The Temple of Jerusalem:
From Moses to the Messiah
The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah

In Honor of Professor Louis H. Feldman

Edited by
Steven Fine
The Center for Israel Studies
Yeshiva University

BRILL

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"This volume is the product of the inaugural conference of the Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies which took place on May 11–12, 2008"—Preface.

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PREFACE

One who never saw the Temple of Herod has never seen a beautiful building.
—Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 4a

This claim for the beauty of Herod’s temple resonates throughout Jewish and Roman literature of antiquity, from Josephus to the Talmud, from Tacitus to Cassius Dio. For the rabbis to make this claim is nonetheless quite intriguing. The temple that Herod the Great rebuilt in Jerusalem was surrounded with suspicion from the very first, with many Jews fearing that once Herod took down the Hasmonean temple, he might never rebuild it. These fears were, it turns out, unfounded. Herod did rebuild the temple, and in record time. He designed it according to the highest architectural standards of his day. The architectural identity of the temple was part and parcel of the massive imperial construction projects initiated by Herod’s patron, Augustus, in Rome and across the empire. Herod’s “beautiful” building was most like a temple to the deified emperor, and on a scale appropriate to a client king who was soon called not just “Herod” but “Herod the Great.”

The destruction of Herod’s “one temple for the one God,” (as Josephus describes it) in 70 CE was perhaps the most significant “tipping point” in the long history of the Jewish people and its search of the Divine. Temple worship was essential to Jewish identity from hoary biblical antiquity, from the Tabernacle in the desert to Solomon’s Temple and the temple that was rebuilt under Persian imperial sponsorship and continually under construction—both physically and conceptually—until it was destroyed by Titus in the summer of 70 CE. From that day to the present, Jews—at least some Jews—continued to think about, imagine, and pray for the rebuilding of the Temple and the messianic advent its reconstruction would signify. Along the way, Samaritans, bearing their own unique and very ancient traditions, and their own holy mountain, would, like Jews, ponder the Tabernacle, and await its messianic return. Christians too developed deep concern for the Temple, and the Haram al-Sharif is today the site of Islam’s third most holy site, the Al Aqsa mosque.
For readers of this volume, none of this is new. What is exciting, however, is the extent to which recent research across disciplines has added to our understanding of this most complex phenomenon. The essays collected here reflect the ongoing scholarly concern with the Temple of Jerusalem, across the ages and disciplines. This volume is the product of the inaugural conference of the Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies which took place on May 11–12, 2008. The Center for Israel Studies, established in 2007, nurtures excellence in interdisciplinary scholarship and the teaching of Israel throughout history and across disciplines, with a keen focus upon both the longue durée and the modern state. The Center for Israel Studies supports research, conferences, publications, museum exhibitions, public programs and educational opportunities that enhance awareness and study of Israel in all of its complexities.

It is my pleasant duty to thank the many people who have made this collection possible, beginning with the authors themselves. The manuscript was prepared for submission by a team of Yeshiva University undergraduate and graduate students. I thank Michael Cinnamon, David Danzig, Simcha Gross, Gila Kletenik, Joseph Offenbacher, Jackie Rosenswie, Anna Socher, Matthew Williams, and especially James Nikraftar, who led the student team. As always, I am pleased to thank the people at E. J. Brill for their professionalism and kindness in bringing this volume to press. Finally, the Center for Israel Studies is the brainchild of Richard M. Joel, the president of Yeshiva University and Morton Lowengrub, our Vice President for Academic Affairs. I have been most fortunate to guide and form the Center for Israel Studies since its inception, and am gratified to present this, the first academic publication of the Center.

This volume, like the conference upon which it is based, is dedicated to Professor Louis H. Feldman, the Abraham Wouk Family Professor of Classics and Literature at Yeshiva University. Professor Feldman is completing his fifty-fourth year as a member of the Yeshiva faculty, an astonishingly long career during which he has taken the role of mentor to generations of our students. To this day, Professor Feldman’s influence and personal charisma animate our campus, as they do his classroom. With that, Professor Feldman is the doyen of all scholars of the Second Temple period, the undisputed world authority on the writings of Flavius Josephus. This volume is a small token of
the respect and affection in which the faculty, students and community of Yeshiva University hold Professor Louis H. Feldman, a true gavra rabba be-Israel.

Steven Fine
New York City
Israel Independence Day, 5770
April 20, 2010
It is my honor to join in this celebration of Professor Louis H. Feldman. Professor Feldman has taught at Yeshiva University since 1955, when the renowned scholar of Philo of Alexandria, Jewish thinker and second president of Yeshiva University, Samuel Belkin, brought this newly minted Harvard-trained classicist to our campus. A skilled academic “talent scout,” Belkin could see even then that the young Louis Feldman was destined to be a great scholar. As a classicist and as a traditional Jew, Louis was brought to Washington Heights to exemplify and teach the careful “synthesis” between traditional Judaism and western culture that Yeshiva so prizes, a synthesis whose origins Belkin traced back to Greco-Roman antiquity.

More than half a century later, we can appreciate the richness of Professor Feldman’s contributions to Yeshiva University and to the world of scholarship. His writings on Judaism under Greece and Rome include numerous monographs, hundreds of articles and translations of enduring and foundational value. Professor Feldman has single-handedly moved the great Jewish historian Josephus from the periphery of scholarly interest to the very center of that discussion. The titles of his recent monographs, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (1993), *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible* (1999), *Remember Amalek!: Vengeance, Zealotry, and Group Destruction in the Bible According to Philo, Pseudo-Philo, and Josephus* (2004) and *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (2006), evoke the range of Professor Feldman’s interests.

But Professor Feldman’s legacy expands far beyond his written word. As president of Yeshiva, I am privileged to observe and meet almost daily with Louis’ greatest achievement, his students. Louis Feldman has built his career around mentoring students, bringing to the task an inimitable passion for teaching which is only matched by his knowledge, his keen wit and the playful glimmer in his eye. Professor Feldman’s students are among the most prominent scholars of ancient Judaism in the world. It is less known that they also number among the most prominent rabbis, lawyers, judges, economists, doctors, social
workers and teachers as well. At every turn, I meet yet another hasid of “Professor Feldman,” each with his own endearing “Louis story.” Astonishingly, while many of these students are well past retirement age, Professor Feldman’s newest crop of acolytes are Yeshiva College freshmen.

I am especially excited that the celebration of Louis Feldman recorded in this volume documents the inaugural conference of Yeshiva University’s Center for Israel Studies, The Temple of Jerusalem: From Moses to the Messiah. The Center for Israel Studies, established in 2007, is an expression of the longstanding relationship between Yeshiva University and the land and state of Israel—in all of its richness and complexity. I thank the director of our center, Professor Steven Fine, for organizing this project, and am especially proud that our undergraduate and graduate students were brought in to the editing process and helped to bring this volume to press.

The rabbis of old held that mentorship is the highest level of teaching, and a prerequisite to substantive learning. For more than half a century, Louis Feldman has been the “mentor” to generations of students and readers around the globe. Congratulations, Louis! We all await your next study, and your students await you in class.
In the multi-cultural society of the Iberian peninsula during the fourteenth- and fifteenth centuries, religious art was created not only by members of the faith community it was intended to serve, but its production could be the work of artists of another faith. These joint efforts were, in part, the result of Jewish and Christian artists working together in ateliers that produced both altarpieces as well as Latin and Hebrew manuscripts. In 1941, Millard Meiss was the first to draw attention to the existence of an atelier headed by Ferrer Bassa (d. 1348) that produced two types of artwork, retablos (altarpieces), like that in the Morgan Library, and manuscripts, for example, Part 2 of the Anglo-Catalan Psalter (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 8846), which negated the usual assumption that workshops specialized in only one genre.\(^1\) Subsequently, additional manuscripts were ascribed to the same workshop, among them a Hebrew Moreh Nevukhim (Guide to the Perplexed) of Moses Maimonides whose colophon dates 1348 (Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliothek, cod. hebr. XXXVI).\(^2\) A Book of Hours painted

\(^1\) Millard Meiss, “Italian Style in Catalonia and a Fourteenth-Century Catalan Workshop,” *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, 4(1941), 45–87. Meiss associated the following manuscripts with the workshop of the Master of St. Mark now attributed to Ferrer Bassa: a *Decretum Gratiani* (British Library, Add. Ms 14274–5), a compilation of legal documents known as the *Llibre Verd* (Barcelona: Municipal Archives), Pedro IV’s *Coronation Order of the Kings of Aragon* (Madrid: Museo Lazar Galdiano, ms. R.14,425) and a Missal from Ripoll (Barcelona: Archives of the Crown, Ms. 112), in addition to another retablo and wall paintings. For a recent study of the Bassa workshop, see Rosa Alcoy i Pedrós, *L’Art Gòtic a Catalunya. Pintura I. De l’inici a l’italianisme* (Barcelona: Enciclopèdia Catalana, 2005), 146–70.

between 1338 and 1342 for Mary of Navarre, first wife of Pedro IV (Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. Lat. I), suggests an earlier date for some of the manuscripts.

The production of the Bassa workshop demonstrates that Christians illuminated the pages of Hebrew manuscripts; at the same time documentary and other evidence indicate that Jews and conversos produced altarpieces for Christians. The archives of Saragossa, for example, yield interesting information on Abraham de Salinas, a painter of that city who was commissioned by La Seo Cathedral to paint a retablo on the life of the Virgin in 1393, just two years after the worst pogroms in Spanish history, although it must be noted that Saragossa was one of two Jewish communities spared these attacks. 3 Bonafós Abenxueu, a Jewish silversmith, contracted to provide the frame. Later, Abraham created two other retablos for the Church of San Felipe in Saragossa, one on the life of San Mateo and another devoted to St. John the Baptist. He also painted a retablo for the parochial church of La Puebla de Alborton in the province of Saragossa, and a second altarpiece for the same church with six scenes of the history of the Annunciation to Mary. That Abraham de Salinas was given the commissions just mentioned, including repeat commissions from the same churches, testifies both to the fact that he was esteemed as a painter, and that he was able to produce various Christological themes that satisfied his patrons.

This paper concentrates on architectural representations in one of the art forms created by both Jews and Christians: the altarpiece or retablo. This form of painting came into widespread use as the result of a ruling by the Lateran Council of 1215 that worshippers should be able to view the Transubstantiation, the moment during the mass when the wafer is believed to become the body of Jesus. To allow congregants to view the Elevation of the Host, paintings were moved behind the altar table and were, therefore, known as retablos, literally, works behind the table. The economic success enjoyed by the Kingdom of Aragon in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries allowed for the creation of large, multi-paneled and expensive altarpieces by renowned artists, even in the parish churches of small villages. Due to

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its large size, the iconography of the retablo became extremely complex, and came to include many subjects that required Jewish figures and subjects drawn from the Hebrew Bible.

As a result of both medieval church doctrine (that the Jews of any era were witnesses to the early history of the Church) and the close association of Jews and Christians in the small towns of medieval Aragon, the panel painters who worked in situ used local Jews as models for the figures on altarpieces. An example is an Exodus from Egypt, once part of an altarpiece in Banyoles painted in 1480. The composition, with its triangular space separating the Israelites from the drowning Egyptians at lower right, has a long history and is found in works of art as early as the fourth century. Some of the Jews of Banyoles who appear in the guise of fleeing Israelites may be associated with archival records. One of their leaders, Bonjuà Cabrit, was a doctor-surgeon to the royal house of Catalonia. He may be the man wearing a tallit (prayer shawl) at the head of the procession. His cloak marks him as a Jew in accord with dress regulations that were promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and reiterated in the laws of various Spanish kings including Alfonso X (1252–1284), whose law code was adopted in all of Spain by the second half of the fourteenth century. In 1412, Juan II required both Jewish and

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4 This doctrine is attributed to St. Augustine, who wrote that “if they were not dispersed through the whole world with their scriptures, the Church would lack their testimonies concerning those prophecies fulfilled in our Messiah.” (quoted in Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century. Volume II. 1254–1314*, ed. Kenneth R. Stow (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 25 n. 5.


5 This composition for the Crossing of the Red Sea appears as early as the fourth-century Via Latina Catacomb and on a mosaic in St. Maria Maggiore dated 432–40. (For illustrations, see Henry N. Claman, *Jewish Images in the Christian Church. Art as the Mirror of the Jewish-Christian Conflict 200–1250 CE* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), figs. 2–4 and Wolfgang Fritz Volbach, *Early Christian Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1961), fig. 128. The subject appears among the earlier frescoes from the Synagogue in Dura-Europos, but the composition is somewhat different.

6 Bonjuà Cabrit is cited in legal records as possessing a copy of *Avicenna* that was stolen from Meir of Figueras, the son of a deceased physician. (Robert I. Burns, *Jews in the Notarial Culture. Latinate Wills in Mediterranean Spain 1250–1350* [Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996], 64).

Muslim men to let their hair and beard grow without trimming. The purpose of these requirements was to distinguish between Christians and Jews and to prevent sexual relations between them. The deep red of Cabrit’s robes link him to a woman in red further back in the procession, whose hair is wrapped in a cloth with an ornament at top front. This type of headdress identifies Jewish women in both Jewish and Christian art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

I would like to make one more point before proceeding to the main topic of this paper, and that is the veracity of details found in medieval paintings, both miniatures in manuscripts and paintings intended to be hung on the wall. This point was made by the late Richard Ettinghausen in discussing Islamic miniatures of the medieval period. He wrote: “Close attention is paid in the . . . paintings of Hariri’s Maqamat to details of quotidian existence in the multifaceted Arab mercantile society . . . The unusually detailed vignettes . . . inform us better than those in any other medium about contemporary life in the Arab world.” I would posit that the same may be said of the depictions of Jews and their environment in the altarpieces of Aragon and in related miniatures in haggadot produced during the fourteenth century in Barcelona and its surroundings. I have already written on the explicit depiction of the dress of Jewish men and women in both media; this essay discusses depictions of the Temple and the Jewish quarters on

Cornell University Press, 2006), 163 and for a history of clothing restrictions, see Ray, 156–64.


9 Women wearing the same headdress appear in the seder scene of the Sarajevo Haggadah (Sarajevo: National Museum) and in that of the manuscript known as the Sister of the Golden Haggadah (London: British Library, Or. 2884). For illustrations, see Cecil Roth, Facsimile of the Sarajevo Haggadah (Belgrade: Beogradski Izdavac-Grafički Zavod, 1975), and Bezalel Narkiss, Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles. A Catalogue Raisonné (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), Pl. LI, fig. 168.

Women with the same headdress appear on a retablo panel of the Massacre of the Innocents dated 1390–1400, now in the Saragossa Museum, and the same headgear is worn by a group of women on a fourteenth-century capital in the cloister of Barcelona Cathedral. (For the retablo, see Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, Hebraica aragonalia. El legado judío en Aragón, Vol. 2 (Saragossa: Palacio de Sastago—Diputación de Zaragoza, 2004), 135. For the capital, see Elena Romero, ed., La Vida Judía en Sefarad (Toledo: Julio Soto Impresor, 1991), 60.


Aragonese altarpieces and suggests that their appearance was rooted in local architecture which was invested with symbolic value.

*Depictions of Architecture Associated with Jews in Aragonese Altarpieces*

Of the types of architecture associated with Jewish life in the Kingdom of Aragon, the most common form still existing is the arcuated gate to the *judería*, the Jewish quarter, that can be found in many cities. This defining structure is used to indicate the locus of an episode from fourth-century Christian history, a portrayal of Saint Helena in the Holy Land questioning Judas, a Jew, who claimed to have knowledge of the burial spot of the True Cross, on an altarpiece painted on the theme of the True Cross by Miguel Jiménez and Martín Bernat in 1485–1487 for the Parish Church of Santa Cruz de Blesa in Teruel (fig. 1). The scene is staged on fifteenth-century Jewish turf, just inside the arcuated gate to a *judería*, while the house behind is based on the architecture of Jewish houses like those still extant in Besalú. In this painting, by virtue of the subject matter, the *judería* symbolizes the land of the Jews, the Holy Land.

In contrast to the numerous extant gates to Jewish quarters, there are relatively few complete medieval synagogues to be found in Spain, aside from the well-known ones in Toledo and Cordoba, and the significant remains of a synagogue found in Lorca in 2003. A few medieval buildings have tentatively been identified as belonging to former synagogues, the church of San Antonio Abad in Hijar, for example, but it has not yet been excavated. In Catalyud, the facade

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14 For the synagogue of Hijar, see Motis Dolader, *Hebraica Aragonalia*, 370.
Figure 1: Miguel Jiménez (ca. 1466–1505) and Martín Bernart (ca. 1469–1493). *Interrogation of a Jew. Altarpiece of Santa Cruz*, 1485–1487. Oil on panel. Museo de Saragossa.
of a synagogue remains that features two entrances, one for men and the other for women. To supplement these meager architectural remains, we must turn to the *retablos* on which synagogues served as surrogates for the Temple.

The following scenes found on Aragonese *retablos* took place in the Temple: Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, serving as a priest; the High Priest Expelling Joachim and Anna from the Temple; The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, sometimes represented as his Circumcision, which is the most commonly depicted Temple narrative; and Jesus Speaking to the Doctors, i.e. the sages. Yet, an examination of the architecture in which these events take place shows it to be Gothic, as in the Presentation of Jesus in the *retablo* of San Salvador in Ejea de los Caballeros, whose “Temple” has columns with stylized foliate capitals that support rib vaulting. Two biforium windows complete the impression of a late medieval building, rather than a depiction of an antique Temple. This painted sanctuary is striking for its furnishings, both those that are absent and what is prominently present. There are no signs that the building is a church, no crucifixes on the walls, no altarpieces with holy scenes. Instead the “altar” table is occupied by a very large cylindrical wooden case, too large to be a church vessel but the right size to be a *tik*, a container for the Torah scroll, an appurtenance of medieval synagogues first mentioned in texts of the eleventh century. The same comments could be made about the majority of buildings that are “Temples” on the *retablos*. They are Gothic buildings that are sometimes a combination of nave-like spaces and apses or simply rectangular buildings, as in this Expulsion of Joachim and Anna from the Temple (fig. 2). There are two noteworthy details in this scene. One is the the *zunnar* or rope belt worn by Joachim that was required of dhimmi (protected) populations living under Muslim rule as a means of sartorial differentiation denoting their special status. The second detail is the decoration of the *tik* with a scarf or cloth, a practice still followed in Sephardi and Middle Eastern congregations where the textile is used to follow the text or to show it reverence.

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15 For Catalyud, see Motis Dolader, *Hebraica Aragonalia*, 30.
15a For an image of the Ejea altarpiece, see Mann, *Uneasy Communion*, fig. 38.
Figure 2: Workshop of Blasco de Grañén. The Expulsion of Joachim and Anna from the Temple. Retablo de la Virgen con el Niño. ca. 1435–1445. Tempera on panel. Parish Church of Nostra Señora del Rosario. Villarroya del Campo (Saragossa).
Figure 3: Domingo Ram (a. 1464–1507) *The Annunciation to Zacharias. Saint John the Baptist with Scenes from His Life.* Aragon, last third of the 15th Century. Tempera on wood, gold ground. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, 1925 (25.120.669).
Another Temple scene, the Annunciation to the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, appears as the first scene on an altarpiece devoted to episodes from the life of John the Baptist (fig. 3). The High Priest or kohen gadol is Zacharias, soon to be the father of the saint. He wears bells at the hem of his tunic, and the ziz or breastplate atop his miznefet, his headgear. A chain attached to his foot is held by another priest outside the kodesh k'dashim, the Holy of Holies, for rescue in case Zacharias fainted or died in performance of the day’s rites. This detail is first recorded in the Zohar, written in Spain in the thirteenth century, just two centuries before its appearance in this altarpiece. The Holy of Holies is set off by a doorway. Within it is an altar-shaped table on which sits a tik that was not a feature of the Jerusalem Temple, but a medieval synagogue furnishing. An intriguing detail is the paneled door behind the men which acts to define their separate space, whose shape is difficult to discern. In contrast, in another scene on the altarpiece, John the Baptist preaches to both men and a woman in an interior that is clearly described. John stands in an apse joined to the nave of a church that is defined by its succession of arches. Clearly, the architectural spaces of these two scenes were designed to echo one another, the clarity of the church superseding the uncertain design of the Temple, the broken and cracked floor of the latter hinting at its imminent destruction.

In a scene of the Circumcision of Jesus in the Temple now in the Hispanic Society, Jesus stands on the altar (fig. 4). Most remarkable are the two items of Jewish ceremonial art nearby, a kos or goblet and a circumcision knife whose curved blade is hinged to its protective cover. This particular type of circumcision knife is known from various countries of the Sephardi diaspora: for example, Italy and the Ottoman Empire. The presence of other Jewish ceremonial art in addition to the Torah case reinforces the notion that the building depicted is a synagogue; still the offering of two birds held by Joseph, the offering of a post partum woman, indicates that the building also represents the Temple. In a variant version of the scene from the Convent of San

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Francisco in Tarazona, a similar knife is used and the officiating priest wears a tallit with fringes.\textsuperscript{18}

On the predella of an altarpiece dedicated to St. Anne, the Virgin and St. Michael (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 88.3.32), Jesus has ascended a staircase that is part of a minbar (fig. 5), the term used for the elevated chair of the reader of the Qur'an in a mosque and used in medieval rabbinic literature for the raised platform from which the Torah was read in the synagogue and from which sermons were delivered.\textsuperscript{19} Behind him is the reader's desk and the facade of the Torah ark.


Depictions of a Torah case atop a raised reader’s desk appear in two haggadot: the Barcelona and the Sassoon in scenes of the service in the synagogue that preceded the seder.20

Recent excavations in Lorca prove the accuracy of the synagogue architecture painted on retablos. In 2003, the considerable remains of a synagogue were found near the local fortress. They consist of a vestibule leading to a rectangular hall whose perimeter is surrounded by stone benches. The ruins of the Torah ark are on one of the short ends and the center of the hall is filled with the vestiges of the reader’s desk that was reached by a flight of steps.21 A painted version of this synagogue type appears in the retablo panel now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, where the scene is enlivened by Jewish worshippers seated along the walls and in a parallel row of seats,22 while Mary and Joseph watch Jesus ascend the steps of the minbar (fig. 5). The space is illuminated by glass “mosque” lamps and, in a case of art imitating life, a large cache of glass shards from “mosque” lamps were found beneath the teivah at Lorca and reconstructed.23

Another synagogue furnishing appears in a scene of the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple from Anento in the province of Saragossa.24 It is a painted and gilt leather hanging behind the altar. These wall hangings known as corame were similar to tapestries in that they were prestigious and expensive decorations that also had the practical purpose of preventing drafts and adding a luxurious furnishing to a space. The making of corame was the specialty of Jewish craftsmen. With the expulsion of 1492, Jewish artists brought their craft to Italy where decorated leather hangings soon became a popular and prestigious art form.25 Corame hung and still hang in Sephardi synagogues of the diaspora: in the Scuola Spagnola of Venice, and inside the Torah ark in Bevis Marks, London. This retablo allows us to see that the use of corame in synagogues is a tradition that began in Spain.

21 See above n. 13.
22 The men’s seating in parallel rows facing the center of the building is an arrangement of seats that persists in Sephardi synagogues to this day.
24 Motís Dolader, Aragón Sefarad, 113.
Figure 5: Anonymous. *Christ among the Doctors*. Catalonia, early 15th century. Tempera and gold on wood. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Friedsam Collection, Bequest of Michael Friedsam (32.100.123).
The one exception to the modeling of the Temple on local synagogues is a scene of the Circumcision of Jesus from an altarpiece in Palencia, in which all the figures stand in a hexagonal structure with a domed roof. Medieval circular or polygonal structures were thought to imitate the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the most important Christian building in Jerusalem.

When the Jews of Spain evoked the Temple in their pictorial art, specifically in their Bibles, they did so by representing the implements of the Holy Sanctuary in Jerusalem on a single or double-paged spread. The significance of these furnishings was underscored by the verses surrounding their representation, which linked them to the hope that the Temple would be rebuilt. The building was absent from the Bibles in which these compositions appear; an emphasis on Temple ritual and symbols superseded the representation of their architectural home. This Jewish model could not work for a Christian art, which needed to express the roots of Christianity in Judaism and its supersession of the older religion. Only by depicting its holy persons in Jewish architectural settings, either performing Jewish rites or abrogating them, could the origins of Christianity be expressed pictorially. For Christian artists of medieval Spain, and for Jewish artists who worked for Christian patrons, the local synagogue became the emblematic Jewish space for events dating to the lifetime of Jesus and early saints.

Synagogue architecture in medieval Spain was little different from that of mosques or churches, as attested to by documents recording the conversion of the sacred building of one religion into that of another: synagogues like the El Transito in Toledo became churches, especially at times of persecutions, and mosques became synagogues after the reconquest of Seville. That a building depicted in a retablo was a synagogue depended on its furnishings: foremost among them, the tik, which always appears on an altar table, never in an ark, since for Christian patrons the altar was the focus of sacred space; second, the minbar, the raised reader’s desk that is related to the raised reader’s chair in mosques, a legacy of Muslim rule; third, Jewish ceremonial objects or Hebrew books that appear in many scenes, for example, Jesus among the Doctors, and Saints Preaching in the Syna-

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26 For an image of the panel see Isidro Bango Torviso, Memoria de Sefarad (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior, 2002), no. 235.
gogue. Finally, there was the appearance of prestigious decorations, corame.

The medieval Christian identification of contemporaneous synagogues with the Temple in Jerusalem is eloquently expressed in a description written by Brother Diego de Espés at the time of the destruction of the principal synagogue of Saragossa.

In the year 1559, [the Jesuits] acquired a building contiguous to their college that had been a synagogue of the Jews... It was a three-aisled temple, although small, with pillars; the side naves were somewhat lower, the central nave was taller.... At the southern end was an altar on the wall with raised mosaic and in the north was a large, painted candelabrum with seven lights and also a small pulpit for readings and ceremonies. On the sides, there were six small doors to enter the synagogue or for other ceremonies... and on one side there was a large entrance.... High on the walls, the entire synagogue had large painted and blue Hebrew letters forming inscriptions from the Psalms of David or texts from some Prophets, appropriate metaphors of their Temple.28

Brother Diego’s description hints at a basic reason for the Christian identification of the medieval Spanish synagogue with the Temple in addition to their tendency to see Jews of their own time as equivalent to those alive at the time of Jesus, and the space of the judería as symbolic of the Holy Land. Brother Diego mentions two characteristics of the Saragossa synagogue that Jews themselves interpreted as transforming a synagogue into a mikdash me’at: the presence of a menorah and the decoration of the walls with biblical verses referring to the Holy Sanctuary. Medieval Spanish authorities like Maimonides and Jacob ben Asher wrote: “And in the synagogue, we place the menorah...in remembrance of the Temple menorah.” (Hilkhot Hanukkah 671:6).

In the close quarters of the medieval towns and cities of Aragon, where Jews and Christians mingled daily and the Jewish population of a town like Ejea was 270 out of a total numbering only in the 100’s, economic and social interchange between Christians, Jews, and Muslims was intense. The Muslims who laid tiles in churches and synagogues and the Jews who painted altarpieces for churches could

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not but have exchanged ideas about what was appropriate for the decoration of the Other’s house of worship and the meaning of its architecture. The Jews’ own view of the synagogue as a small Temple, a mikdash me’at,29 a play on the name of the Temple, Beit ha-Mikdash, must have been an influential factor in its depiction in Christian art as a surrogate for the Jerusalem Sanctuary.

29 The dedicatory inscription of the Cordoba Synagogue of 1314–1315 refers to the building as a “small sanctuary.”