction.

In regard to the Talmudic sources which are frequently cited the following ought be noted. Where the word "Jerusalem" does not precede the reference, it is always taken from the Babylonian Talmud. Where it does precede, it is taken from the Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud.

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to Rabbi Jacob H. Nagur of Brith Sholom Congregation and Rabbi Ferdinand Isserman and his staff of the Temple Israel Congregation for their generous cooperation in furnishing material for this study.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYNAGOGUE

As is the case with so many of the world's prominent institutions, the setting in which the seeds of the synagogue were sown has long since become obscure. Jewish and Christian scholarship for centuries has sought to determine the origin of the synagogue. Basically there are three theories that attempt to determine the setting in history that gave it birth. The first theory asserts that the synagogue was already an established institution before the Babylonian Exile, perhaps as early as the time of the Patriarchs. The second places its birth during the period of the Exile itself. The third theory proposes that the synagogue did not enjoy a distinct existence until the post-exilic time of the Men of the Great Synagogue and thereafter in the repossessed land of Palestine. Since the question of origin and early historical development has considerable importance in determining what the synagogue was at the time of Christ and why it was as it was, some consideration must be given to the three theories of origin.

The Pre-Exilic Development of the Synagogue

The general Talmudic view is that the synagogue dates back to Moses, the Patriarchs, or to an even earlier period. According to Edersheim, in Talmudic literature "the introduction of morning, mid-day, and afternoon prayers is respectively ascribed to Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob."[1] The Targum of Onkelos on Genesis 25:27 states that Jacob served in a בית אולפנא, that is, in a house of instruction.[2] This is reflected in the Targum Ps.-Jon. on the same passage in Genesis.[3] In the Targum Jerusalem I on Genesis 33:17 it is written that Jacob built a house of teaching (בית מדרשא). However, that these references refer to the synagogue is doubtful. Schuerer, referring to the cited Targum references, says: "In neither case is a synagogue [sic.] proper intended."[4]

In the Babylonian Talmud,[5] and in the Palestine or Jerusalem Talmud[6] as well, the services of the synagogue are traced to the time of Moses. Josephus, referring to Moses and his leadership in the wilderness, wrote:

> For he did not suffer the guilt of ignorance to go on without punishment, but demonstrated the law to be the best and most necessary instruction of all others, permitting the people to leave off their other employments, and to assemble together for the hearing of the law, and learning it exactly, and this not once or twice, or oftener, but every week.[7]

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[1]Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), I, 431.

[2]Emil Schuerer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1890), XXIII, 55.

[3]Edersheim, loc. cit.

[4]Schuerer, loc. cit.

[5]Kama 82a.

[6]Jerusalem Megillah 75a.

[7]Josephus, Contra Apionem, II, 18.

From this it would appear that Josephus viewed the synagogue as having had its origin at the time of Moses although he does not expressly ascribe to these assemblages the title of synagogue. Philo, also, concurred in tracing the institution back to Moses.[8]

The word "synagogue" does not occur at all in the Biblical account of the Patriarchs and of Moses. In fact the word is found only once in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament, and that in Psalm 74:8 which reads: "They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land." Concerning this passage Edersheim says:

> The term rendered 'Synagogue' in the A.V. has never been used in that sense. The solution of the difficulty here comes to us from the LXX. Their rendering, καταπαύσωμεν (let us make to cease), shows that in their Hebrew MSS. they read שַׁבְּתוֹ. If so, then the ו probably belonged to the next word, and the text read: שַׁבָּת וְכָל־מוֹעֲדֵי־אֵל 'Let us suppress altogether—the Sabbath and all the festive seasons in the land.'[9]

It is evident that the Jewish authorities of the Talmudic period in ascribing the synagogue to the time of Moses and before regarded the synagogue as an essential element of the religious institutions of Judaism. To them no period of the history of Israel was conceivable without it. Whether the synagogue can on the basis of accurate historical evidence be assigned to such an early period of Jewish history is another matter. Schuerer concludes: "The utter absence of testimony

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[8]Schuerer, loc. cit.

[9]Edersheim, loc. cit.

forbids our thinking of a pre-exilian origin."[10] H. E. Dana dismisses the matter briefly: "There is a tradition among the Jews that it was established by Moses, but of course this was incorrect."[11] Even among modern Jewish historians there are few who still hold to the theory of pre-exilic origin. This is typified by the statement of S. W. Baron: "The general talmudic view that the synagogue dates back to Moses, the patriarchs, or to an even earlier period, is evidently unhistorical."[12]

Development of the Synagogue During the Babylonian Exile

By far the great majority of modern authorities see the birthplace of the synagogue in the Babylonian Exile. During this time the Jewish exiles were suddenly and forcibly bereft of the focal point for their entire religious worship, the Temple at Jerusalem. No longer were the daily sacrifices offered by the Temple priesthood for the sins of the people. No longer did the smell of burning incense from the Temple-court assure the people that their prayers were being sent continually heavenward. No longer did pilgrims at festival times crowd the highways that led to Jerusalem. No longer could they approach the House of their God with psalms on their lips and sacrifices on their backs. The captives were deprived of what had been the chief external support of their religion--the Temple. R. T. Herford conjectures as follows:

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[10]Schuerer, loc. cit.

[11]H. E. Dana, The New Testament World (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1937), p. 108.

[12]Salo Wittmayer Baron, The Jewish Community (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), III, 10.

> The question could not fail to present itself to the minds of the more devout amongst them, what was to become of their religion? There is no record of what they did, nor indeed any probability that as a community the captives either could or did take any steps to answer the question forced upon them. But it seems very natural to suppose that here and there a few would meet together from time to time, neighbors and friends who had known each other in the old homeland, and would encourage and comfort one another under their present affliction. This is enough to account for what may be called the germ of the Synagogue--the occasional meeting of groups of people for religious purposes.[13]

G. F. Moore, also admitting that conclusive evidence is absent, surmises that the exiled Jews soon began gathering in small groups on the sabbaths and at the times of the old seasonal feasts or on fast days, "to confirm one another in fidelity to their religion in the midst of heathenism, and encourage themselves in the hope of restoration."[14] In such gatherings we may imagine them listening to the words of a living prophet, perhaps, like Ezekiel, or reading the words of older prophets; confessing the sins which had brought this judgment upon the nation and beseeching the return of God's favor in penitential prayers, perhaps in the poetical form of the Psalter or the Book of Lamentations. Baron envisions that the first synagogal assemblies took place as follows:

> Following an apparently old custom (II Kings 4:23), some of these leaders that is, the exiled elders, priests and prophets enumerated in Jeremiah 29:1 began gathering on Sabbaths and holidays in the house of the leading prophet, Ezekiel, and apart from listening to his discourses, took counsel in all matters of communal concern. In one of these momentous gatherings it was decided to abstain from resurrecting on Babylonian soil the sacrificial

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[13]Robert T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924), pp. 89-90.

[14]George Foot Moore, Judaism: In the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), I, 283.

> worship of the Temple[15] . . . . the rebuilding of which in the near future they proclaimed as both a hope and a program.[16]

Moore believes that such early synagogal gatherings are referred to in Ezekiel 8,14 and 20 where Ezekiel is shown speaking to "certain of the elders of Israel" as they sat before him in his home.[17]

The main worship emphasis was necessarily changed from one of sacrifice to one of prayer, recitation of the traditional and new psalms and exposition by prophet or elder.[18]

> Prayer now took the place of their morning and evening 'sacrifice', their morning and evening 'incense;' now for the first time we hear of men kneeling upon their knees three times a day praying and making supplication before God. Now for the first time assemblies of prayer and lamentation and praise . . . .[19]

Since there apparently existed no real central agency or authority to influence local gatherings, each locality or family or group probably chose its own prayers and passages for recitation and adopted its own ritual grounded in local practices or family reminiscences.

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[15]The Deuteronomic centralization of worship had not definitely settled the matter for the diaspora communities apart from the obvious existence of a number of *bamot* right up to the time of the Captivity. It is significant that even after the captivity there was apparently no discouragement in the rebuilding of the Temple in Elephantine even though it was restricted to meat offerings and incense. Cf. *Ibid.*, I, 60.

[16]*Ibid.*, I, 59-60.

[17]*Ibid.*, I, 283.

[18]Baron, *loc. cit.*, III, 60.

[19]Arthur P. Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, 35-36.

As already mentioned the Old Testament in the Authorized Version uses the word "synagogue" only once[20] and there as demonstrated above, it is a dubious translation. The word does not occur in Ezekiel and Daniel, the books of the Exile. The LXX does, however, translate the Hebrew עֵדָה in most instances with the Greek συναγωγή. In this regard Baron writes:

> The new type of religious gathering came to be called 'edah, in contrast to the predominantly secular pre-exilic assembly, the kahal. The former term, used with predilection by exilic writers of the Old Testament is correctly translated in the Septuagint by the word συναγωγή.[21]

This distinction, however, is not substantiated by the usage of these two words in the Old Testament. Although the term עֵדָה occurs 169 times in the Old Testament, it occurs only three or four times in books written during or after the Exile, and these references are only in psalms whose dating is uncertain. If any significance at all could be laid on the usage of the two terms, the Old Testament would rather support the opposite distinction. For, of the 123 times that קָהָל is used at least twenty-six of these references are in the exilic and post-exilic portions. That any of the references to "assembly," "congregation," or "company" in the exilic books of Ezekiel and Daniel actually refer to the synagogue is completely uncertain and will perhaps never be definitely established. Among these uncertain references to the synagogue in the Biblical literature of the exile are the refer-

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[20] Supra, p. 5.

[21] Baron, op. cit., I, 61.

ences to gathering on the river banks. Abram Sachar identifies the gatherings "by the rivers of Babylon" (Psalm 137:1), "on the banks of Ulai" (Daniel 8:16), and "by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel" (Daniel 10:4), with the exilic institution of the synagogue. He points out that the reason the synagogue assemblies convened on the river banks was to provide water for the rites of purification as the brazen laver had done in the Temple Courts.[22] Archeological investigations have uncovered synagogues near rivers which were built in the diaspora following 70 A.D.,[23] but whether these references in the Exile are to synagogue gatherings it is impossible to determine positively. Another effort to find references to the synagogue in the exilic portions of Scripture is that of the Talmudic rabbis in identifying the "little sanctuary" of Ezekiel 11:16 with the synagogue.[24]

Although substantial historical proof is absent, it is generally the view of historians today including most Jewish historians consulted by this writer that at least the seeds for the institution of the synagogue were sown in the Exile. But although the practice of assembling for a type of synagogal worship seems to have begun in Babylon, it is doubtful that at this early date there were erected any sort of special buildings to house these assemblies.

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[22]Stanley, loc. cit.

[23]Infra, pp. 25f.

[24]Megillah 29a.

Development of the Synagogue in the Early Post-Exilic Period in Palestine

It has been suggested that a parallel development of the synagogue occured in Palestine during the Exile among those left behind. It is assumed that the faithful among those who remained in Palestine continued to gather at the sites of their former local sanctuaries[25] under the leadership of the former priests of these shrines.[26] When the exiles began to return to their Palestinian homeland after 536 B.C. it seems that they also brought the custom of meeting together for prayer and mutual comfort and admonition. As Herford points out, however, the development of regular synagogues was still not an immediate occurance:

> I am by no means suggesting that regular synagogues were at once established by the returning exiles on their arrival, but only that the habit of meeting for worship and instruction begun in the Exile, was not wholly forgotten in the recovered homeland, and had sufficient vitality to take root and grow there.[27]

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[25] Those sanctuaries that had been abolished by Josiah in his reform of 621 B.C.

[26] Peter Blake, editor, An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), p. 24.

[27] The Talmud speaks of one hundred-twenty elders and prophets making up the Great Synagogue. Cf. Samuel J. Levinson, The Great Synagogue in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isaac Landman, et al. (New York: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., 1943), X, 132.

There were two influences during the pre-Christian era, one in the early post exilic period and one later, significant in giving the synagogue a definitive character. These were two important groups of religious leaders that appeared on the Jewish religious scene. One is known to us as the Great Synagogue, or Men of the Great Synagogue, and the other is the group that came to be known as the Pharisees.

The Influence of the Men of the Great Synagogue

Not a great deal is actually known about the Keneseth Hagedolah, or Great Synagogue, also often referred to as the Anshe Keneseth Hagedolah, or Men of the Great Synagogue. Solomon Golub has this to say:

> We do not know of how many members it consisted originally. In a short time it must have been limited to seventy,[28] in accordance with the number of elders chosen by Moses. We do not know what the qualifications for membership were. We imagine it must have included the heads of the clans.[29]

Herford on the basis of a passage in the Midrash identifies the members of the Great Synagogue with the Sopherim that developed from Ezra.[30] Levinson says: "The Great Synagogue is said to have been composed of the elders and prophets who came back from the Babylonian Captivity . . . ."[31] Levinson in the same reference identifies the Great Syna-

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[28]Jacob Solomon Golub, In the Days of the Second Temple (Cincinnati: Department of Synagogue and School Extension of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1929), pp. 47-48.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Herford, op. cit., p. 22.

[31]Levinson, loc. cit.

gogue with the assembly convened by Nehemiah.[32] Regardless of who the members of the Great Synagogue were and what the size of the body was, there are certain things known of this group and its work which are founded on quite reliable sources. The group was not a synagogue in the proper sense of the word. It was rather an assembly or convention much like the later Sanhedrin.[33] But this group did play a considerable part in the development of the synagogue. The Talmud says of them:

> Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly. The latter used to say three things: Be patient in (the administration of) justice, rear many disciples, and make a fence around the Torah.[34]

From those few remarks it is evident that the Great Synagogue was much concerned for the Torah[35] and its study. The Men of the Great Synagogue took on themselves the task of preserving the Mosaic Law. So concerned were they to keep the Law perfectly intact that they "counted all the letters in the Torah and interpreted it."[36] The influence of their concern for the Law soon became manifest in the synagogal

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[32]Nehemiah 10:2-28 lists eighty-five members if these are to be interpreted to be members of the Great Synagogue.

[33]Cf. Herford, op. cit., p. 21 and Moore, op. cit., I, 31.

[34]Aboth I, 1.

[35]This was probably due to the influence of Ezra. Dana asserts: "Under the reform instituted by Ezra, which placed great emphasis upon the study of the Law, great impetus was given to the systematic study of the Law." Dana, op. cit., p. 108.

[36]Herford, op. cit., p. 22.

assemblies of the people. The assemblies provided a prime opportunity to disseminate the teaching of the Torah to which the Men of the Great Assembly had committed themselves. Under their influence the reading and study of the Torah was firmly implanted in the institution of the synagogue.

The Great Synagogue is also credited by later generations with fixing in a preliminary way the liturgy of the synagogue. They are given credit for making the earliest collection of prayers and making the first rules of synagogue worship.[37] They are also said to have prescribed the benedictions and prayers (in the daily prayer),[38] and the benedictions ushering in the holy time or marking its close (Kiddush and Habdalah).[39] According to the Talmud they authorized the observance of the Feast of Purim and fixed the days that were to be kept.[40] According to Finkelstein, the synagogue service, which had grown up without official direction, was largely put on an organized basis by the Men of the Great Synagogue. A fixed formula was established for its daily and Sabbath prayers. The service probably began with the reading of the prescribed portions of the Torah; this was followed by the informal petitions of the individual members of the congregation; after which the leader recited aloud his prayer for the whole group.

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[37] Golub, op. cit., p. 48.

[38] Cf. Rabbi Jeremiah in Jerusalem Berakhoth 4a.

[39] Berakhoth 33a.

[40] Megillah 2a.

As it was formulated by the Great Synagogue it seems to have read as follows:

> Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God and the God of our Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the most-high God, Possessor of heaven and Earth sic. . Hear our cry, O Lord, who dost hear prayer.[41]

On Sabbaths and festivals, when petitions for daily needs could not be offered, the second and third verses read, "Grant us joy, O Lord, our God in this Sabbath (or: festival) day. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who dost sanctify Israel and the Sabbath (or: festival)."[42]

How long the Men of the Great Synagogue were active in the capacity of formulating and controlling the worship (particularly that of the synagogue) in Palestine is a matter that cannot be finally settled on the basis of adequate historical evidence. The opinions range from the view expressed by Levinson, on the basis of Nehemiah 9 to 11, that the Great Synagogue was convened by Nehemiah for only one day and that subsequent references are to rabbis in the period of the Tannaim and even the Amoraim who carried on the spirit of the Great Synagogue.[43] In the Mishnah, on the other hand, it is stated that Simeon the Just was "of the remnants of the Great Synagogue,"[44] that is, as is the general interpretation of the passage, he was the last who belonged to

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[41]Louis Finkelstein, The Pharisees (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), pp. 578-79.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Levinson, loc. cit.

[44]Aboth I, 2.

that body. This Simeon is commonly identified as one who died about 270 B.C.[45] Therefore it is the apparent contention of the Talmud that the Great Synagogue died out in or about 270 B.C.

The Influence of the Pharisees

The Pharisees who in all probability originated in the period before the Maccabaean war as a reaction against the Hellenizing spirit that was manifesting itself in Jewish religious life,[46] exerted considerable influence on the institution of the synagogue in the two centuries before the Christian era. Of this influence Moore writes that all the light of history

> would incline us to conjecture that the leading part in this development i.e., of the synagogue was taken by the Pharisees from the second century before our era . . . the men of insight must have learned from the apostasy of many in high places and the indifference of the most that there was nothing more urgent to do than to inculcate and confirm religious loyalty by worship, knowledge, and habit, through some such means as the synagogue . . . . Methodical instruction in the Law, was, under these conditions, the foundation of everything. Hence the regular readings from the Pentateuch, accompanied by an interpretive translation in the vernacular, and followed by an expository or edifying discourse, usually taking something in the lesson as a point of departure, became constant elements of the synagogue service.[47]

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[45] Herford, op. cit., p. 21.

[46] John Davis, The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, revised and rewritten by H. S. Gehman (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1944), p. 476.

[47] Moore, op. cit., I, 286.

The Pharisees with their very zealous concern for the Law and its obedience to and even beyond the letter[48] became the leading proponents of synagogue worship.[49] Through the synagogue, as Moore points out, more perhaps than through any other means the Pharisees gained their strong hold on the mass of the people. In their hands the synagogue was doubtless the chief instrument in the Judaizing of Galilee.[50]

Largely through the efforts of the two afore mentioned groups, the synagogue before the beginning of the Christian era had become a public institution, commonly possessing an edifice for religious gatherings erected by the community or given to it by individuals. It had attained an independent position as a sort of a worship of different character from that of the Temple—a service of prayer and reading of the Torah without sacrifice or offering. In the establishment of the Synagogue regular instruction in religion had taken its place as an organic part of worship, and even as its most prominent feature.[51]

Derivation of the Synagogue Names

The term "synagogue" is the Greek συναγωγή, an assembly

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[48]The Pharisees counted 248 positive commands in the Pentateuch to which they added countless more. Cf. Lewis N. Dembitz, Jewish Services in Synagogues and Home (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1898), p. 24.

[49]Cf. Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, A History of the Jewish People (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927), p. 160.

[50]Moore, op. cit., I, 287.

[51]Ibid., 284.

(from συνάγειν, "to bring together"). Originally the name was applied to the worshipping group, but in the course of time it came to designate the place where the assembly gathered. The same phenomenon occured in the Hebrew designation. The Hebrew equivalent is keneseth (הַכְּנֶסֶת), an assembly, although when the building itself is meant the term used is בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת, house of assembly. The Aramaic designation which was perhaps that used most commonly by Jesus and the disciples was knishta or בית כנישתא. Although these are the most frequently used named for the synagogue there have been and are others. Popular usage long retained the term "house of the people" (בֵּית הָעָם) based on the appearance of this term in Jeremiah 39:8[52], although it seems that the learned forbade its usage.[53] Other names that have been applied to the synagogue by the Jews are בֵּית הַתְּפִלָּה, "house of prayer"; בֵּית אֱלֹהִים, "house of God"; בֵּית יְהוָה, "house of Jehovah"; מִקְדָּשׁ, "sanctuary", and בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ, "house of holiness." These essentially are titles by which the Temple at Jerusalem was known, but were subsequently applied to the synagogues.[54] Greek speaking Jews usually referred to

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[52]It is uncertain what the term means in this passage.

[53]Bernard J. Bamberger, The Synagogue in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isaac Landman, et al. (New York: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., 1943), X, 119.

[54]William Rosenau. Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs (New York: Block Publishing Company, Inc., 1929), pp. 12-13.

their place of worship as a <u>proseucha</u> (προσευχή),[55] or <u>proseuchterion</u> (προσευκτήριον), which means literally "place of prayer."[56] This is believed to have been based on Isaiah 56:7. Occasionally Greek and Syrian sources speak of the "Sabbath house."[57]

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[55]Cf. Carl Friedrich Keil, <u>Manual of Biblical Archaeology</u> (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1887), I, 202: "The προσευχαί were originally different from the synagogues, being simply places for prayer in the open air and outside the towns, for the most part in the neighborhood of running water, as the Jews were in the habit of washing themselves before engaging in prayer . . . . But, because houses of prayer were frequently built upon such places as are here referred to, the name προσευχαί was also transferred to them."

[56]Cf. Josephus, <u>Vita</u>, 54.

[57]Bamberger, <u>loc. cit.</u>

CHAPTER III

THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SYNAGOGUE BUILDING

External

Sources of Information

As might be expected most of the information that is available concerning the architecture of the synagogue in the early New Testament era is based on archaeological discoveries. There is very little written material extant from that period that describes the physical features of the synagogue.

The first mention of remains of old synagogues of about this period comes from the Middle Ages. Jewish pilgrims who returned from lands of the Diaspora to Palestine to prostrate themselves at the tombs of the Prophets, Patriarchs and scholars make reference to ancient synagogue remains in the brief accounts of their travels.[1]

The first scholar to describe them in detail was Rev. Edward Robinson in 1838. Other scholars since then have included Ernest Renan in the 1860's, Corder and Kitchener in the 1870's and especially in the early 1900's scholars of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft.[2] Since then a great many groups have added to the slowly-pieced together information.

Up to 1943, when archeological research in Palestine was greatly

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[1] E. L. Sukenik, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece (London: The Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., p. 2-3.

hindered by the political tenor of the times, synagogues had been excavated in over forty different places in Palestine, including Galilee, Samaria, Judea, and Transjordan. But curiously enough not a single one of those surviving synagogues belongs to the period of the New Testament.[3] As near as scholars can determine, most, if not all, of these remains date from the third to the sixth centuries. The synagogue at Tell Hum (Capernaum) has been believed by some to belong to the time before 70 A.D., but as Finegan points out, "It is more probably to be dated around A.D. 200 or later."[4]

The reason for this apparent anomaly is alluded to in the Jerusalem Talmud which credits Vespasian (father of Titus) with the destruction of four hundred-eighty synagogues in Jerusalem alone.[5] Even if this figure is somewhat exaggerated it seems apparent that a good many if not all of the synagogues of Palestine were destroyed when the Romans violently suppressed the Jewish revolt of 70 A.D. The synagogues were again destroyed, it is believed, in the second century when Hadrian forcibly put down the rebellion of Bar Cochba about 135 A.D.[6] This would account for the fact that there are no

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[3]With the possible exception of the synagogue of Theodotus in Jerusalem which is generally ascribed to the first century after Christ. Of this synagogue, however, only an inscribed lintel remains.

[4]Jack Finegan, Light From the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew Christian Religion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c.1946), p. 228.

[5]Jerusalem Megillah III, 1.

[6]William Foxwell Albright, The Archaeology of Palestine and the Bible (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1935), p. 59.

surviving synagogue remains from the period before the second century of the modern era.

Even the synagogue remains that have been discovered are for the most part fragmentary. Not only have the elements taken their toll, but there is evidence of human interference in many cases. It is not at all unlikely that the synagogues in the course of centuries were the targets for abuse by the Arabs and the Turks, and that more than once the smooth, well hewn stones found in the ruins of the synagogue were confiscated and used by the neighboring peoples for constructions of their own. As a result, unfortunately our present knowledge of the architecture of the ancient synagogues is often piece-meal and fragmentary.

Location

Regarding the situation or location of synagogues the Talmudic canon prescribes only one regulation, namely that they should be built on the highest sites in the towns.[7] Edersheim disputes the relevancy of this passage for Palestinian Jews:

> There is no evidence that in Palestine Synagogues always required to be in the highest situation in the town, or, at least, so as to over top the other buildings. To judge from a doubtful passage in the Talmud (Shabb.11a), this seems to have been the case in Persia, while a later notice (Tos. Neg. ed. Z. IV.23) appeals in support of it to Prov. 8:2.[8]

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[7]Shabbath 11a.

[8]Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), I, 433.

Sukenik, however, states that the Palestinian synagogue mostly satisfy this specification.[9] The synagogue at Gerasa, for example, stood on very high ground, overlooking the Temple of Artemis. The Esfiyeh synagogue was on Mt. Carmel. The Hammath-by-Gadara synagogue was on the crest of Tell Zoni, which stood from sixty-five to eighty-five feet above the level of the plain.[10] At times, however, particularly among the Jews of the dispersion, local circumstances made it impolitic to comply with the Talmudic injunction due to governmental restrictions. Sometimes, as Jacobs points out, there were "evaded by the erection of tall rods on the roof, so that the Talmudic regulation was complied with in letter if not in spirit."[11]

There is some evidence that at times synagogues were built at the corners of the streets in a busy part of town in apparent remembrance of the words of Proverbs 1:20f.: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets; She crieth in the chief place of concourse."[12] This seems to be the case at Antioch where the synagogues were located in the heart of the city. But, where local legislation required the concentration of cults outside the city limits, the Jews obeyed or

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[9]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 49.

[10]Herbert G. May, "Synagogues in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 15.

[11]Joseph Jacobs, Synagogue Architecture, in The Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isadore Singer, et al. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1916), XI, 632.

[12]A. Hausrath, New Testament Times, the Times of Jesus (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), p. 85.

sought a special exemption.[13]

Although official Judaism has preserved no trace of a precept to that effect, there is abundant evidence that Jews, particularly in Hellenistic countries of the period under discussion, built their synagogues by preference in the proximity of water. This practice of meeting near water was already discernible during the period of the Exile as noted above.[14] Josephus makes mention of this phenomenon quoting the "decree of those of Halicarnassus":

> We have decreed, that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing so to do, may celebrate their Sabbaths, and perform their holy offices, according to the Jewish laws, and may make their proseuchae at the seaside according to the customs of their forefathers.[15]

As mentioned above, however, there is no reference in rabbinic literature to a need for building or meeting near water.[16] Of the synagogues excavated to this time those at Delos, Aegina, and Miletus (all in Hellenistic countries) lie close to the edge of a body of water. Perhaps this is the reason why Paul in Acts 14:13, on the Sabbath in Philippi, went outside the town gate along a river, where he supposed there would be a synagogue. But as Dr. Sukenik points out, "There is

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[13]Salo Wittmayer Baron, The Jewish Community (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), I, 92.

[14]Supra, p. 10.

[15]Josephus, Antiquities, XIV, 10.

[16]Emil Schuerer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1890), XXIII, 70.

no sufficient archaeological evidence for the existence of such a tradition in Palestine."[17]

The locating of the synagogue near water is assumed to have been done for the sake of giving everyone a convenient opportunity for performing such levitical purifications as might be necessary before attending public worship.[18] As Ewald points out it also seems to have been the custom especially among Hellenistic Jews to wash the hands before prayer.[19]

Orientation

There is no injunction in the Talmud that explicitly prescribed which direction the synagogue building was to face. There are, however, two Talmudic statements concerning the matter. The one states that the entrance into the synagogue was by the east, as the entrance into the Gate Beautiful into the Sanctuary.[20] To this Edersheim says: "This, however, may refer not to the door, but to the passage (aisle) into the interior of the building."[21] Bacher adds in the same connection: "One is tempted to assume that this rule, found only in the

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[17]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 50.

[18]Infra, pp. 33f.

[19]Heinrich Ewald, The History of Israel (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1886), VII, 308.

[20]Tosephta Megillah III, 13.

[21]Edersheim, op. cit., I, 434.

Tosephta has in view Babylonia and other lands to the east of Palestine.[22] The second reference in the Talmud directs the worshiper to turn toward Jerusalem in prayer, giving the clue that the synagogue may have been built facing Jerusalem.[23] On the basis of archaeological discoveries the latter statement seems to have been most commonly complied with. Dr. Sukenik sums up these archaelogical finds as follows:

> Thus the majority of ancient Palestinian synagogues, being situated in Cisjordenia north of Jerusalem, are appropriately oriented to the south, though with variations of several degrees, but those in Transjordania, even as far north as the Sea of Galilee, face west . . . . As regards synagogues outside Palestine, it may be assumed, a priori, pending the emergence of archaeological evidence, that other countries east of Palestine followed the same practice as Transjordania. It is certain that in the regions to the west of Palestine the synagogues were oriented to the east. Such is the case at Miletus, Priene, Aegina, and elsewhere.[24]

Although the majority of the synagogues heretofore uncovered are oriented toward Jerusalem, the direction was only approximate and influenced by the lay of the ground. "In general, however," Edersheim concludes, "it was considered that since the Shekhinah was everywhere in Palestine, direction was not of paramount importance."[25]

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[22] W. Bacher, Synagogue, in A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), IV, 639.

[23] Babha Bathra 25a and b, and Jerusalem Berakhoth IV, 5.

[24] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 50f.

[25] Edersheim, loc. cit.

Style

As was evidenced after the forced dispersion of the Jews following the destruction of 70 A.D., Jewish worship was not bound to buildings be they Temple or synagogue. Ten Jews assembled anywhere in public or in private were the real συναγωγή which could conduct a real service like that held in the largest and most glorious structure. This relatively secondary position of the house of worship, brought about largely by the development of the synagogue institution, had an influence on the architectural of the synagogue building itself. It brad a certain indifference to the style of architecture. The style of the building was not considered of primary importance, but rather the worship that took place in the building. This, coupled with the fact that the Jews were handicapped by their "aversion to plastic presentations," as Baron terms it, was the reason why no specific architectural style developed among the Jews of Palestine.[26] Even the oldest synagogue ruins "reveal little that is distinctly Jewish."[27] Most of the synagogue ruins already discovered in Palestine, particularly those in Galilee bear very definite traces of Greco-Roman influence.[28] The synagogue uncovered in other countries from ancient times generally

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[26]Salo Wittmayer Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), I, 290f. Hereafter referred to as Baron, SRHJ.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Lewis N. Dembitz, Synagogue in The Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isadore Singer, et al. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1916), XI, 622.

bear the characteristics of the current architectural styles of those countries. This phenomenon is so general as to lead Jacobs to assert: "The synagogue was unquestionably fashioned, up to recent times, in the style of architecture that prevailed in the country in which it was built."[29] This is also the conclusion of Blake in his study of Jewish synagogue architecture.[30] As will be brought out in subsequent sections there are, however, noticeable traces of the influence the Temple had on the architecture of the ancient synagogue, although in general the Jews of this period were careful not to imitate the Temple too closely.[31]

Features of External Architecture

Since the literature from the period with which we are concerned does not treat the actual features of the external architecture of the synagogue the only source of information available is that of the excavated ruins of synagogues from the period of the second century of our era and later. As has been shown above this source of information is at best fragmentary. Whether the architecture represented in these ruins reflects that of the time of Christ, two and more centuries earlier, can not be definitely established. It is, however, the opinion of a number of scholars that some of the synagogue remains that we have, as for example that at Tell Hum or Capernaum, are patterns of earlier

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[29]Jacobs, op. cit., p. 631.

[30]Peter Blake, editor, An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1954), p. 36.

[31]Baron, SRHJ, loc. cit.

synagogues perhaps erected on the same site during the first century A.D.,[32] that is, during the time that Jesus and His disciples worshipped in the synagogue of Palestine.

It would be extremely difficult as well as lengthy to describe the external features of each of the now more than forty excavated synagogues of our period. The writer feels that this can be done more effectively with diagrams and sketches than with words. Therefore diagrams and sketches with accompanying explanations have been reproduced in the appendix.[33] Therefore in the body of this text the writer will confine to a brief and general description of the most important and prominent external features.

Building Materials.---For the most part the synagogue buildings were constructed, or at least faced, with well cut stones.[34] This fact, as afore mentioned, has made them tempting quarries, which is the sad reason that most of them are almost ruined to their base. By way of exception the synagogue of Beth Alpha in the Valley of Esdraelon, Dr. Sukenik testifies, "is rather irregular and of poor workmanship."[35]

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[32]Cf. Finegan, loc. cit. and Gustav-Dalman, Sacred Sites and Ways (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), p. 152.

[33]Infra, pp. 87ff.

[34]R. A. S. Macalister, A Century of Excavation in Palestine (New York: The Fleming Revell Co., c. 1925), p. 312.

[35]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 31.

The building material is stone, as would be expected. If there were synagogues constructed of clay bricks or even wood (the latter being extremely doubtful in Palestine due to the scarcity of wood there), the evidence has long since disappeared. Usually the synagogue was constructed of the local stone of the region, as, for example, the basalt that was used in the synagogue at Chorazin.[36] This was not always the case, however, as witnessed by the synagogue at Tell Hum which was a white limestone structure, contrasting vividly with the black basalt round about. The thickness of the stone walls varied. The walls at Tell Hum, for example were from two to even seven feet thick.

Dimensions.--Of this Baron generalizes, "Most synagogues were small."[37] By way of example he adds, "That of Dura, for instance, could comfortably seat only some 55 men and 35 women. . . ."[38] This seems to be true in most of the synagogues excavated thus far. To cite a few examples: The synagogue at Tell Hum has a ground plan, excluding the courtyard that measures 66.9 feet long and 61.2 feet wide. That at Chorazin or Kerazeh

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[35]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 31.

[36]Ibid., p. 22.

[37]Baron, The Jewish Community, I, 92.

[38]Ibid.

is about 65.6 feet long and 42.6 feet wide. The synagogue at Kafr Bir 'im, also in Galilee, measures 59.4 feet in length and 45.8 feet in width. The dimensions of the synagogue at Na'aran are 68.9 feet long and 48.5 feet wide. The synagogue at Beth Alpha covers an area about 91.8 feet long and 45.9 feet wide. Finally, the synagogue at Miletus measures 60.7 feet long and 38 feet wide. On the basis of this it would seem that Baron's conclusion is valid in which he speculates: "the Jews preferred small neighborhood houses, in lieu of or in addition to, a large central synagogue."[39] This is not, however, to say that there were no large synagogues. Although none have as yet been discovered, Philo tells of a huge synagogue at Alexandria that was so large that the hazzan had to signal to those in the back the proper moment for the responses.[40]

The Forecourt.--One of the prominent external features of many of the synagogues was the forecourt. These forecourts are best described by the diagrams found in the appendix,[41] but a few additional comments, particularly concerning the significance and use of the forecourt are necessary. Briefly, the forecourt was usually a roofless, colonnaded annex attached either before or to the side of the basilica proper. The

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Edersheim, op. cit., I, 61.

[41] Infra, pp. 87ff.

forecourt at Tell Hum, for example, was in the shape of a trapezium running along the whole east side of the synagogue about 49.2 feet long and from 36.9 to 43.7 feet wide. A portico of about ten to eleven feet in width surrounds the court on three sides. According to Father Orfali (the Franciscan excavator) there were eight entrances or gates into the court from the outside. It was paved with large slabs of stone.[42] Those who hold to the view that the synagogue was basically modeled after the three divisions of the Temple compare the forecourt to the Chatzar, or Temple courts, particularly the Court of the Israelites and the Court of the Priests.

Although conclusive evidence of the precise use of the forecourt is lacking there are a number of theories. As was mentioned above in connection with the location of certain synagogues near bodies of water there is some evidence that at least some of the Jews were accustomed to performing certain ritual ablutions or purifications particularly before prayer.[43] Dalman points out, however, that there was no rabbinic precept concerning cleanliness in entering a synagogue, that is none that are extant today.[44] But there was among certain Palestinian rabbis the custom of washing the hands before the daily recitation of the Shema' in keeping with Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and the prayers following

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[42]Sukenik, on. cit., p. 20.

[43]Supra, p. 25.

[44]Gustav Dalman, Sacred Sites and Ways (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1935), p. 147.

it.[45] This may perhaps have been what Paul had in mind when he figuratively demands the "lifting up of pure hands for prayer."[46] At any rate there is evidence that in some of the synagogue forecourts there were arrangements made for the supply of water. In the forecourt of the synagogue at Gerasa stones with channels for waterpipes were found and it is supposed that there may have been a fountain or laver of water there.[47] There is some evidence of a water-vessel having been located in the center of the court at Beth Alpha.[48] Father Orfali calls attention to three stone vessels about twenty-seven inches high and from twenty-six on the top to thirteen inches on the bottom in width.[49]

Krause (Synagogale Alter-tümer) proposes that the forecourt was "an open-air place of prayer where the Jews prayed turning towards the sanctuary."[50]

Whatever the purpose of the court actually was, it is doubtful that it was erected as a mere entrance way for the synagogue, since the rabbinic authorities forbade its being used as a "mere passage."[51]

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[45] Ibid.

[46] 1 Timothy 2:8.

[47] May, op. cit., p. 14.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Dalman, loc. cit.

[50] Ibid., p. 146.

[51] Ibid., p. 147.

Doorways.--Quite generally, particularly among the synagogues of Galilee, observes Macalister, the facade or front side of the synagogue had three doors, one opening into the center of the nave and one into each of the two side aisles.[52] In the case of Kafr Bir'im a portico was built on the facade side within which the doorways were set. Sukenik describes the main doorway at Tell Hum, which was about 5.8 feet wide, as follows:

> A frame, divided into three fasciae surrounded by ovolo and cavetto, rose from the door-posts to the lintel, in the middle of which it was interrupted by a relief, of which only traces of an eagle with outstretched wings remain.[53]

For further material on the size, number and location of doorways in some of the various synagogues compare the diagrams in the appendix.[54]

Windows.--There is a notable passage in the Talmud concerning windows that perhaps influenced synagogue construction somewhat. Rabbi Hiyya B. Abba is credited with saying: "A man should always pray in a room that has windows."[55] There is perhaps here an allusion to Daniel who had prayed through an open window toward Jerusalem.[56] May theorizes that windows,

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[52]Macalister, loc. cit.

[53]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 10.

[54]Infra, pp. 87ff.

[55]Berakhoth V, 31a.

[56]Daniel 6:11.

particularly in the facade of the synagogue, may have been thought to permit the assembly to look toward Jerusalem and its temple during their worship.[57]

Besides this liturgical significance placed on window construction, the synagogue had to depend on windows as the chief source of light. Consequently as may be expected, the facades were abundantly supplied with window openings. The synagogue at Tell Hum, or Capernaum, for example, had at least three windows in the facade, besides a large arched window in the center. This center window, which was located directly above the main entrance, was 3.3 feet high by 2.6 feet wide. At a time when no glass covered window openings kept out the adverse elements this was considered an unusually large window. This window was provided with an iron grating evidenced by the socket holes still in the sill and sides. The window was approximately twenty inches deep. There were probably other smaller windows to light the gallery.[58]

Internal

Have

Once again the reader is referred to the diagrams and floorplans of synagogues in the appendix which will provide more detailed information concerning the size, shape, and general description of individual synagogues than can be profitably given here.[59] In general, however, the

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[57] May, op. cit., p. 13.

[58] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 2.

[59] Infra, pp. 87ff.

nave was of rectangular shape with a longitudinal row of columns running down either side separating the side aisles from the nave proper. These rows of columns are generally joined by a transverse row on the side opposite the facade, forming a third aisle. In the synagogue at Chorazin, for example, the nave is 21.6 feet wide and each aisle 10.5 feet wide.[60] At Kafr Bir'im the nave is 20.3 feet wide and the aisles are about 9.3 feet in width.[61]

Among those who liken the architecture of the synagogue to that of the temple, the nave is compared to the Holy Place.

Seating

General Seating.--In a number of the ancient synagogues there were stone benches built along the walls for the seating of the assembly. Since those found at Tell Hum are perhaps in the best condition and fairly representative of the others we will focus our attention on them. Sukenik describes them thus:

> On the east and west sides, two benches were built one above the other, coterminous with the walls. Each bench was 43.6 cm. 17.2 inches high and 54.6 cm. 21.5 inches wide. The stones of the benches taper downwards for the greater comfort of the occupants legs."[62]

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[60] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 22.

[61] Ibid., p. 24.

[62] Ibid., p. 13.

Generally speaking the synagogues had no benches on the floor of the nave itself as do modern day synagogues.[63] There is, however, the possibility that the nave had been provided with wooden benches which disintegrated in the course of time. But, Dembits, on the basis of practices still current in Palestine, Syria, Babylonia and North Africa, believes it more likely that the floor of the nave was spread with matting on which the worshippers sat.[64] The Palestinian Talmud makes brief mention of seats for the congregation called יסודות (subsellia).[65] Whether this referred to the stone benches or other seats is difficult to determine.

Seating for the Leaders.--Whereas the congregation sat on the stone benches along the side walls of many of the ancient synagogues, or else, as is probable, also on mats on the floor, according to the Tosephta the elders sat "with their faces to the people and their backs to the Holy (i.e. to Jerusalem)."[66] This position of prominence was not given to noted rabbis and leaders as a mark of honor and respect, but, as Hausrath conjectures this seat (orseats) was occupied by the

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[63]Beth Alpha does, however, have a few benches on the nave floor, believed by Sukenik to have been placed there at a later date when the seating was no longer adequate. Cf. Ibid., p. 32.

[64]Dembits, op. cit., XI, 630.

[65]Jerusalem Megillah 73d.

[66]Tosephta Megillah IV, 21.

of the synagogue or most reputed scribe "in order that when the chief of the synagogue summoned them to read the Thorah [sic.] (Pentateuch), they could at once mount the reader's platform."[67] Such special seats of distinction or leadership have been discovered at several of the synagogue sites. The first to be found was at Hammath-by-Tiberias near the south wall of that synagogue. It is rather crudely carved out of a single block of white limestone, standing about three feet high and about two feet wide. The kathedra or seat of distinction at Chorazin, which also stood near the south or Jerusalem oriented wall, is also carved of one block and is about twenty-two inches high, thirty-nine inches broad, with a maximum seat depth of twenty-two inches. It has also arms of one piece with the rest of the chair and connected with the chair at their extremities.[68] Similar seats have been found at Dura and Delos. The latter, although in situ, surprisingly faces east, probably indicating that the sitting of the elders "with their backs to the Holy" was customary but not obligatory. At Capernaum a somewhat different seat was found as the apparent seat of honor. Located in the southwest corner there is still in place a rounded piece of the upper bench (on the side wall) provided with a back carved out of stone.[69]

This seat of distinction is today quite generally believed to

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[67] Hausrath, op. cit., I, 86.

[68] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 60.

[69] Ibid., p. 13.

be the "Seat of Moses" referred to in Matthew 23:2, the seats which--although they were ordinarily reserved for the most reputed scribes and leaders--were often elbowed into by pious ambition and rich garments.[70]

Seating for the Women.--"The ancient literature," as Sukenik correctly states, "nowhere mentions a specific regulation to the effect that men and women must be kept separate at public worship [i.e., in synagogue]; still less is it prescribed that the women's section shall be built in the form of a gallery."[71] This division was, however, observed in the Herodian Temple in which there was a Court of the Women עזרת הנשים distinct from the Court of Israel, עזרת ישראל, the latter being the inner one. There is a significant reference in the Babylonian Talmud to the Water-Drawing Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Temple:

> At first the women used to be within and the men without, and frivolity would result; accordingly it was ordained that the women would sit without and the men within, but still there was frivolity. Finally it was ordained that the women should sit above and the men below.[72]

This is perhaps explained by a statement from the Mishnah: "It [the Women's Court] was at first even, but later it was surrounded with a gallery, so that the women looked on from above and the men from below.

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[70]Cf. Matthew 6:2,5; 23:6.

[71]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 47.

[72]Sukkah 51b.

in order that they should not be together."[73] From a similar source in the Jerusalem Talmud[74] there is reason to believe, declares Dr. Sukenik, that in Palestinian Aramaic the male and females halves of any congregation were designated colloquially as אַרְעָיִם , literally "those of the ground (floor)" and עִלָּיָא , "those of the upper (floor)" respectively.[75] From these references it would seem that in the Temple, at least during this one ceremony in which the men entered the Court of the Women, the women viewed the ceremony from some sort of galleries.

Although there can be found no official regulation that brought this Temple practice into the synagogue, Finuli mentions that it was the custom at his time to segregate the sexes in the synagogue.[76] Philo, however, was a Jewish writer in the diaspora and may not have reflected the situation in Palestine. Archaeology does shed some light on the problem and substantiates Philo's words even for Palestine. A number of ancient Palestinian synagogues do have a gallery. At Tell Hum, for example, there is evidence of a double set of columns on the north side that at one time supported an upstairs gallery. The stairs leading to the gallery are of basalt and are located on the outside of

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[73]Mishnah Middoth II, 5.

[74]Jerusalem Sukkah 55 b.

[75]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 48.

[76]Ibid., p. 47.

the building.[77] Although the height of the gallery is difficult to determine as their is not a sinle whole upper column left, it has been estimated at about eleven and a half feet.[78] At Chorazin a staircase was discovered that no doubt led to a similar balcony or gallery.[79] At Kafr Bi'rin traces of a gallery are also evident.[80] The fact that there are also other synagogue remains which yield no proof of a gallery leads us to believe that this was not a compulsory feature of the synagogue during this period. It is admitted, that even where galleries are evident there is no conclusive proof that these galleries were designed exclusively for the women. Nevertheless, on the basis of the Temple practices and the practices of subsequent Judaism (in some areas of orthodox Judaism even to this day the sexes are separated) it is generally accepted that the galleries where present were for the women. Whether the women in their gallery and perhaps behind a screen had their own private prayer worship led by female precentors as was the practice in the Middle Ages is not known.[81]

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[77] Infra, p. 89.

[78] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 15.

[79] Ibid., p. 22.

[80] Jacobs, op. cit., XI, 631.

[81] William Rosenau, Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs (New York: Block Publishing Company, Inc., 1929), p. 22f.

The Ark of the Law

If we liken the forecourt and nave of the synagogue to the courts and Holy Place of the Temple, then the Ark of the Law would conform to the Holy of Holies.[82] The Ark seems to have occupied an integral part of the synagogue from very early times and it is frequently referred to in Talmudic literature. Generally, as in the Mishnah the synagogue Ark of the Law is referred to as tebah (תֵּיבָה) to distinguish it from that of the Temple and Tabernacle, although aron (אָרוֹן) does appear.[83]

In the development of the Ark in the synagogue two stages can be distinguished. In the earlier type of synagogue, particularly that of our period, the Ark was not a permanent, built in receptacle in the wall of the nave, but a portable structure. It was not until later, perhaps the fifth century, that the Ark was built into a special wall receptacle or apse in the wall of orientation.[84]

Rabbinical sources often speak of the ark of the Law of the earlier type as a portable chest.[85] The early ark was made portable for a

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[82] J. M. Casanowicz and A. W. Brunner, Ark of the Law in the Synagogue in The Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isadore Singer, et al. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1916), II, 108.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 69.

[85] Cf. Mishnah Ta'anith II, 1; Tosephta Megillah IV, 21b; and Sotah 39b.

number of reasons. For example, when on account of an absence of rain a fast was ordered, the ark with the scrolls of the Law was carried into the streets where special services were conducted.[86] Also on the festive occasion known as "the rejoicing of the Law" it was carried in procession.[87] Casanowicz adds that the ark was made portable so that it could be readily and quickly moved with its contents in case of disturbance or danger.[88]

Actual remains of Arks of this type are scanty. Several fragments of miniature architecture believed to have been from the ark have been found at Tell Hum and Chorazin. Apart from these the approximate appearance of various arks can be gained from a number of pictorial representations of the time that have come down to us, both from Palestine and the Diaspora. "These illustrations," according to Sukenik, "agree remarkably in the main features. It is sort of a double-doored chest with a gabled or rounded roof. Each of the door-wings was divided horizontally into a number of square or oblong panels. The door-posts were sometimes shaped like columns."[89]

A view of the interior of the Ark is offered by the Jewish gilt glass vessels found in the catacombs of Rome. They have been described as follows: "Here the Ark is as a rule represented with open doors, showing scrolls, each rolled about a rod (umbilicus, ὀμφαλός עמוד)

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[86]Dalman, op. cit., p. 144.

[87]A. C. Bouquet, Everyday Life in New Testament Times (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 211.

[88]Casanowicz, op. cit., II, 110.

[89]Sukenik, op. cit., p. 53.

lying in rows on shelves."[90] On a head piece of door at Tell Hum there is the representation of a "little temple on wheels" which may be a representation of the portable Ark.[91]

In its most rudimentary form this early type of ark was probably a mere wooden case or chest, raised from the floor sufficiently high for the congregation to see the scrolls of the law when the doors were open.[92] This construction of wood is perhaps the reason that this early Ark has come down to us chiefly in representation and not in actual example. This also would account for its portability, as stone construction would have rendered this almost impossible.

Father Orfali, in describing the position of the Ark in the synagogue at Tell Hum, supposes that the Ark was originally kept in the alcove at the north west corner of the synagogue, and during the service was carried into the nave and placed before the northern colonnade. This would explain the reason why the north wall was left without seats.[93] In the course of time, however, at Tell Hum the Ark was placed at the south end of the nave, no doubt to facilitate the

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Dalman, op. cit., p. 145.

[92] Casanowicz, op. cit., II, 110.

[93] Dalman, op. cit., p. 144.

facing "toward the Sanctuary" during the prayers.[94] Consequently when the custom was later introduced of building a stationary Ark, the main entrance to the synagogue at the center of the south side was blocked, thus rendering this elaborate main portal useless.[95] Presumably the same phenomenon occurred in other synagogues at about the same period. As the Ark became a permanent installation it also became more elaborate. In the course of time a special apse, or built in recess was constructed for the Ark in the wall facing Jerusalem.[96] This marks the second stage of the development of the Ark. Such apses or wall repositories have been discovered in synagogues of the fifth century A. D. at Beth Alpha in Palestine and Priene in Sonia. At Capernaum and Chorazin fragments of two stone lions[97] which stood on either side of the Ark have been found which are believed to have been of this later period.[98]

In the pictorial representations of the Ark of this latter period there is also some notion of a veil, פרוכת , by which the recess containing the Ark was divided off from the rest of the hall. They show that it was hung not, as in modern times, over the doors of the Ark, but in the front of the whole apse.[99] This, of course, reminds

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[94] Cf. Infra, p. 51.

[95] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 27.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Infra, p.

[98] May, op. cit., p. 5.

[99] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 56.

us of the veil that was before the Holy of Holies of the Temple.[100] In the Beth Alpha synagogue the floor of the apse is slightly raised and projects into the main hall for some distance as a platform, cut through in the middle by stairs. At the edge of the platform, on either side of the stairs, is a socket. The socket no doubt contained posts, supporting a bar or wire from which the veil hung down.[101] A similar arrangement existed at Dura.[102] Another means of separating the recess of the Ark from the worshippers was a marble screen. Remains of such screens, sometimes decorated with wreaths, vines, Menorahs, and so forth, have been found at Hammath, Ascalon, Ashdod, and elsewhere.[103] A canopy, פָּרֹכֶת , which was spread over the Ark before the commencement of the Sabbath is mentioned in the Talmud.[104] According to one reference the canopy was not to be removed as long as the congregation remained.[105] Just what this canopy was is not known.

The important contents of the Ark, as already mentioned, were the scrolls of the Torah and Haftorah. At times separate chests were

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[100] Cf. Matthew 27:51.

[101] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 57.

[102] Kay, op. cit., p. 16.

[103] Sukenik, loc. cit.

[104] Jerusalem Megillah 73d and Jerusalem Shabbath 17c.

[105] Sota 39b

supplied for the keeping of the Haftorah and remaining books of Scripture.[106] The scrolls were covered with cloths or wrappers called ,[107] and laid on shelves within the ark.

The Bema

The spot where the weekly readings from the Torah and also from the haftarah were read was called the bema (Greek, Βῆμα , Hebrew, בִּימָה).[108] The bema was usually raised above the level of the floor as a sort of platform and frequently was placed in the center of the nave,[109] so that all might hear the Word of Jahweh with equal clarity. That the bema as well as the lunch, or desk, and the kursevn,[109] or chair,[110] were made of wood, as they usually are still today, is quite evident from their almost total absence in the ancient synagogue ruins.[111] In Tell Hum, however, a stone Bema platform has been discovered in the "southeast corner of the nave, next to the pillar."[112] Remains of a stone bema were also found at Beth Alpha near the second pillar from the south of the eastern row, not far from the apse. But it is evident that this bema is of later date than the mosaic floor on

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[107] W. Bacher, op. cit., IV, 639.

[108] Bouquet, op. cit., p. 210. Cf. Edersheim, op. cit., I, 436 and George Foot Moore, Judaism: in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), III, 91.

[109] Megillah 26b.

[110] Also called kisse and nemulah in Edersheim, loc. cit.

[111] Sukenik, loc. cit.

[112] May, op. cit., p. 5.

which it stands.[113] and perhaps as late as the sixth century.[114]

Whether the אנלגין (from Greek ἀναλογεῖον), or lectern referred to in the Tosephta[115] is connected with the bema or an independent reading stand is uncertain. Dr. Sukenik believes that it was a comparatively light object on the order of our music-stands, which could even be hung up when not in use.[116] There are pictorial representations of some such item on the mosaic floor of the synagogues at Beth Alpha and Jerash, on lamps, and in a relief on a capital of a pillar at Tell Hum.[117]

The Seven Branched Candelabra

The seven branched candelabra, whose specifications were stipulated already in Exodus 25:32, was an important ceremonial object in both the Tabernacle and Temple. This candelabra which has become a sort of sacred emblem of Judaism was the Menorah, מְנוֹרָה . Basically it was not composed of candlesticks as we know them today, was made up of seven small oil lamps, each with a hollow spot for oil and a wick, at the top of the branches or lampstands.[118] It was made of stone, or as in

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[113] Infra, p. 51f.

[114] Sukenik, loc. cit.

[115] Tosephta Kelim V, 6, 9.

[116] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 53.

[117] Ibid., p. 55.

[118] May, op. cit., p. 16.

the case of the Tabernacle Temple, of gold or other precious metal. That some such candelabra were also used in the synagogues is clear from the Talmudic writings. The Tosephta speaks of candelabra and lamps being provided for the synagogue.[119] The Jerusalem Talmud tells of a candelabrum which Antonine, to the great joy of the patriarch Jehuda, presented to a synagogue.[120] The Mishnah speaks of the oil which was burning in the synagogue, and also the custom of keeping lamps burning in the synagogue on the Day of Atonement.[121]

But whether the candelabra used in the synagogue were of the seven-branched, menorah type has been long disputed by some authorities. Rabbinic opinion had discouraged the emulation of the Temple features to preserve the superiority of the central Sanctuary. They urged five, six, or eight branched candelabra instead of seven branched ones.[122] In spite of this there is evidence that many a diaspora community, especially in Rome, brushed aside such scruples and brought the seven-branched-candelabra into the synagogue.[123] In Palestine too, however, in the synagogue of Hammath-by-Tiberias a menorah has been found. It is cut of a single block of limestone and measures almost

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[119] Tosephta Megillah III, 22%.

[120] Jerusalem Megillah 74a.

[121] Pesachim IV, 4.

[122] Baron, op. cit., I, 90.

[123] Ibid.

two feet in height, about eighteen inches in width, and about five inches in thickness. On the face side of the branches are carved pomegranates alternating with flowers. There are no spaces between the upper ends of the branches, so that one continuous slab makes up the top of the candlestick. In the upper surface of this, seven grooves are hollowed out corresponding to the seven branches and destined to contain seven earthen lamps.[124] From this it seems evident that the menorah was an object in actual use in some synagogues of the early centuries of the Christian era.[125]

According to pictorial representations from this period the candelabra were placed on either one or both sides of the Ark of the Torah.[126]

Pictorial Representations in the Synagogue

The pictorial representations in the synagogues in the first four centuries of the Christian era range widely from the very simple symbols of the Ark, menorah, and acanthus leaves carved into the stone of lintels to the elaborate pictures of men and animals set in floor mosaics. Just what the attitude of official Judaism was toward such representations particularly of living beings is difficult to ascertain, for it varied greatly. As Finegan points out:

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[124] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 55.

[125] Ibid.

[126] May, loc. cit.

> Sometimes the letter of the law in Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 5:8 was held to absolutely prohibit such representations . . . . But again the law was held to prohibit only the making of images for purposes of worship.[127]

R. Hiesaor b. R. Zadok, for example, who was well acquainted with Jerusalem before its destruction, said, "In Jerusalem there are faces of all creatures except men."[128]

Exactly what the situation was at the time of Jesus is almost impossible to say. That there were at least simple representations particularly of inanimate objects appears likely. Whether, however, there were in the synagogue already at His time figures of the "lion of Judah,"[129] of which portions have been found at Tell Hum, or whether there were already then wall paintings, as have been found at Dura-Europos,[130] is considerably less likely.

It is generally accepted that the floor mosaics that have been discovered at various synagogues, are of later origin. Sukenik states:

> Another feature which distinguished the new type from the old [that is, the synagogues of the fourth and fifth Christian centuries from those of the second and third] was the employment of mosaics instead of flagstones in the floors.[131]

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[127] Finegan, op. cit., p. 227.

[128] Ibid.

[129] The lion has always been a favorite symbol of the Jews. Depicting strength and protection it was no doubt based on the words of Genesis 49:9. Cf. Rosenau, op. cit., p. 20.

[130] The extensive wall decorations of the synagogue at Dura-Europos which date from about 245-256 A.D. are treated in Rachel Wischnitzer-Bernstein, "The Samuel Cycle in the Wall Decoration of the Synagogue at Dura-Europos", The Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, 1941, pp. 85-103.

[131] Sukenik, op. cit., p. 27.

By way of dating the mosaics Dr. Sukenik refers to a fragment of an edition of the Palestinian Talmud which states, "in the days of R. Abun they began to depict designs on mosaics, and he did not hinder them."[132] The R. Abun is known to have lived in the first half of the fourth century.

The first complete mosaic floor of a synagogue to be discovered was that an 'Ain Duk near Jericho. The designs include a large eight foot menorah in the vestibule and a sixty-nine by forty-eight foot nave mosaic containing a panel of Daniel with the lions and a cycle of the zodiac.[133] At Beth Alpha the mosaic, also covering the entire floor, is divided into three panels; one is a picture of the Sacrifice of Issac, another a zodiak similar to that at Ain Duk, and the third a representation of the Ark, the menorah and two lions.[134] The mosaics at the fifth century synagogue of Jerash or Gerasa, are of a higher artistic quality than most of the others of this period. They contain particularly scenes of the Biblical account of the flood.[135]

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[132] Ibid., p. 28.

[133] Ibid., pp. 28-31.

[134] Ibid., pp. 32-34.

[135] Ibid., p. 35-37.

CHAPTER IV

THE SYNAGOGUE WORSHIP SERVICE

Leaders of the Synagogue Worship

Essentially the leaders of the synagogue were laymen. No priest as such had any controlling function in the management or leadership of the institution.[1] According to Herford, "The sole qualification [i.e., for leadership] there was piety, knowledge of the Torah and ability to communicate that knowledge, and that was not confined to any class of men, whether priests or not."[2] The worship of the synagogue was generally regulated by the members themselves under the leadership of those who, by gifts and character, were best fitted to lead. Bearing this in mind we want to examine briefly the qualifications and responsibilities of each of the synagogue's lay leaders.

The Archisynagogus

The principal leader in the synagogue was the archisynagogus (Greek, ἀρχισυναγωγός), or rosh ha-kenaseth (Hebrew, רֹאשׁ הַכְּנֶסֶת). This "head of the synagogue," or president, was in general charge of the synagogue and its services. His position was a community office,

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[1]It is sometimes claimed that the synagogue was the world's first institution whose ritual was conducted by laymen and not a hereditary priesthood. Cf. Peter Blake, editor, An American Synagogue for Today and Tomorrow (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, c.1954), p. 7.

[2]Robert T. Herford, The Pharisees (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924), p. 98.

although he was frequently selected from the number of the community elders.[3] It was his responsibility to maintain order in the services of the synagogue. According to Baron, he "assigned seats, distributed honors, invited guest preachers and, when necessary cared for the building."[4] Schuerer adds that he appointed "who should read the Scriptures and the prayer, and summoned fit persons to preach . . . ."[5] Although it seems that in most cases the archisynagogus did not himself perform the various acts of worship, it was his responsibility to appoint qualified lay members or guests for each of the worship functions.

Among the Jews he was held in high esteem. To belong to the family of an archisynagogus was a matter of great pride.[6] There is evidence that at least in some instances the position was hereditary. An inscription discovered in Jerusalem and dated before 70 A.D. records the building of a synagogue by a certain Theodotus, whose family had the honor of holding the office of archisynagogus for three generations.[7]

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[3]Emil Schuerer, A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, in Clark's Foreign Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1890), XXIII, 65.

[4]Salo Wittmayer Baron, The Jewish Community (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), I, 104.

[5]Schuerer, loc. cit.

[6]Baron, loc. cit.

[7]Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past: The Archaeological Background of the Hebrew-Christian Religion (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, c.1946), passim.

It is not certain whether this was a full time position or whether it could be performed by one already engaged in another occupation. However, because of the demand that it made upon his time and effort, the archisynagogus was exempted in Roman times from routine duties to state and community.[8] He was required, furthermore, to read an account of his activities and financial management to the entire congregation to whom he was finally subject.[9]

The archisynagogus is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament. This was the position of Jairus whose daughter Jesus raised from the dead.[10] When Jesus interrupted His sermon in a synagogue one Sabbath to heal a woman "with a spirit of infirmity," it was the archisynagogus who denounced Him for His breaking of the Sabbath.[11] Crispus, an archisynagogus at Corinth, was converted to Christianity by Paul. Another Corinthian archisynagogus, Sosthenes, was beaten by the Greeks for accusing Paul before a civil court.[12] At Antioch in Pisidia Paul was invited by such officials to deliver the homily or sermon.[13]

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[8]Berhard J. Bamberger, The Synagogue, in The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Inc., 1943), X, 128.

[9]Baron, loc. cit.

[10]Mark 5:22.

[11]Luke 13:14.

[12]Acts 18:17.

[13]This reference in Acts 13:15 refers to more than one archisynagogus. There is no other reference in secular literature that mentions more than one such official in a particular synagogue. Cf. Baron, loc. cit.

Hazzan

The archisynagogus was supported by a permanent, salaried official called the hazzan (Hebrew חזן,[14] Greek ὑπηρέτης). The hazzan had a variety of functions, and, as Baron points out, "much of the confusion prevailing in scholarly discussion of the origin and meaning of this office is due to hopeless attempts to reduce it to a particular function."[15] Basically, he was the assistant of the archisynagogus and servant of the congregation. At times he even had his dwelling under the synagogue roof. The Talmud gives clues as to some of his duties. He was responsible for bringing out the rolls of the Torah, opening them to the appointed readings for the week, handing them either to the archisynagogus, or directly to the chosen reader, and then, after the reading, folding them up to the view of the congregation and then putting them away again.[16] This function is referred to in the Lukan account of Jesus' preaching in Nazareth.[17]

It was his duty to announce the arrival and departure of the Sabbath and other holy days to the community.[18] To do this he would stand on the roof of the synagogue and signal with a thrice repeated

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[14]The word means literally "overseer" and forms the basis for the New Testament ἐπίσκοπος.

[15]Baron, loc. cit.

[16]Sotah VII, 7,8.

[17]Luke 4:20.

[18]Tosephta Sukkah IV.

blast on the trumpet.[19] Also he indicated to the priest the point at which the benediction should be pronounced, and at fasts he told the priests when to blow the trumpets.[20] In the smaller synagogue if there were not enough readers at the service he might fill out the number, or even read the whole lesson himself, as well as lead in prayer.[21]

There are many other functions ascribed variously to the hazzan. He often acted as bailiff, serving summons, or as a shariff, executing sentences, such as floggings in the synagogue precincts.[22] Frequently he was called upon to offer elementary instruction in Hebrew and Scripture.[23] "In his charge were the synagogue building and its furniture," states Moore.[24] Dembitz claims that the hazzan, in the time before the Scripture text was pointed, was responsible for holding the traditions of the true pronunciation and for seeing to it that the Scripture lessons were correctly read.[25]

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[19]George Foot Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), I, 289.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid., I, 290.

[22]Baron, loc. cit.

[23]Schuerer, op. cit., XXIII, 67.

[24]Moore, op. cit., I, 289.

[25]Lewis N. Dembitz, Jewish Services in Synagogue and Home (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1898), p. 69.

The hazzan was carefully chosen. Even in the oldest times the chief qualifications demanded, in addition to knowledge of Biblical and liturgical literature, a pleasant voice and an artistic delivery.[26] According to the Talmud he was apparently one of the learned class, but of a lower degree than the Scribes who were below the Sages.[27]

The hazzan and archisynagogus were generally the two prominent leaders of the synagogue. There were, however, other groups and individuals who played a part in the synagogue and its worship. These too deserve brief mention.

The Shaliach Tsibbur and the Readers of the Scripture

As has already been pointed out and will be further expanded in the treatment of the worship service itself, the individuals who conducted the various portions of the synagogue service were laymen selected each Sabbath by the archisynagogus. The layman (or laymen) who was called on to pronounce the prayers in the name of the congregation was called the shaliach tsibbur or "plenipotentiary of the congregation" (Hebrew שְׁלִיחַ צִבּוּר).[28] Since according to the Mishnah the one who read the haphtarah in the service was also expected to speak part of the prayers, Mersheim concludes that when Jesus took part in the

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[26] Max Schloessinger, Hazzan, in The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1916), VI, 285.

[27] Passim, Sota IX.

[28] Schuerer, loc. cit.

worship service in Nazareth[29] He acted as the *sheliach tsibbur*.[30]

Concerning the readers of the Torah and *haphtarah* more will be said below.[31] The qualifications for readers are listed by Margolis:

> Anyone of the congregation, who possessed a voice, might pass before the Ark and lead in the service. Care was taken that the reader was a man of dignified bearing and suitably garbed. On fast days especially sainted men were invited to read the service so as to move the worshipers to contrition.[32]

The Priest

The priest was not an essential part in the synagogue. When one was present, however, he was shown deference and was asked to pronounce the priestly benediction of Numbers 6:24-26.[33]

The Rabbis

The rabbi was not a permanent official in the synagogue at this

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[29]Luke 4:20.

[30]Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1901), I, 439.

[31]*Infra*, pp. 78ff.

[32]Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, *A History of the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1927), p. 209.

[33]Floyd V. Filson, "Temple, Synagogue, and Church," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, V (December, 1944), pp. 84f.

time. In fact he did not become a synagogue functionary until the nineteenth century in the western world.[34] However, he was entitled to certain honors when he attended the synagogue and was on occasion called upon to preach. At this time the rabbi was a layman and such authority as he had rested upon his own personal character and mental gifts, and not upon any kind of ministerial office. The title "rabbi" literally meant "my master" and at this time was conferred upon any layman who had sufficient training and learning in the traditional law and the Scriptures to qualify him as an authority and a teacher.

The Elders or Sanhedrin

The elders (Hebrew זקנים , Greek πρεσβύτεροι) or local sanhedrin, although not involved in the actual synagogue service seemed to have exercised ultimate control of the synagogue. They were the official political as well as religious judges in most Palestinian towns.[35] They were for all intents and purposes the trustees of the synagogue, and they appointed the archisynagogus.[36] The elders, as far as we know, were the only officials connected with the synagogue who were ordained.[37]

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[34] Bamberger, op. cit., X, 130.

[35] Schuerer, op. cit., XXIII, 62.

[36] B. S. Easton, "Jewish and Early Christian Ordination," The Anglican Theological Review, V (March, 1923), pp. 312f.

[37] Ibid., p. 316.

The Pharisees and Sopherim

These two groups fit into essentially the same category as regards the synagogue. Although neither group as such exercised leadership in the synagogue, both had become extremely influential in the synagogue and its service of worship. With their intense interest in the Law and their avowed concern to keep the Law constantly before the people, they were frequent, though unofficial, readers and preachers in the synagogue. According to Hausrath the Sopherim in Ezra's plan

> were to have been instructors of the people, a class of lawyers who excelled the Levites in the reading of the Hebrew text, in the Targum and Midrash, and from them did the synagogues usually select their preachers, and the Sanhedrin their members.[38]

About the same could also be said concerning the Pharisees. Mindful of the great effect of their preaching and teaching in the synagogues, Golub can say: "The Pharisees were the recognized heads of the Synagogue . . . ."[39]

The Sabbath Worship Service

The exact moment of the arrival of the Sabbath at sunset on Friday evening was announced by the hazzan from the roof top of the synagogue or an elevated house. He blew six blasts on the trumpet at intervals. At

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[38]A. Hausrath, New Testament Times, the Time of Jesus (London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), I, 89.

[39]Jacob Solomon Golub, In the Days of the Second Temple (Cincinnati: Department of Synagogue and School Extension of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1929), p. 169.

the first blowing of the trumpet the Jews in the field about the town put down their work; those who worked closer to town did not rush from the fields, but waited for those who worked further out, and all marched into town together. The shops, however, were still open; they closed at the trumpet call. The third blast was the signal at which the pots were taken from the stoves and wrapped in various materials to preserve their warmth. The third blast was also the signal for the kindling of the Sabbath lights. The devout, who wore phylacteries all day long, removed them at this signal. Then came an intermission, followed by three successive blasts, thus heralding the sacred Sabbath rest.[40]

As soon as the next morning, the Sabbath morning dawned, the people hastened to the synagogue with quick steps. For the Rabbinic rule was to hurry to the synagogue, but to return with slow and lingering steps.[41] According to the Mishnah the worship service could be conducted only if a minimum of ten were present to form an edah or congregation.[42] In some of the larger or wealthier communities ten Batlanim, or men of leisure, were sometimes hired to be always present at the synagogue insuring that there would always be a sufficiently large congregation on

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[40]Hayyim Schauss, The Jewish Festivals (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1938), pp. 13f.

[41]Edersheim, op. cit., I, 437.

[42]Dembitz, op. cit., pp. 67f.

hand.[43]

The parts of the Sabbath service according to the Talmud were to include the Shema', prayers, reading of the Torah and haphtarah and the blessing of the priest.[44] Foakes Jackson lists five basic elements in the worship service at the time of Christ: (a) the recitation of the Shema; (b) prayer by the leader; (c) lections with translations; (d) the sermon; and (e) the blessing.[45] Finch finds seven elements in the normal Sabbath service: (a) the offering of prayer, (b) the reading of the Law; (c) the offering of the Tephillah or Shemonah 'Esreh; (d) a reading from the Prophets or haphtarah; (e) an exhortation or sermon on the readings; (f) the offering of praise; and (g) the Aaronic blessing.[46] For the purposes of this paper the general division followed will be that of (a) Before the Torah (including the recitation of the Shema', the Tephillah and the Priestly Benediction), (b) The Torah, and (c) After the Torah (including the haphtarah and sermon discourse).

It must be emphasized, however, that much of the synagogue liturgy of Christ's time is still in doubt. No complete manuscripts or descriptions of this liturgy have come down to our times. Furthermore, it is likely that at this time there was still no great degree of uniformity among the liturgies used by the Jews of Palestine and of the diaspora.

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[43] Edersheim, op. cit., I, 433f.

[44] Megillah IV, 3.

[45] F. C. Finch, The Synagogue and the New Testament (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), p. 63.

[46] Ibid., pp. 63f.

Of this Levertoff says:

> Nevertheless, it is very doubtful if we have the material for a complete outline of the Synagogue Liturgy of the time of our Lord. We have to depend on Rabbinical sources, and, valuable as they are, it must be remembered that the Rabbis, especially those of the second and later centuries, whose references, usually casual, to liturgical matters are discussed in Rabbinic literature, were often inclined to project back into generations of old' the conditions which really existed in their own time. Besides, even according to the earliest traditional literature, the Liturgy, even in its simpler elements, took definite form only by degrees . . . .[47]

Before the Torah

The Shema'.--Basically the service usually began with the recitation of the Shema'. This was at times preceeded by an invocation and a pair of benedictions. The invocation, "Bless ye the Lord, the blessed One," was followed by the congregational response, "May the Lord, the blessed One, be blessed forever and ever."[48] Concerning the benedictions connected with the Shema', the Mishnah prescribes for the morning worship two benedictions before the Shema' and one after.[49] The first benediction called the yotzer for its initial word was in its earliest form probably as follows:

> Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the World, Former of light and Creator of darkness, Maker of peace and Creator of all things, who gives light in mercy to the earth and to those who

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[47] Paul Levertoff, Synagogue Worship in the First Century in Liturgy and Worship, edited by W. K. Lowther Clarke (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1933), pp. 61f.

[48] Ibid., p. 65.

[49] Berakhoth I, 4.

> live thereon, and in his goodness renews every day, continually, the work of creation(lit. the work of 'in the beginning', the Rabbinic term for 'creation'). Let a new light shine over Zion and thy Messiah's light over us.[50]

The second benediction, also known by its first word ahabah, in an early form went as follows:

> With everlasting (or abundant) love hast thou loved us, O Lord our God; with great and exceeding compassion hast Thou pitied us. Our Father, our King, for the sake of our fathers who trusted in thee, and to whom thou didst teach the statutes of life, be gracious also unto us, and teach us. Merciful Father, have mercy upon us; enlighten our eyes in the Law and let our hearts cleave unto thy commandments. Give us a single heart to love and fear Thy Name. For in thy holy Name we trust; we rejoice and exult in thy salvation. Thou art a God who worketh salvation, and hast chosen us from all peoples and tongues, and hast brought us nigh unto the great Name for ever in truth; to give thanks unto thee and to proclaim thy unity in love. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who hast chosen thy people Israel in love.[51]

Next followed the Shema' itself. The Shema' is always distinguished from prayer proper, and is rather a confession of faith than a prayer. Hence it is spoken of as being "recited" and not"prayed" (קריאת שמע).[52] The Shema' consisted of the three paragraphs, Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21, and Numbers 15:37-41. This confession of Jehovah alone as the one God of Israel was to be said, according to the rabbis, not only during the Sabbath morning worship, but by every adult male Israelite twice each day.[53] The three paragraphs of the Shema' are

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[50]For the last sentence Elbogen substitutes: "Blessed be the Lord our God for the glory of His handiworks, and for the light-giving lights which He has made for His praise. Selah. Blessed be the Lord our God who has formed the lights." Elbogen, op. cit., I, 439.

[51]Levertoff, op. cit., p. 69.

[52]Schuerer, op. cit., XXIII, 77.

[53]Ibid., p. 84.

referred to in the Mishnah by their first words: (a) שְׁמַע (the origin of the general title Shema'); יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֱמֶת־שְׁמַע ; (c) וַיֹּאמֶר.

Following the recitation of the Shema' came the benediction, emeth we-yatsib, which read:

> True and faithful(constant), established and enduring, right and faithful, beloved and precious, desirable and lovely, awful and mighty, well-ordered and worthy of all acceptation, good and beautiful is this word (i.e. the Shema') to us for ever. True it is that the God of eternity (or 'the world') is our King, the Rock of Jacob--the Shield of our salvation. From generation to generation he endureth, and his Name endureth, and his throne is established, and his Kingdom and Faith endure forever. His words live and endure, they are faithful and desirable for ever and for all eternity, for our fathers and for us, for our children and for our generations, and for all the generations of the seed of Israel, thy servant. For the past and present generations it is a good and constant word for ever and ever; it is true and faithful, an established thing that shall never pass away. True it is that thou art indeed the Lord our God and the God of our fathers, our Creator, the Rock of our salvation, our Redeemer and Savior from everlasting; such is thy name; there is no God beside thee.[54]

Jocz notes that following the Shema' it was the practice to recite the brief benediction, "Blessed be His name, whose glorious Kingdom is forever and ever," in a low voice. This custom he adds, was subsequently discontinued when the minim (Jewish Christians) began to take advantage of this occasion to insert a heretical prayer, or the name of Jesus the Messiah.[55]

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[54]Levertoff, op. cit., p. 70.

[55]Jakob Jocz, The Jewish People and Jewish Christ (London: The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, 1949), p. 49.

The Shemoneh' Esreh or Tephillah.--The Shemoneh' Esreh or Tephillah constitutes the principal prayer portion of the worship. By way of introduction it is well to note briefly some of the Jewish customs in regard to synagogue prayer at this time. The formula given in the Talmud which the prayer leader, or sheliach tsibbur, summoned the congregation to prayer was "בָּרְכוּ אֶת יהוה."[56] The use of written prayer materials by the leader or the congregation was generally forbidden. The prayers used traditionally in the service were committed to the memory not only of the leader but of the majority of the male adult worshipers as well.[57] The sheliach tsibbur, as he prayed, would stand before the Ark which contained the sacred Torah. Hence, to pray was commonly called "to go before the Ark."[58] The Tosephta and other rabbinic literature required that the worshiper face Jerusalem and its Sanctuary particularly during the act of prayer.[59] No doubt this injunction reflects such Biblical references as the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple which mentions praying "unto the Lord toward the city" and "toward the house."[60] Also significant was Daniel's orientation toward Jerusalem during prayer.[61] In compliance

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[56]Berakhoth VII, 3.

[57]Ludwig Blau, Liturgy in The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1916), VIII, 138.

[58]Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893) II, 367.

[59]Tosephta Berakhoth III.

[60]I Kings 8:44.

[61]Daniel 6:11.

with this general custom the congregation would stand and face Jerusalem during the Shemoneh 'Esreh. As most of the synagogues were already oriented in that direction this was an automatic action. In the instances where the ark was placed along the wall opposite that which was Jerusalem--oriented the congregation had to turn around during the prayers.[62]

It is doubtful that at this time the worshipers were required to cover their heads during prayer. As Zeitlin emphasizes, this is apparent not only from silence, but from a statement in the tractate Semhorim that in the early days even the Shema' could be recited by men with uncovered heads.[63] As for the women, however, their heads had to be covered as is reflected in the custom of the early Christian Church.[64]

The use of the tephillin, or phylacteries during prayer was restricted to private prayer and weekday synagogue prayer, but was not a part of the synagogue service on Sabbath or festivals. The same is true of the tallit, or prayer-shawl.[65]

The Shemoneh 'Esreh is the designation given to a group of prayers,

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[62] W. Bacher, Synagogue, in A Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), IV, 639.

[63] Solomon Zeitlin, "An Historical Study of the First Canonization of the Hebrew Liturgy," The Jewish Quarterly Review, XXXVIII (January, 1948), p. 303.

[64] Cf. I Corinthians 11:6.

[65] Levertoff, op. cit., p. 66.

the keynote of which is praise. They invariably end with the formula: "Blessed art thou, O Lord . . . ." which has also given to them the name Berakhoth, or benedictions. Frequently also they are called Tephillah, which means, "the prayer." In more recent times its revised and descended form still in common use in Judaism has been called Amidah (Hebrew for "standing," because it is recited standing), or the Eighteen Benedictions. The number of the prayers in this group as we shall see has varied in history from the original six prayers for week-days and seven for Sabbaths and feast-days, to its present fixed form of nineteen.[66]

Since the current versions do not represent the earliest form of these benedictions, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the basic text or the text as it was used during the time of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as Levertoff contends,

> There was always an aversion among the Rabbis to making prayer a matter of mixed formulas. Some Rabbis, for instance, held that one should include something new in one's prayer every day (Ber. 29b); and even in the third century A.D. much latitude prevailed as regards personal deviations in phraseology.[67]

The beginnings of the Tephillah are veiled in obscurity, although some trace portions of the prayer, particularly the first three and the last three benedictions, as far back as Ezra.[68] It is, however, general-

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[66] Ibid., p. 71. For an explanation of the difference in counting eighteen or nineteen benedictions cf. Jocz, op. cit., p. 54 and Edersheim, op. cit., I, 441.

[67] Levertoff, op. cit., p. 73.

[68] Cf. Blau, op. cit., VIII, 133 and Arthur P. Stanley, Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), III, 135.

ly agreed that these six skeleton benedictions constitute the oldest portions of the prayer.[69] The first three petitions are petitions of praise. Although the exact form of these benedictions is all but impossible to determine for a given period in history, an old version of these benedictions, and perhaps much like that used at the time of Christ, is that given by Levertoff. Benediction I:

> Blessed art thou, O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, the great, mighty, and awful God, the God most high, Possessor of heaven and earth, our shield and the shield of our fathers, our trust from generation to generation. Blessed art thou, O Shield of Abraham.

Benediction II:

> Thou art mighty forever, O Lord; thou quickenest the dead; thou art mighty to save. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who quickenest the dead.

Benediction III:

> Thou art holy and awful is thy name, and there is no God apart from thee. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the holy God.[70]

The last three benedictions close the Tephillah on a note of thanksgiving to God. In their early form as quoted by Levertoff, they perhaps read as follows:

> Benediction XVI: Be pleased, O Lord, our God (with our prayers); dwell in Zion, and may thy servants worship thee in Jerusalem . . . . Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, whom alone we fear and worship.

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[69] Per Contra Louis Finkelstein, "The Development of the Amidah," The Jewish Quarterly Review, XVI (1925-1926), passim where the oldest petitions are listed as 1, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

[70] Levertoff, op. cit., p. 71. For the current form of these benedictions see Daily Prayers. Revised edition. With English translation by Dr. A. Th. Philips (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, n.d.), pp. 103f. Hereafter this work will be referred to as Daily Prayers.

Benediction XVII: We give thanks unto thee; we thank thee for all thy benefits, the grace and loving-kindness with which thou hast rewarded us and which thou hast shown (lit.done') to us and to our fathers before us. Blessed art thou, O Lord, whom it is good to thank (or, 'the good God, whom it is meet to thank').

Benediction XVIII: Grant peace upon Israel thy people and upon thy city, and upon thine inheritance, and bless us all together (lit. 'as one'). Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Maker of peace.[71]

There are those who believe that at an early date and perhaps at the time of Christ the Tephillah used in the Sabbath service consisted only of these six benedictions plus one other single prayer that took the place of the thirteen intervening petitions. The subject of the substituted prayer was identified with the particular day and its proper observance. There are others, however, who believe that even though the intervening petitions were not a part of the original Tephillah and each had its own historical development, most of them were used already in the Sabbath service in Christ's day. In either case the thirteen petitions deserve some mention as to their content and form.

To be sure the thirteen intervening petitions were not used in their present form at the time of Christ. The Tephillah did not receive its present form until after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The work of recasting and giving a fixed form to Tephillah seems to have been precipitated by the need for a unified and unifying among the dispersed Jews after this date. The Talmud in a general way ascribes the final formulation of the Tephillah to the "Men of the Great Assembly."[72]

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[71]Moore, op. cit., I, 295; Edersheim, op. cit., I, 440.

[72]Megillah 17b.

But by the side of this pious ascription stands the far more likely historical statement also in the Talmud that reads: "Our Rabbis have taught: Simeon the cotton-dealer (Dalman transl. Flachsschüller) arranged the eighteen benedictions in order in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel at Jabneh."[73] On the basis of this it is generally accepted that Simeon ha-Pakuli, in the presence and under the direction of Gamaliel II in about 90 A.D., recast the Tephillah in the form to which all modern versions of it revert.[74] According to Moore,

> the work of the redactor was principally, as tradition describes it, to arrange in appropriate order existing topics of prayer, probably with the exercise of a certain selection among nearly equivalent petitions and the adoption of a normal, though not obligatory phraseology.[75]

The prayers themselves, particularly the central thirteen petitions, had their origin at various times and under various circumstances. Some of them were adapted from the Temple liturgy, others were perhaps originally framed for the private use of individuals, while others still, expressing feeling and desires of the community or the people, seem to have their origin in the synagogue itself.

Professor Finkelstein, Jewish liturgical scholar, on the basis of

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[73]Jocz, op. cit., p. 52.

[74]Moore, op. cit., I, 292.

[75]Ibid., I, 292f.

of the presence of the term אלהינו ה' , designates as the oldest of the thirteen petitions the prayers for health (VIII), for prosperous years (IV), and for Jerusalem (XIV). These existed in some form already before the Christian era.[76] In an early form these petitions read as follows:

> Benediction VIII: Heal us, O Lord, from our afflictions, and vouchsafe a healing to our wounds. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Healer of the sick.
>
> Benediction IX: Bless this year unto us for our good in all kinds of the produce thereof. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who blessest the years.
>
> Benediction XIV: Have pity, O Lord our God, on Israel thy people, on Jerusalem thy city, and on Zion the dwelling-place of thy glory, and on thine altar, and on thy Palace, and on the Kingdom of the house of David, the Messiah thy righteousness. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Builder of Jerusalem.[77]

Finkelstein, also on the basis of internal evidence, assigns the petitions for wisdom (IV), for repentance (V), for redemption (VII), and for the gathering of the dispersed (X) to the period of the rise of the pupils of Hillel, that is the period beginning about 10-20 A.D.[78] In an early form these petitions read as follows:

> Benediction IV: O our Father, favour us with knowledge, understanding, and discernment from the Law. Blessed art thou, O Lord, gracious Giver of knowledge.
>
> Benediction V: Turn us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall turn; renew our days like unto the days of old. Blessed art thou, O Lord,

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[76] Finkelstein, op. cit., p. 8.

[77] Levertoff, op. cit., p. 72. For the present form see Daily Prayers, pp. 93ff.

[78] Finkelstein, op. cit., pp. 12f.

who delightest in repentance.

Benediction VII[79]: Look upon our afflictions and plead our cause, and redeem us for thy Name's sake. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the redeemer of Israel.

Benediction X[80]: Sound the great horn for our freedom, and lift up the ensign to gather us. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gatherest the banished ones of Israel.[81]

Paul Levertoff dates the fifteenth petition before Christ, and the petition concerning forgiveness (VI) tentatively at the "beginning of the Christian era."[82] The version of these prayers he cites is:

Benediction XV: Hear, O Lord our God, our voice and have mercy upon us. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Hearer of Prayer.

Benediction VI: Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who dost abundantly forgive.[83]

Two other petitions Levertoff dates with a general and uncertain "after A.D. 70?" These are the prayers for restoration of good government (XI), and for the restoration of sacrificial worship (an insertion in XVI)[84]. In an early form they are as follows:

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[79]Levertoff dates this petition after 70 A.D. Cf. Levertoff, loc. cit.

[80]Rankin dates this petition from 40-70 A.D. Cf. O. S. Rankin, "The Extent of the Influence of the Synagogue Service Upon Worship," The Journal of Jewish Studies, I, 1 (1st Quarter, 1928), p. 29.

[81]Levertoff, loc. cit.

[82]Ibid.

[83]Ibid.

[84]Ibid., pp. 72f.

> Benediction XI: Restore our judges as at first, and our counsellors as at the beginning, and reign thou alone over us. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who lovest righteousness and judgment.
>
> Benediction XVI: Have pity and restore thy Shekinah into Zion thy city, and the order of (sacrificial) worship into Jerusalem. Blessed art thou, O Lord, our God, whom alone we fear and worship.[85]

The last of the prayers to be added to the Tephillah were the petitions for the destruction of heretics and apostates (XII, known as the Birkat ha-Minim), and for the righteous converts (XIII). These two petitions, known definitely to have had their origin after 70 A.D., have been dated as late as 110-117 A.D.[86] In their early forms they read:

> Benediction XII: Let the apostates have no hope, and may the wicked kingdom (Rome) be rooted out, and the Nazoreans and the Minim (heretics) perish as in a moment, and be blotted out from the book of life. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant.
>
> Benediction XIII: May they tender mercies be stirred towards the proselytes of righteousness, and give us a good reward with those who do thy will. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Trust of the righteous.[87]

The twelfth benediction, attributed to Samuel the Small, was directed against the minim who were those ostracized and considered heretical by the synagogue leaders. Chiefly at this time these were Jewish Christians, antinomians and sectarians.[88]

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid., p. 72.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Jocz, op. cit., pp. 52f; Blau, op. cit., VIII, 133.

The Decalogue.--There is a tradition that in early times, perhaps yet at the time of Christ, the Decalogue had a place in the synagogue service. Whether this was recited after the *shema'* or after the *Tephillah* it is quite certain that it was in the portion of the service before the reading of the Torah.[89] The custom was discontinued about the middle of the first century, according to Rabbi Nathan, "because of the *Minim*," that is, because some heretical group, perhaps of Jewish Christians, maintained that it was only the Decalogue revealed by God to Moses.[90]

The Priestly Benediction.--The priestly benediction of Numbers 6:23-26 was taken over to the synagogue from the Temple. The benediction did not serve as the terminal point in the synagogue worship service, as is customary in the Christian liturgy, but most probably came at the end of the *Tephillah*. According to Moore, the Priest's Benediction, when pronounced, fell between the seventeenth and eighteenth benedictions of the *Tephillah*, being very fittingly placed before the benediction concerning the peace of God, serving as a kind of congregational response to the Priest's Benediction.[91] The words of the priest, "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace," are taken up by the

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[89]Cf. Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938), p. 65. Hereafter referred to as Finkelstein, *Pharisees*. Also cf. Lovertoff, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

[90]Berakhoth 12a.

[91]Moore, *op. cit.*, I, 294.

congregation through the shaliach tsibbur: "Bestow peace . . . upon us," etc., with the corresponding benediction to the "Maker of peace."

The priest in pronouncing the benediction elevated his hands up to the shoulders and spoke the blessing in three parts. After each section the people responded with an Amen.[92] The superstitution that it was unlawful to look on the priest while he spoke the blessing[93] Edersheim regards as being of later date.[94]

The Priest's Benediction was to be pronounced only by the priest and, as is still the custom, when a priest or descendant from a priestly family was not present for the sabbath worship, the benediction was omitted.[95]

The Reading of the Torah

In the words of Herford: The principle object of the Jewish assembly in the Synagogue has always been to release in experience the blessing of which the divinely given Torah was the revelation and the instrument."[96] Schmerer expressed the same thought: "the main object of these Sabbath day assemblages in the synagogue was not public worship

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[92]Edersheim, op. cit., I, 442.

[93]Chagigah 16a.

[94]Edersheim, op. cit., I, 443.

[95]Levertoff, loc. cit.

[96]Herford, op. cit., p. 93.

in its stricter sense, i.e., not devotion, but religious instructions, and this for an Israelite was above all instruction in the law."[97] For this reason the reading of the Torah was the very center of the Sabbath worship. It has even been said and is likely true that the reading of the Torah occupied the place in the synagogue that the sacrifice held in the Temple.[98]

Nehemiah records a special blessing that Ezra uttered before reading the book of the Law, to which the assembly responded with "Amen! Amen!"[99] This practice was continued subsequently in the synagogue. The first reader would begin with the introductory "Bareku" (Bless ye the Lord).[100] According to Levertoff the congregation would then respond: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who gavest us the Torah of truth and plantest eternal life in our midst. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Giver of the Torah."[101]

According to the Mishnah there were to ve seven Torah readers in the Sabbath morning service and each was to read a minimum of three verses. In calling up the readers the archisynagogus was to give pre-

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[97]Schuerer, op. cit., XXIII, 93.

[98]George A. Barton, The Religion of Israel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1928), p. 148.

[99]Nehemiah 8:6.

[100]Kaufmann Kohler, Benedictions, in The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1916), III, 9.

[101]Levertoff, op. cit., p. 74. Levertoff also sees in this a possible clue to Jesus' words in John 5:39.

cedence to a priest or descendant of Aaron if one was present. Next followed a Levite, and afterwards five ordinary Israelites.[102] How closely this injunction was followed in the first century of the present era, especially in the smaller synagogues of Palestine, is not known.

It is probable that when readings on ordinary Sabbaths first came to be customary, a passage was selected freely by the head of the synagogue or by the reader. Successive readers then might take passages from different parts of the Torah. If this had not been true then the prohibition in M. Megillah: "Readers may not skip from place to place in the Pentateuch,"[103] would be meaningless. Ultimately the Pentateuch, however, was divided into consecutive sections (sederim, or parashoth) of such length as to complete the reading of the Pentateuch in a specific length of time. The Talmud reflects this development with the statement "that Israel might hear the law consecutively."[104] Moore suggests that a practical reason for this, aside from the spiritual benefit that no doubt accrued, may have been that the rolling and unrolling of the scroll for widely separated readings was tedious both to the hazzan and the congregation.[105]

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[102] Gittin 59b and Megillah 24a.

[103] M. Megillah IV, 1a.

[104] Megillah 75b.

[105] Moore, op. cit., I, 299.

By the third century[106] of the Christian era a regular pericopal system for reading the Torah had developed. The Jews in the West generally followed the Palestinian custom of reading through the Torah in three or three and half years.[107] In the three year cycle the text was divided into 154 sections, one for each Sabbath, and in the three and half year cycle there were 175 divisions.[108] The Babylonian custom, which may have developed later and is the generally used pericope today, read through the Torah in one year.[109] Dr. Finch in his special study of the origin of the synagogue pericopal system contends that the triennial readings were in use already at the time of Christ. In his significant study he points to possible connections between the words of Jesus and actions of Christ and the pericopal section of the Torah read in the synagogue.[110] Finch describes the Palestinian pericopal system:

> In it portions appropriate to the great days of the calendar fell to be used on these occasions, surely not without some adjustment of the chronology, and the matter lying between them was distributed over the intervening weeks so that an end of such reading was made about the first sabbath of Adar.[111]

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[106] Cf. Megillah 29b, Jerusalem Shabbath XVI, 1 and Sopher XVI, 10.

[107] Moore, op. cit., I, 299f.

[108] Idersheim, op. cit., I, 444.

[109] Moore, loc. cit.

[110] Finch, op. cit., passim.

[111] Ibid., p. 2.

According to Finch in the fourth century the annual Babylonian cycle displaced the older Palestinian one.[112]

The Torah was read in the synagogue service in its original Hebrew form. Since the Bible Hebrew had at the time of Jesus long since ceased to be the spoken language of the Jews, it seems that the reading was usually accompanied by a translation into the vernacular.[113] In Palestine, Babylonia, and parts of Syria the vernacular was Aramaic. In Egypt and in general throught the Diaspora the vernacular was Greek.[114] In many cases a special person was called upon to act as translator in the services. Since the translation was called the targum, he became known as the תַּרְגְּמָן or תּוּרְגְּמָן . Larger synagogues, no doubt, hired a special Targumist or Methorgeman of their own.[115] As a rule the Targumist could be a scribe, rabbi or any one who was familiar with the Scriptures and had a traditional acquaintance with the Targum.

Although it is not certain when the use of a translation entered the synagogue service, it has been traced back as far as Ezra. In Ezra's assembly the practice is stated: "They read in the book of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Moore, op. cit., I, 302.

[114] It is possible that the Septuagint was read in the Greek speaking lands in place of the Hebrew text. Finch, op. cit., p. 63.

[115] Bacher, op. cit., IV, 641.

the reading."[116] The traditional Talmudic interpretation of this passage is that it refers to an Aramaic translation that accompanied the reading of the Torah.[117] Of this Golub adds the comment that Ezra "stopped at nothing which might make for the spread of the Torah."[118] Concerning the translation the Talmud further specifies: "One who reads the Torah (in the Synagogue) should read not less than three verses, and he should not read to the translator more than one verse (at a time)."[119]

The present practice in the synagogue of intoning the Torah and many of the prayers in the manner of a ritual or liturgical chant seems to have an early origin. These intonations, entirely foreign to our present musical system, are mostly in an indefinite rhythm, a sort of cantilation.[120] In the early synagogue and Temple readings the readers or cantors had to memorize the inflections and intonations as the texts were unpointed and unmarked. Taking their clue from musical notations used in connection with the shofar,[121] the Levites evolved thirty different inflections which applied to most of the readings. For these differ-

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[116]Nehemiah 8:8.

[117]Megillah 3a.

[118]Golub, op. cit., p. 492.

[119]Megillah 24a

[120]Cf. Alois Kaiser and William Sparger, The Principal Melodies of the Synagogue: From the Earliest Time to the Present (Chicago: T. Rubovits, 1893), p. ivff. and David Ewen, Hebrew Music (New York: Block Publishing Company, 1931), pp. 26f.

[121]The ram's horn blown at festivals in the Temple.

ent inflections they evolved and invented curious signs which they added to the text to aid the reader in remembering how to sing a certain passage.[122] How extensively these annotations were in use during the period of the synagogue under consideration is not known.[123]

The reading of the Torah was generally concluded with a short benediction: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who has chosen us from among all the nations, and hast given us thy Torah. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Giver of the Torah."[124] To this the congregation responded, "Amen."

After the Torah

The Reading of the Haphtarah.--The reading from the Prophets or Haphtarah was preceded by benedictions which, at least in substance probably were as follows:

> Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who hast chosen good prophets, and hast found pleasure in their words which were spoken in truth. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who hast chosen the Law, and Moses thy servant, and Israel thy people, and the prophets of truth and righteousness.[125]

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[122] Idem, op. cit., p. 26.

[123] For a complete treatment of the development of Jewish music see A. Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Music: In Its Historical Development (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1948), passim.

[124] Levertoff, op. cit., p. 74. Also cf. Kohler, op. cit., p. 9.

[125] Levertoff, loc. cit.

> Gladden us, O Lord our God, with the prophet Elijah, thy Servant, and with the Kingdom of the house of David, thy Messiah. May he come soon and gladden our hearts. Suffer not a stranger (Herod) to sit upon his throne, nor let others any longer inherit his glory; for by thy holy Name thou didst swear unto him (David) that his light should never be quenched. Blessed art thou, O Lord, the Shield of David.[126]

The haphtarah (Hebrew הַפְטָרָה), or lection from the prophetic books, was so named because it formed the "conclusion" of the reading from the Scriptures. The expression that was commonly used, הִפְטִיר בַּנָּבִיא meant "to close with the prophet."[127] The Talmud reflects that already in the first century of the common era the haphtarah was regularly read at the Sabbath morning services, although it indicates that there was no lectio continua required.[128] Hence the choice of the selection was open to the archisynagogus or the reader.[129] Finch, however, in his study states that although a lectio continua was not required for the haphtarah there was a pericopal system in use already at an early date, perhaps in the time of Christ. Of this he says: "With the reading of the Law there went as a kind of Second Lesson a short reading from the Prophets, chosen as appropriate to and enforcing the teaching of the Torah for the day."[130]

As to the length of the selection Finch continues: "Originally it

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[126] Ibid.

[127] Schuerer, op. cit., XXIII, 81.

[128] Cf. Megillah IV, 4.

[129] Cf. Moore, op. cit., I, 301.

[130] Finch, op. cit., p. 3.

consisted of one verse, then three, ten, and finally twenty-one with a verse of good omen added at the conclusion.[131]

Th The Haphtarah, it seems, was read by only one person. In reading the verses to the translator the reader may, according to the Talmud, give him three verses at a time. "If the three verses constitute three separate paragraphs, he must read them (to the translator) one by one. The reader may skip from place to place in the Prophet but not in the Torah."[132]

The Discourse.—The דְּרָשָׁה , or discourse, was already an established part of the synagogue service at the time of Christ.[133] Its roots in all probability lay in the expositions that Ezra addressed to his assemblies.[134] There was no stated preacher, as has been already pointed out, and it was the responsibility of the archisynagogus to select each Sabbath the best qualified layman to deliver the discourse. Edersheim lists a number of qualifications for the preacher that were considered, if not essential, at least advisable.

> He ought to have a good figure, a pleasant expression, and melodious voice (his words ought to be 'like those of the bride to the bridegroom'); fluency, speech 'sweet as honey,' 'pleasant as milk and honey'—'Finely sifted like flour,' a diction richly adorned, 'like a bride on her wedding day;' and sufficient confidence in his own knowledge and self-assurance never to be disconcerted . . .

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131 Ibid.

132 Megillah 24a.

133 Cf. Luke 4:20ff.

134 Cf. Nehemiah 8.

> as far as mental qualifications of the preacher, he must know his Bible as well.[135]

Frequently guest rabbis, teachers, scribes or pharisees were asked to preach. This was the case with Jesus in Nazareth and elsewhere,[136] and of Paul at Antioch of Pisidia.[137]

The content of the discourses, of course, varied greatly. Philo makes some general references to frequently used themes:

> Our houses of prayer in the several towns are none other than institutions for teaching prudence and bravery, temperance and justice, piety and holiness; in short every virtue which the human and the divine recognises and enjoins.[138]

Concerning the style and methods used Edersheim has this to say:

> There were scarcely bounds to the liberties taken by the preacher. He would divide a sentence, cut off one or two syllables from a word and join them to the next, so producing a different meaning, or giving a new interpretation to the text. Perhaps the strangest method was that of introducing Greek words and expressions into the Hebrew, and thus not only to give a witty repartee, but in illustration of Scriptures . . . . If such license was taken, it seems comparatively a small thing that a doctrine was derived from a word, a particle, or even a letter. But as already stated, the great point was to attract the hearers. Parables, stories, allegories, witticisms, strange and foreign words, absurd legends, in short, anything that might startle an audience, was introduced.[139]

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[135] Edersheim, op. cit., I, 447.

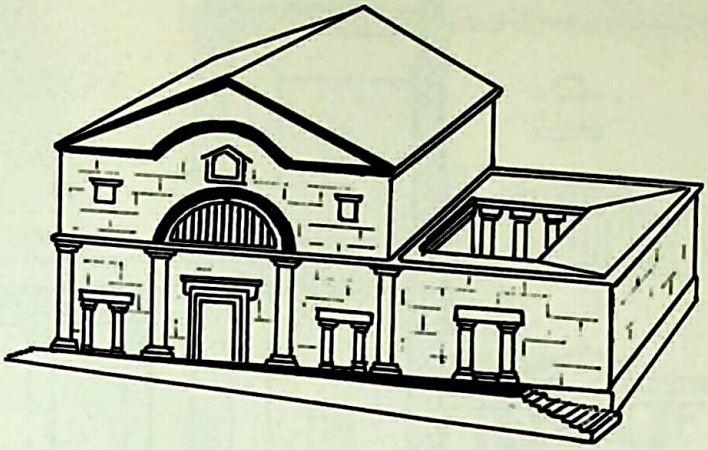
[136] Luke 4:16ff.; Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:44.

[137] Acts 13:15ff.

[138] Quoted in Mansperath, op. cit., p. 85.

[139] Edersheim, op. cit., I, 448.

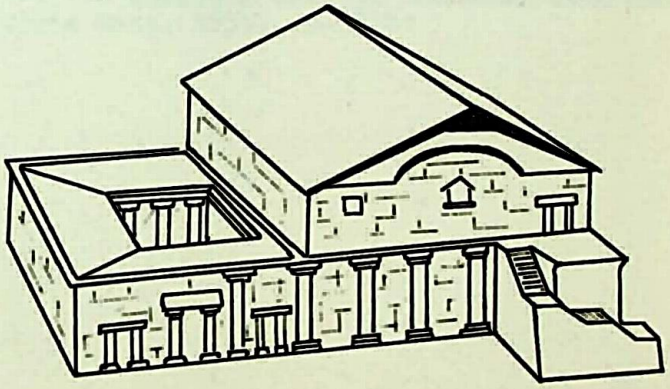
APPENDIX



Front of a Model of the Synagogue at Tell Hum

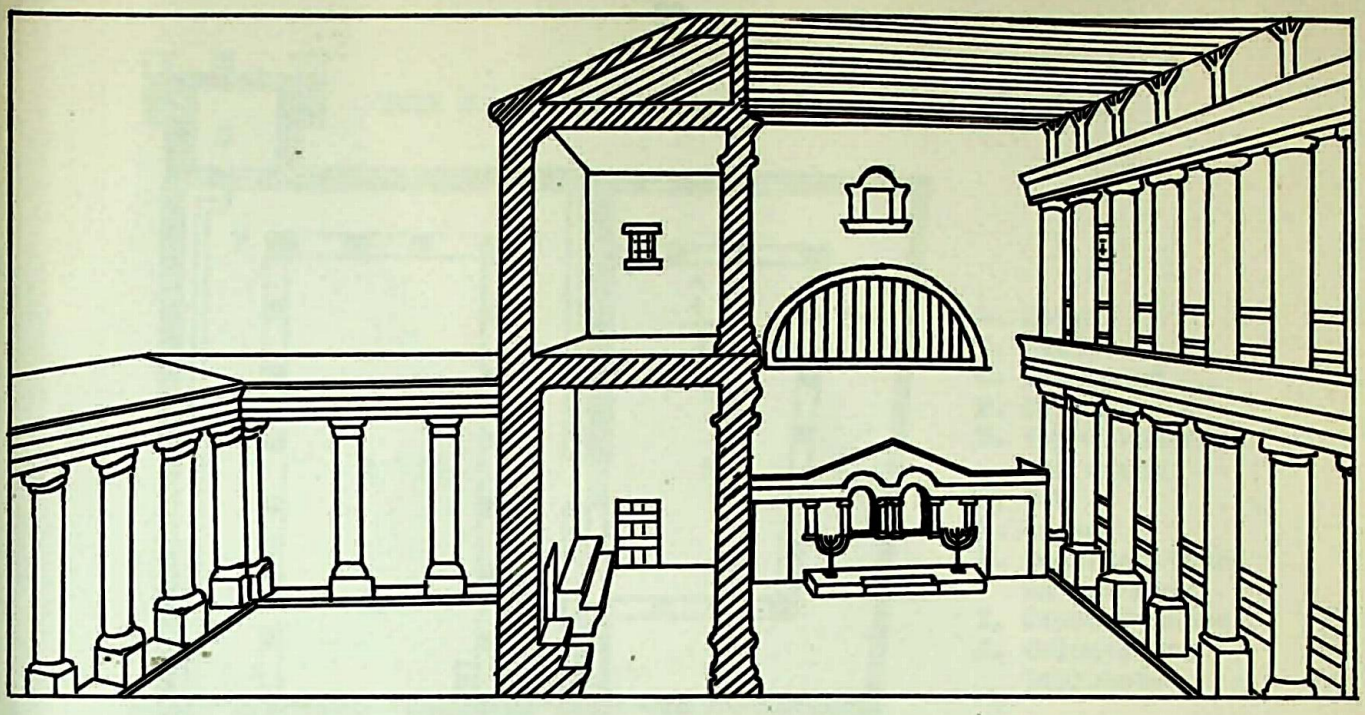
by H. Kohl and C. Watzinger*

*Herbert G. May, "Synagogues in Palestine," The Biblical Archaeologist, V (February, 1944), 1.



Rear View of the Above Synagogue Model*

*Gustav-Dalman, Sacred Sites and Ways (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), p. 140.

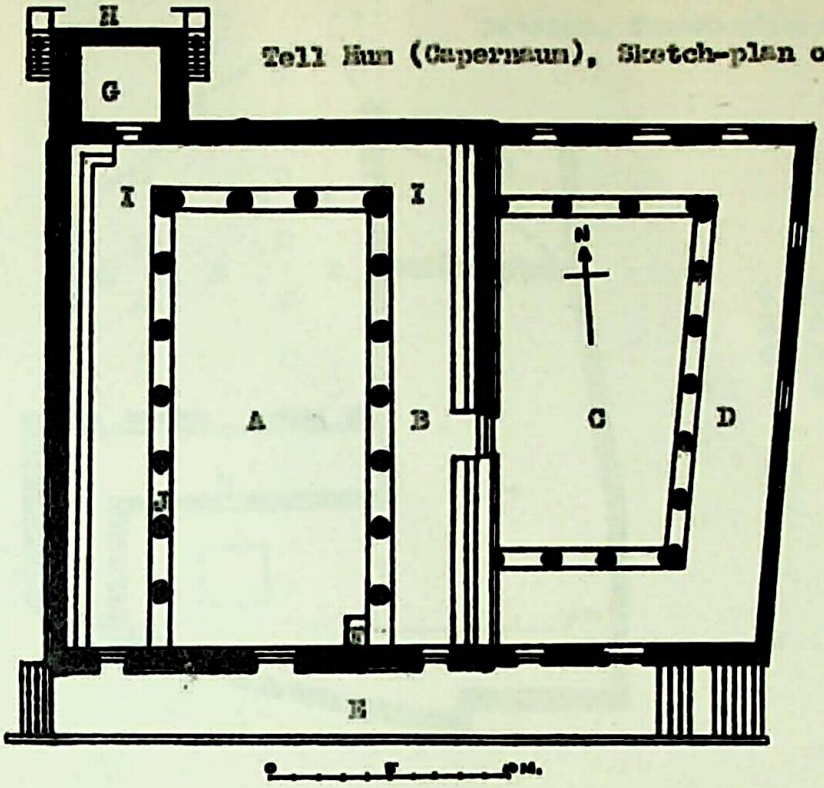


Cross-section of a Model of the Synagogue

at Tell Hum*

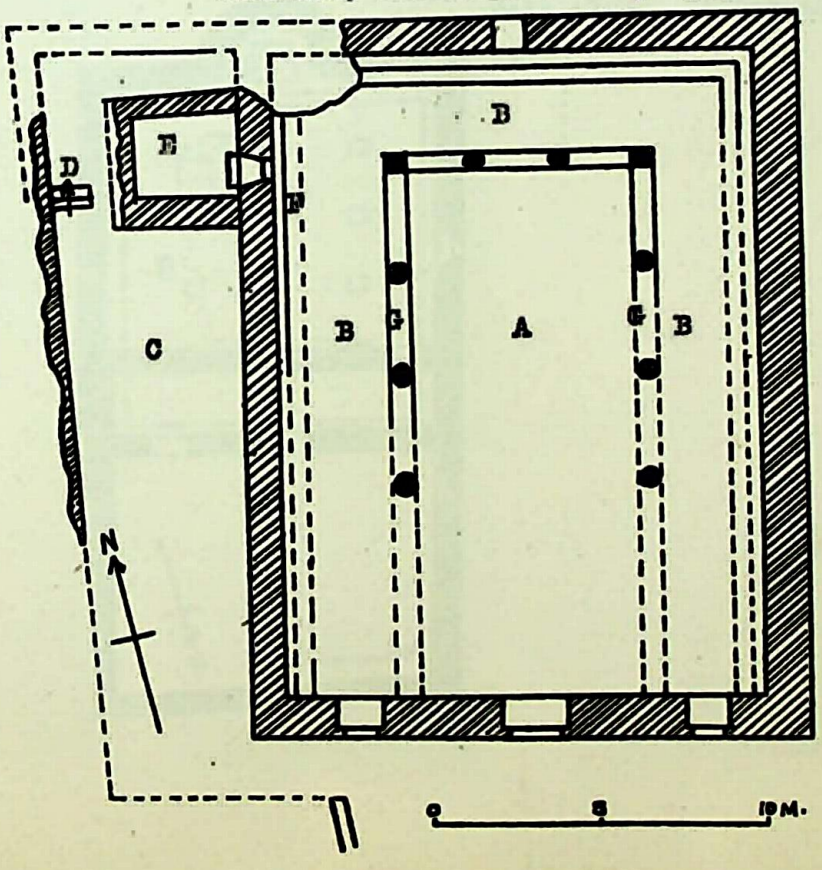
*A. C. Bouquet, Everyday Life in New Testament Times (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 216.

Tell Hum (Capernaum), Sketch-plan of Synagogue



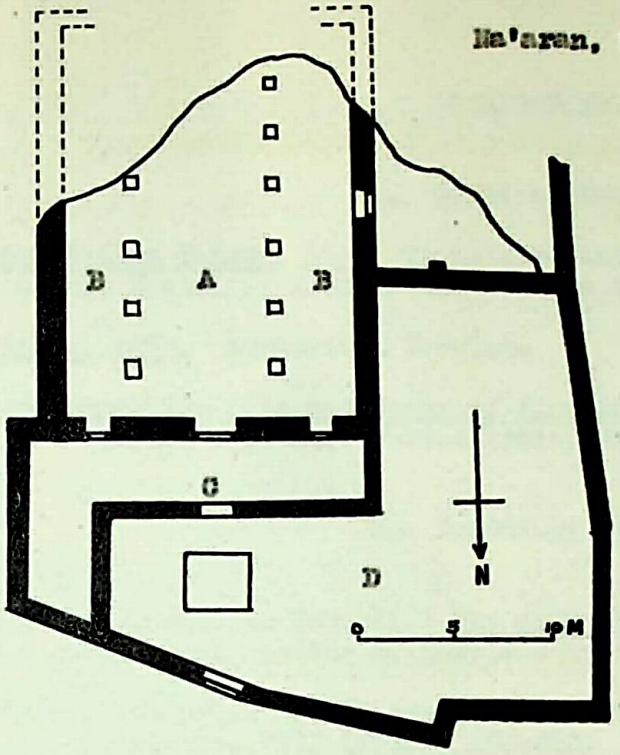
A. Nave
B. Aisles
C. Courtyard
D. Portico
E. Front Platform and steps
F. Ark
G. Annex
H. Outside Stairs to Balcony
I. Stone Benches
J. Columns and Stylobate

Chorazin, Sketch-plan of Synagogue



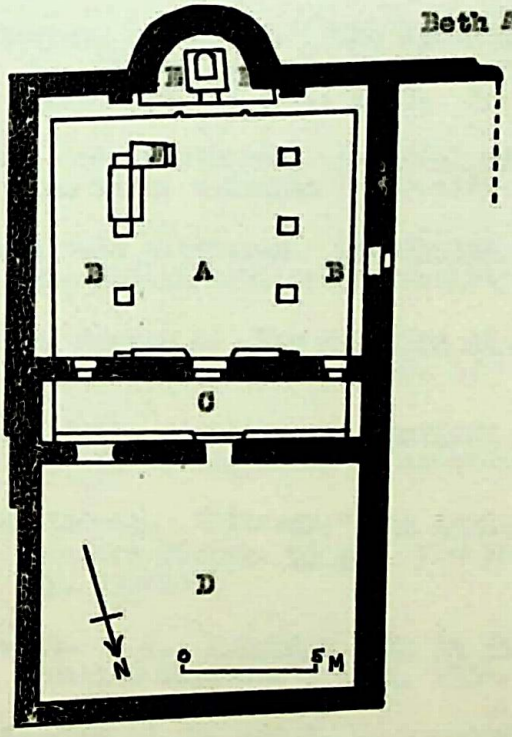
A. Nave
B. Aisles
C. Courtyard and Portico
D. Stairs to Balcony
E. Annex
F. Stone Benches
G. Columns and Stylobate

Ma'aran, Sketch-plan of Synagogue



A. Nave
B. Aisles
C. Vestibule
D. Courtyard

Beth Alpha, Sketch-plan of Synagogue



A. Nave
B. Aisles
C. Vestibule
D. Courtyard
E. Apse Containing Ark
F. Bema

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