BIBLE ILLUSTRATION AND THE JEWISH TRADITION

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Several decades ago, the occurrence of extrabiblical, Jewish elements in early Christian Old Testament iconography led a group of scholars to the hypothetical assumption that both early Christian and Late Antique Jewish narrative cycles hark back to still earlier Jewish illuminated manuscripts. This view, once widely accepted, has been challenged frequently since the 1960s by another group of scholars, who explained the presence of Jewish exegetical motives in Christian art as the result of a tex-

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tual exchange between the Rabbis and the Church Fathers rather than a pictorial exchange between workshops. The latter view was derived primarily from nineteenth-century scholarship on rabbinic motives in the work of the Fathers and the belief that Christian Old Testament exegesis depended massively on rabbinic traditions—a theory that modern research on Jewish-Christian relations has failed to support. To date, scholars have been mostly concerned with either proving or refuting the Jewish background of Christian Old Testament iconography and some publications on this topic have dealt with the question in a spirit of "all or nothing." The following remarks are an attempt to remove this question from the battlefield of "protagonists" [1] and "antagonists" and present it within its proper context, that is, in the context of the relations between Judaism and Christianity during the Late Antique period. As the question pertains to works of art from different periods and provenances in the entire Roman Empire, a paradigmatic approach is inappropriate: each picture cycle has its own historical, political, and cultural *Sitz im Leben* and represents a different aspect of Jewish-Christian relations.

"In the days of Rabbi Yohanan [Israelites] began to paint on the walls and [the sages] did not stop them." [2] This famous statement in the Jerusalem Talmud, referring to Rabbi Yohanan bar Nappaha, a rabbinic authority from the third century A.D., provides a suitable *halakhic* framework to the wall paintings in the synagogue of Dura Europos on the northern Euphrates in modern Syria, executed in 245.[3] A similar statement was made concerning mosaic pavements in the days of Rabbi Abin (first half of the fourth century);[4] however, both Talmudim remain silent on the question of illuminated manuscripts, suggesting that there was only modest decoration and calligraphy in books.[5] Whether the rich Old Testament cycle of Dura was unique or only one among many cycles that have vanished, we do not know. The Talmudim say nothing about the character of wall painting in the days of Yohanan. Single biblical scenes are found on mosaic floors in Israel and the Diaspora, but a cyclic treatment is known only from the Dura synagogue. The evidence of Dura, however, does not exclude the possibility that Jewish biblical cycles preceded comparable Christian cycles. Prior to the fourth century, single Old Testament scenes and short cyclic entities of the Jonah story appear in Christian catacombs in Rome. Full-fledged narrative cycles, however, do not occur in Christian art before the fourth century, as in the catacomb at the Via Latina, nor do they become as extensive as the Dura cycle until the fifth century.

1. A term used frequently. See, for example, Stichel, *Illustration.*

2. *Avodah zarah* 3:3, trans. J. Neusner, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel: A Preliminary Translation and Explanation,* vol. XXXIII, Chicago, 1982, 121.

3. C. Kraeling, *The Synagogue: The Excavations at Dura Europos* (Final Report, vol. VIII, pt. 1), New Haven, 1956.

4. This statement, which immediately follows the one above (see note 2), does not appear in all editions of the Jerusalem Talmud; it is omitted, for example, from Neusner's translation, but see E. E. Urbach, "The Rabbinical Law of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archeological and Historical Facts," *Israel Exploration Journal,* IX, 1959, 236 n. 88.

5. The Rabbis seem to have been extremely reluctant to allow decorations in the Torah and insisted that scrolls in which the name of God had been written in gold be hidden; see *Mishnah Sophrim* 1:8, *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 103b. See also B. Narkiss, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts,* Jerusalem, New York, and Toronto, 1969, 14.

The Texts: The Torah and Its Interpretation

The canonization of the Torah—the Pentateuch—is believed to have taken place as early as the Babylonian exile (586–539 B.C.). From then on the Torah was considered an authoritative, sacred book. The fact that the Book of Daniel, written during the Hellenistic period, is not included in the canon of the Prophets makes it plausible that the latter was also canonized before the Hellenistic period. There must, however, have been a gap between the canonization of the Torah and that of the Prophets, for the Samaritans, who performed a schism from Judaism in the time of Ezra, during the early fifth century B.C., recognize the Pentateuch as canonical, but not the Prophetic writings. The latest group of biblical writings (Hagiographa—books included neither in the Pentateuch nor in the Prophets) was written and compiled at different dates, and originally formed part of a much larger corpus of religious literature. According to tradition, the biblical canon was concluded by the generation of Jabneh (after A.D. 70); however, rabbinic discussions on this matter during the Mishnaic (until c. A.D. 200) and Talmudic periods (c. A.D. 200–500) seem to indicate that it was still not considered definitive.[6]

The Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint) admitted to the canon a collection of books known as the Apocrypha. Like the Pseudepigrapha—visionary writings, traditionally attributed to biblical figures and included in neither the Hebrew nor the Greek canon—they contain numerous extrabiblical traditions about biblical events and figures.[7] These books were rejected as "external" by the rabbinic authorities and became part of the Christian, rather than the Jewish, exegetical heritage. With the exception of the book of Ben Sira, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are not referred to in rabbinic literature, and they survived the following centuries neither in Hebrew nor in Aramaic but in various languages spoken and written throughout the Christian world. Another category of Jewish literature consists of various apocalyptic writings.[8] Although a Talmudic passage[9] advises against saving apocalyptic writings from fire, they appear to have influenced Talmudic eschatology, which incorporated motifs from them. Like the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, these apocalyptic writings were widely known among the early Christians. The rejection of these writings by the rabbinic authorities has been explained by the high esteem they enjoyed among Christians: because they constituted an essential element in Christian thought, they were no longer considered part of the specifically Jewish spiritual, religious, and cultural heritage.[10]

6. See, for example, N. R. M. de Lange, *Apocrypha: Jewish Literature of the Hellenistic Age*, New York, 1978, 3ff.; J. W. Miller, *The Origins of the Bible: Rethinking Canon History*, New York, 1985, listing further literature. Quotations from the Bible are taken from *The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, New York and Oxford, 1965. Divergences between this edition and the Hebrew text are indicated by square brackets.

7. The Apocrypha include the books of Tobit, Judith, Ben Sira, the Wisdom of Solomon, Maccabees, Ezra III, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, the Prayer of Manasseh and Psalm 152, as well as additions to the books of Esther and Daniel. Ezra IV, an additional Apocryphon, was not included in the Greek canon.

8. This group includes such books as Enoch, Jubilees, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Psalms of Solomon, the Assumption of Moses, and others.

9. *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 116a.

10. de Lange (as in note 6), 1–23. For general information about extracanonical Jewish literature, see G. W. E.

The Pentateuch was certainly the object of exegesis from the time of its canonization. Later biblical writings foreshadow interpretative traditions that were to become fully developed during the Talmudic period.[11] Extrabiblical material elaborating on biblical history is known to us from the writings of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius. The former, also known as Philo Judaeus (c. 20 B.C.–A.D. 50),[12] was a writer of the Egyptian Diaspora and wrote in Greek. He was well acquainted with the Hellenistic knowledge of his time, with Greek literature, philosophy, and science. He regarded himself as a mediator between the Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds and dealt with the Bible in terms of Greek philosophy. His biographies of the three patriarchs and Moses include much extrabiblical, legendary material. Josephus, a native of Jerusalem, witnessed and documented the Roman war of A.D. 66–70.[13] Like Philo, he wrote in Greek. Although he mentions having written an Aramaic vernacular version of his *History of the Jewish War,* only the Greek versions of his works are preserved. Of these, the most relevant to biblical history is the *Antiquities.* The writings of Philo and Josephus are referred to as "Hellenistic Jewish literature," thereby setting them apart from the rabbinic texts. Although Josephus was connected to Pharisaic Judaism and reflected some of its traditions, this separation is thoroughly appropriate in view of the *Textgeschichte* of his and Philo's works. As Heinz Schreckenberg has pointed out, Josephus's writings were almost totally assimilated by the Christian tradition, while being almost universally ignored by the Jewish literary tradition.[14]

After the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, only the party of the Pharisees was able to survive the disaster as a cultural entity and provide the nation with the necessary framework to reestablish and reorganize Judaism. Because the Pharisees were determined to create a uniform cultural and religious environment, we know very little about non-Pharisaic Judaism in Late Antiquity. This is reflected in the difficulty modern scholars have had in defining a clear borderline between Jewish Christianity and Judaism and in learning about Jewish groups outside the rabbinic milieu.[15] As a dominant factor in Late Antique Jewish life, Pharisaic Judaism was resolved to distance itself from Christianity, and its effort, assisted by gentile Christianity's rejection of Jewish Christians, was crowned with success by the fourth century.[16] All the Late Antique exegesis of the Bible[17] that has been preserved in Jewish tradition was the fruit

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Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah,* Philadelphia, 1981.

11. For example, the famous legend about Abraham's being saved from the fiery furnace of the Chaldeans (*Genesis Rabbah* 38:13, vol. II, 54) is probably alluded to in Isa. 29:22. See I. L. Seeligmann, "Voraussetzungen der Midraschexegese," *Vetus Testamentum, supplements,* I, 1953, 167.

12. Philo, *The Loeb Classical Library,* London, 1950.

13. Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates,* trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, London and New York, 1930.

14. H. Schreckenberg, in H. Schreckenberg and K. Schubert, *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity,* Maastricht and Minneapolis, 1992, 131.

15. M. Simon, *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425),* English ed., Oxford, 1986, deals in detail with most aspects of the relationship of Jewish Christianity to Judaism and gentile Christianity. See also G. Stemberger, *Juden und Christen im Heiligen Land. Palästina unter Konstantin und Theodosius,* Munich, 1987; J. Neusner, *Judaism in the Matrix of Christianity,* Philadelphia, 1986, and idem, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine,* Chicago and London, 1987.

16. Simon (as in note 15); Neusner (as in note 15).

17. For more information on rabbinic literature, see G. Stemberger's revised edition of H. L. Strack's *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch,* Munich, 1982. A standard work on Talmudic thought is E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs,* 3d English ed. Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1987. See also recently J. Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature,* New York, 1994.

of Pharisaic-rabbinic authorities. The *Mishna,* their compilation of the religious law (*Halakhah,* literally "walking," the way one should walk), and their commentaries on biblical and Mishnaic law in the Jerusalem and the Babylonian Talmud gave Judaism the durable structure it needed to survive the destruction of the Temple and subsequent catastrophes. Biblical interpretation was a feature of the Late Antique synagogue service: according to a practice known to have been followed in Israel as well as in Babylonia, the weekly readings of the Torah were immediately translated into the Aramaic vernacular by the *meturgeman* (interpreter). These *Targumim* (translations) were not merely literal translations but contained numerous exegetical traditions that were later developed in rabbinic writings. Most surviving *Targumim* have been dated to the first and second centuries and therefore provide important evidence of early legendary traditions. Another component of the synagogue service, the homily delivered by a sage, also included interpretation. Homiletic materials dealing with the narrative portions of the Pentateuch are called *Aggadah* (account), to be distinguished from *Halakhah.* The result of this interpretative activity is the collection of writings known as Midrash (interpretation). These texts were the stronghold of rabbinic Judaism, whereas those Jewish writings that found acceptance in the Christian world were neglected if not rejected.

The Late Antique Rabbis were neither more nor less "iconoclastic" than some of the early Fathers[18] and they disagreed on the interpretation and observation of the second commandment: "You shall not make yourself a graven image, nor the likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Exod. 20:4–5). Although there was no explicitly positive attitude toward figurative art, an examination of rabbinic sources[19] reveals that artistic expression was permitted as long as there was no danger of the work of art becoming an object of worship. Many Rabbis were willing to accept art of a purely decorative character, from which an idolatrous attitude could be excluded. Two-dimensional works of art were more easily tolerated than three-dimensional objects. Artistic expression was typically restrained during the century and a half following the destruction of the Temple, as it was during the first two centuries of Christianity. However, from the third century on, art created by and/or for Jews was by no means unusual. The discovery in the early 1930s of the wall paintings in the third-century synagogue of Dura Europos should have disproved the prevalent view that the second commandment had been strictly and narrowly observed; nevertheless, this view remains a common misconception.[20]

18. P. C. Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art,* New York and Oxford, 1994, has recently discussed the attitude of the Apologists toward art and challenged the conventional view that early Christianity, being an offspring of Judaism, was strictly aniconic. In his view, the Apologists' polemic against art was an attack against Greek art for propagandistic purposes. It is a fact, however, that no figurative or narrative art survives from the first two centuries of Christianity's existence.

19. Urbach (as in note 4); J. Gutmann, "The 'Second Commandment' and the Image in Judaism," *Hebrew Union College Annual,* XXXII, 1961, 161–74, repr. in J. Gutmann, ed., *Beauty in Holiness: Studies in Jewish Customs and Ceremonial Art,* New York, 1970, 1–40, and again in Gutmann, *Images,* 3–18, and in idem, ed., *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages,* Northampton, Mass., 1989, 11.

20. It is surprising, given the number of Jewish works of art that have been generally known for more than half a century and the research on the interpretation of the second commandment (see note 4), that many publications

The Images: Rabbinic Motifs in Art

Not only was Jewish art unopposed to the mainstream of rabbinic thought, but it reflected the rabbinic tradition of biblical exegesis. The adherence of the Dura wall paintings to this tradition[21] appears, for example, in the depiction of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al (Figs. 1 and 2). According to the first book of Kings (18:20ff.), Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al set up sacrificial altars and exhorted their respective deities to miraculously ignite the pyres. Ba'al's followers prayed in vain, while Elijah's prayers were immediately answered. Medieval rabbinic sources add the following legend to the biblical narrative: Hiel, who built and prepared the altar for the prophets of Ba'al, concealed himself beneath the altar table in order to light the fire at the right moment. When he tried to do this, however, a snake came and killed him. Hiel and the snake are clearly visible in the Dura wall painting. The fact that the Midrash survived only in medieval sources does not exclude the possibility that it was known in Late Antiquity as well, if only in oral versions. In fact, the image in Dura proves its earlier existence. Annabel Wharton has recently shown that the oral tradition might have played a significant role in the creation of the Dura paintings.[22]

Extrabiblical rabbinic motifs also appear in Early Christian Old Testament cycles. A fifth-century wall painting in the church of S. Paolo fuori le mura in Rome, known to us only

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on Jewish art and on the problem of Jewish-Christian relationships in art open with an apologetic statement to the effect that the Jewish people were not as iconoclastic as they were believed to be. Stichel opens his recent article on the topic in this spirit: "The question of the practice of art among the ancient Jews still remains one of the controversial issues of present-day archeological and art historical research (trans.)," Stichel, *Illustration*, 93.

21. Kraeling (as in note 3); E. Sukenik, *The Synagogue of Dura Europos and Its Murals* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1947; see also U. Schubert, *Spätantikes Judentum und frühchristliche Kunst (Studia Judaica Austriaca II)*, Vienna, 1974, 35–65. This view is not shared by E. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, vols. IX–XI, Princeton, 1952–68, or by J. Neusner, "Judaism at Dura-Europos," in J. Gutmann, ed., *The Dura Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation 1932–1972*, Montana, 1973 (repr. 1992), 155–92. Neither Goodenough nor Neusner is convinced that the Dura paintings exhibit a close relationship to rabbinic Judaism. For recent information about the city of Dura, its various religious communities, and the synagogue in particular, see A. J. Wharton, *Refiguring the Post Classical City: Dura Europos, Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna*, Cambridge Mass., 1995. Wharton argues against a perception of Dura as a remote Roman garrison town in the desert, presenting it as a commercial and agricultural center of the Euphrates region.

22. A. J. Wharton, "Good and Bad Images from the Synagogue of Dura Europos: Contexts, Subtexts, Intertexts," *Art History*, XVII, no. 1, 1994, 1–25, and idem (as in note 21), 38–51. The story appears in *Yalqut shimoni* on 1 Kings 18:26, chap. 214, ed. D. Heyman, D. N. Lehrer, Y. Shiloni, Jerusalem, 1973–77. The *Yalqut shimoni* is a collection of rabbinic commentaries to the Bible created in the Middle Ages by Shimon ha-darshan (eleventh, thirteenth, or fourteenth century). See Stemberger–Strack (as in note 17), 314f. However, an allusion to this tradition is found slightly earlier in *Exodus Rabbah* 15:5, ed. H. Freedman and M. Simon, *Midrash Rabbah Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices*, London and New York, 1983. The second part of *Exodus Rabbah* (chap. 15ff.) is an early medieval commentary on the book of Exodus (Stemberger–Strack, ibid., 285). For the oral tradition in Late Antique Judaism, see Stemberger–Strack, ibid., 41ff.; for further thoughts toward an interpretation of the Elijah sequence in Dura, see recently B. Narkiss, "'Living the Dead Became': The Prophet Elijah as a Holy Image in Early Jewish Art," *Byzantine East*, 75–78.

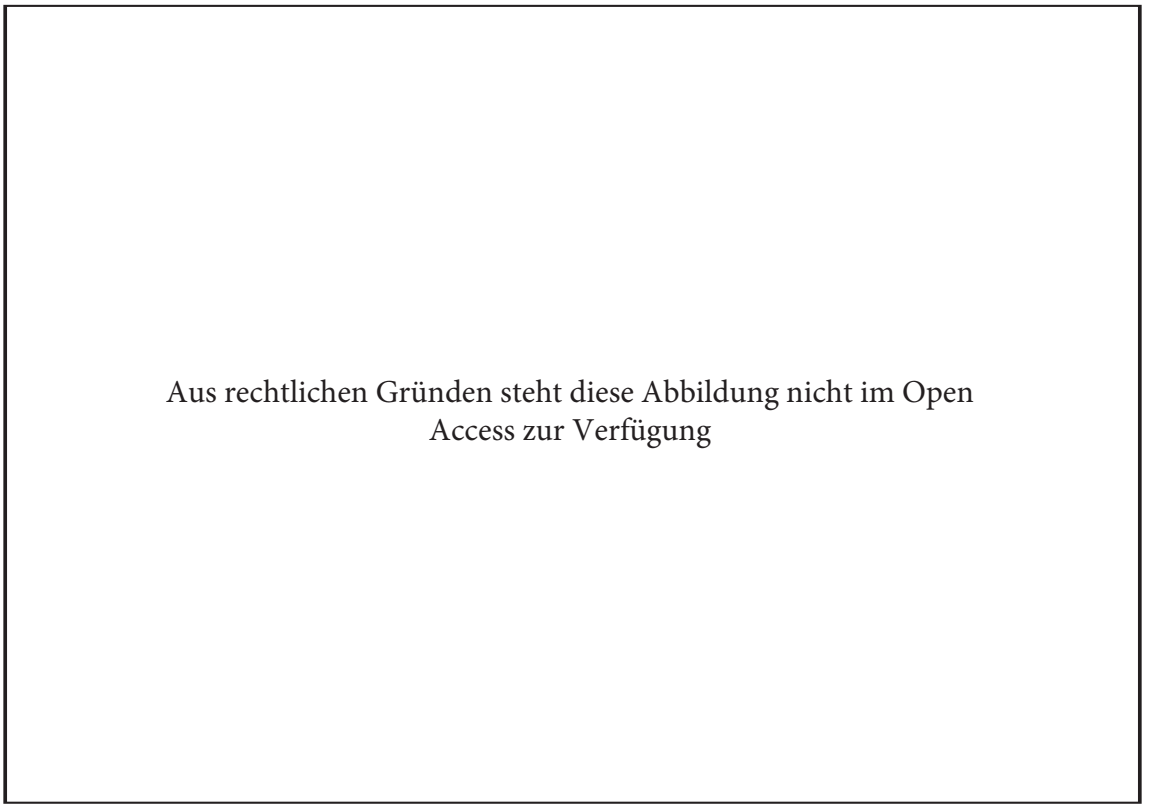

Fig. 1 Dura Europos synagogue, Syria, c. 245 C.E.: The Sacrifice of Elijah, wall painting (after Goodenough)

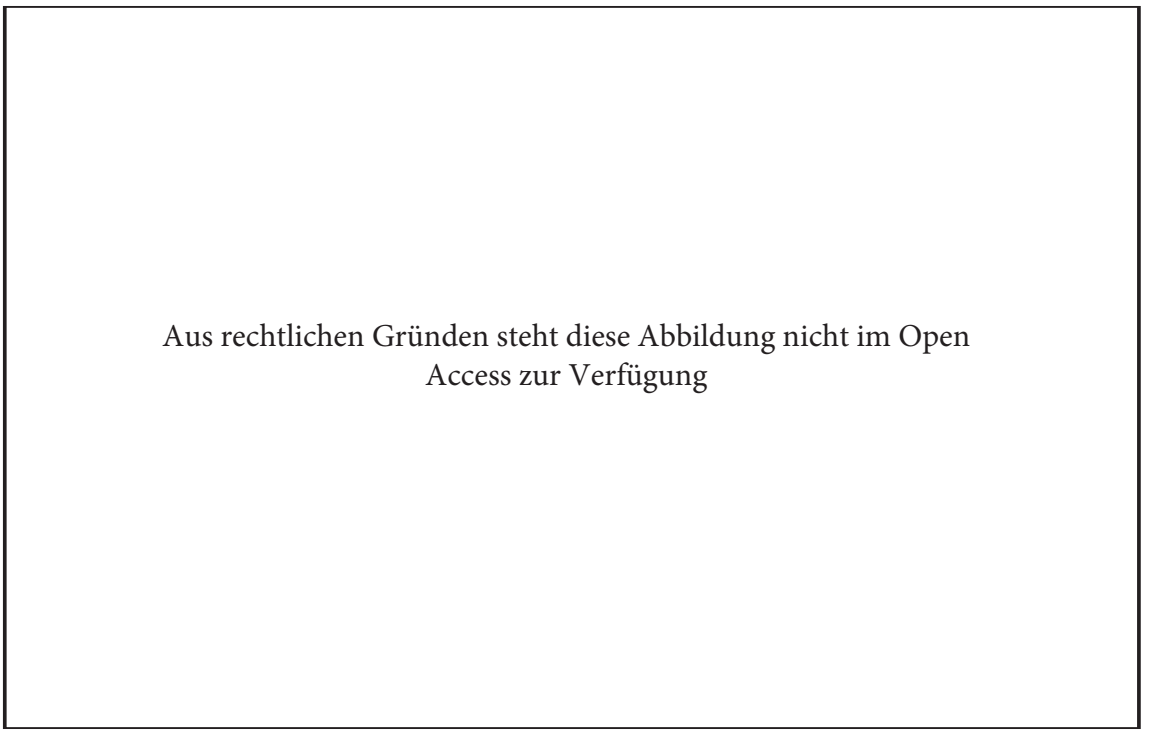

Fig. 2 Dura Europos synagogue, c. 245 C.E.: The Sacrifice of the Prophets of Ba'al, wall painting (after Goodenough)

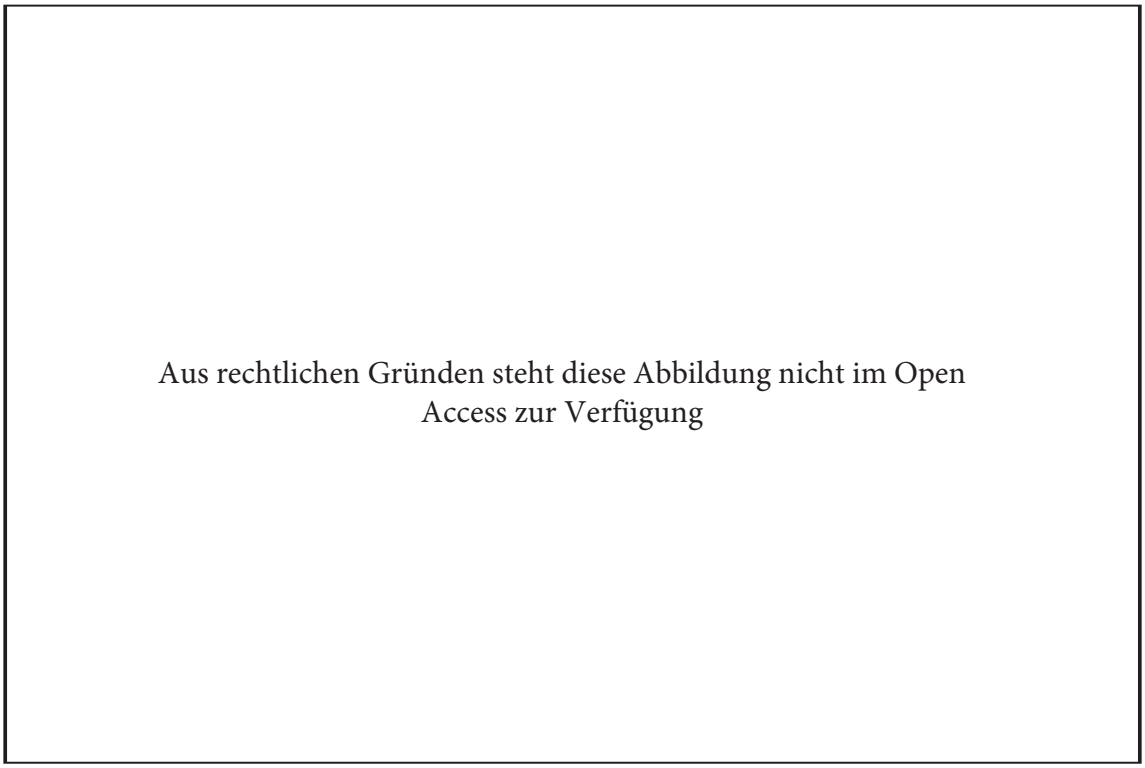

Fig. 3 Former church of San Paolo fuori le mura, Rome, fifth century: Potiphar's Wife Attempting to Seduce Joseph, drawing after wall painting (after Waetzold)

from a seventeenth-century copy,[23] showed Potiphar's wife attempting to seduce Joseph (Fig. 3). The setting is a bedroom and the woman is seen sitting in bed, grasping the young man's garment. The account in Genesis (39:7–13) says only that Joseph entered Potiphar's house when nobody except the wife was there; she tried to seduce him, but he managed to escape. The account says nothing about the woman being in bed. However, the rabbinic commentaries, in attempting to explain the unexpected absence of Potiphar's people, added the following legendary details: "'And there was none of the men in the house': is it possible that in so large an establishment as the house of the evil Potiphar, there was not a single man at home? A Tannaite authority of the house of Rabbi Ishmael [stated]: that day was a festival day for them, and they all had gone off to their temple. But she had said to him, 'I am sick.' She was thinking, 'I have never had a day such as this, on which Joseph will submit to me.'"[24] The woman's feigned illness implies that she was in bed. A similar way of representing this scene was cho-

23. Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica, cod. Barb. lat. 4406, fol. 46; S. Waetzold, *Die Kopien des 17. Jahrhunderts nach Mosaiken und Wandmalereien in Rom,* Munich and Vienna, 1964, 55ff. The S. Paolo murals were painted over between 1270 and 1290 by Cavallini, but presumably the Late Antique iconography was preserved. For a discussion of some of the murals, see H. L. Kessler, "Pictures as Scripture in Fifth-Century Churches," *Studia Artiorum Orientalis et Occidentalis,* II, no. 1, 1985, 17–31, repr. in idem, *Studies in Pictorial Narrative,* London, 1994.

24. *Babylonian Talmud, Sota* 36b; trans. J. Neusner, *The Talmud of Babylonic: An Academic Commentary,* vol. XVII, Atlanta, 1994, 176.

sen by the illuminator of page 31 of the Vienna Genesis, a Greek paraphrase of the book of Genesis from the sixth century (Color Plate V).[25] Here the scene is further enriched at the right and in the bottom register with extrabiblical details relating to the childhood of Joseph's future wife, Aseneth. An ivory panel on the sixth-century cathedra of Maximian in Ravenna shows Potiphar's wife standing in front of her bed, an image presumably connected to the same rabbinic tradition.[26]

An early fourth-century wall painting in the catacomb of the Via Latina in Rome shows Jacob resting his head on three stones (Color Plate VI). To his left appears the heavenly ladder bearing the figures of two angels, a composition that seems to have influenced future depictions of this episode. The text (Gen. 28:11) is ambiguous: "Taking of the stones to be found at that place he put [them? it?] under his head and lay down in that place to sleep." Following the dream, however, he is said to have taken "*the* stone," and set it up as a pillar (verse 18). Late Antique Jewish sages tried to explain this contradiction as follows: Jacob used three (according to other versions, four or twelve) stones as a pillow. If he found these united into a single block the next morning, this would be a sign that he, together with Abraham and Isaac, was one of the three patriarchs.[27] According to other versions, the sign meant that he would have four wives[28] or that twelve tribes would descend from him.[29] Although it is possible that the pictorial rendering arose directly from the ambiguous biblical text in verse 11, it has frequently been related to the rabbinic tradition.[30]

The Theory: Jewish Illuminated Manuscripts in Late Antiquity

More challenging than the identification of certain iconographic elements derived from rabbinic texts is the elucidation of this rabbinically related iconography within its cultural context. Three Christian artists working at different places in the Mediterranean world at different dates portrayed Potiphar's wife in or next to her bed, consistent with the Jewish legend. Could these artists have invented this iconography independently, without knowing the story? Or did they copy a Jewish pictorial model showing Potiphar's wife in bed—again perhaps without knowing the story? Since no Late Antique Jewish pictorial rendering of this motif is known to have survived, the existence of such a model is hypothetical. Did the artists have ac-

25. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, cod. theol. 31. O. Mazal, *Wiener Genesis. Purpurpergamenthandschrift aus dem 6. Jahrhundert. Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe des Codex theol. gr. 31 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien,* Frankfurt am Main, 1980. See also John Lowden's chapter in this volume. For further background on the rabbinic sources in the context of the Vienna Genesis, see J. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretative Life of Biblical Texts,* San Francisco, 1990, 56–59.

26. H. L. Kessler and K. Weitzmann, *The Cotton Genesis, British Library Codex Cotton Otho B VI,* Princeton, 1986, fig. 398.

27. *Genesis Rabbah* 68:11, vol. III, 9.

28. *Targum Neophyti* on Gen. 28:11, ed. A. D. Macho, Madrid, 1978.

29. *Genesis Rabbah* 68:11, vol. III, 9.

30. For example, U. Schubert (as in note 21), 24f.

cess to the original Jewish source and create the iconography to illustrate it? Or was this legend familiar in Christian circles and available to the artists not from a Jewish but from a Christian written or oral source?

Previous discussions of the possible Jewish influence on Christian imagery have always involved the hypothesis that there was a tradition of Jewish illuminated manuscripts in Late Antiquity that had a certain, even strong, influence on the development of Early Christian and later Old Testament illustration. The many publications on this subject consist entirely of attempts to either "prove" this hypothesis by tracing certain motifs to rabbinic literature, or to "disprove" it by claiming that the motifs in question were also known to the Church Fathers.[31] In 1901 Josef Strzygowski already postulated the existence of Jewish illuminated manuscripts of the Bible.[32] In the 1950s and 1960s,[33] Kurt Weitzmann suggested that the middle-Byzantine Octateuchs[34] hark back to a Late Antique Jewish pictorial source, and that this same source was the model for the third-century murals in the Dura Europos synagogue. He extended his theory to other pictorial recensions of the Old Testament, some of which exhibit rabbinical details, while others contain elements borrowed from the writings of Josephus Flavius. Other scholars accepted Weitzmann's belief in the existence of Late Antique Jewish illuminated manuscripts and further developed his theory. The cycles analyzed in this context were primarily those in the catacomb at the Via Latina, the mosaics in the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore, the Vienna Genesis, and the Ashburnham Pentateuch.[35] This approach was challenged in 1966:

31. The frequently used term "Indizienbeweis"—proof by evidence—demonstrates the spirit of this attitude quite well. See Stichel, *Illustration,* 109.

32. J. Strzygowski, *Orient oder Rom?* Leipzig, 1901, 31–39.

33. K. Weitzmann, "Die Illustration der Septuaginta," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst,* III–IV, 1952–53, 96–120 (for an English version, see "The Illustration of the Septuagint," in H. L. Kessler, ed., *Studies in Classical and Byzantine Manuscript Illumination,* Chicago and London, 1971, 45–75); K. Weitzmann, "Zur Frage des Einflusses jüdischer Bilderquellen auf die Illustration des Alten Testamentes, *Mullus: Festschrift für Theodor Klauser (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum),* Ergänzungsband 1, 1964, 401–15 (for an English version, see "The Question of the Influence of Jewish Pictorial Sources on Old Testament Illustration," Kessler, ibid., 76–95).

34. Weitzmann, "Septuagint" (as in note 33), 73–75. A recent study of the Octateuchs is J. Lowden, *The Octateuchs: A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration,* University Park, Pa., 1992; see also K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabò, *The Byzantine Octateuchs,* Princeton, 1999.

35. C. Roth, "Jewish Antecedents of Christian Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XVI, 1953, 24–44; C. O. Nordström, "Some Jewish Legends in Byzantine Art," *Byzantion,* XXV–XXVII, 1955–57, 502–8; idem, "Water Miracles of Moses in Jewish Legend and Byzantine Art," *orientalia suecana,* VII, 1958, 78–109, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 277–308; C. O. Nordström, "Rabbinica in frühchristlichen und byzantinischen Illustrationen zum 4. Buch Moses," *Figura,* I, 1960, 24–47; idem, "The Temple Miniatures in the Peter Comestor Manuscript at Madrid," *Horae Soederblomianae,* VI, 1964, 54–81, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 39–74; C. O. Nordström, "Rabbinic Features in Byzantine and Catalan Art," *Cahiers archéologiques,* XV, 1965, 187–90. See also H. L. Hempel, "Zum Problem der Anfänge der AT-Illustration," *Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft,* LXIX, 1957, 103–31, and LXXIII, 1961, 299–302, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 81–113; idem, "Jüdische Traditionen in frühmittelalterlichen Miniaturen," in H. Fillitz, ed., *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und Archäologie des Frühmittelalters. Akten zum VII. Internationalen Kongress für Frühmittelalterforschung, 1958,* Graz and Cologne, 1962, 53–65, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 347–61; O. Pächt, "Ephraimillustration, Haggadah und Wiener Genesis," *Festschrift für Karl M. Swoboda,* Vienna, 1959, 213–21, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 249–60. A slightly different approach was taken by André Grabar, "Recherches sur les sources juives de l'art paléochrétien," *Cahiers archéologiques,* XI, 1960, 41–71, and XII, 1962, 115–52; see also G. Kretschmar, "Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach dem Verhältnis zwischen jüdischer und christlicher Kunst in der Antike," in *Abraham unser Vater, Festschrift für Otto Michel,* Leiden and Cologne, 1963, 295–319, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 156–84. Among this group of scholars was Joseph Gutmann, who published an analysis of rabbinic elements in the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Paris, Bibl. Nat., nouv. acq. lat. 2334) and suggested

Heinrich Strauss[36] ascribed the presence of rabbinical elements to a literary tradition instead of a transmission of iconographic formulas, and Joseph Gutmann pointed out that the existence of a manuscript model for the Dura wall paintings was purely hypothetical and that the comparisons between the Dura cycle and later Christian art were not convincing.[37] In a series of later articles, Gutmann made it clear that, while he believes that art played an important role in Late Antique Jewish life,[38] he rejects the assumed connection of the Dura paintings to Christian cycles and the hypothesis of Jewish illuminated manuscripts in Late Antiquity.[39] From the early 1970s on, Ursula and Kurt Schubert, together with their students, have put forward more Judaistic views that stress the rabbinic elements in Early Christian art.[40]

This decades-long debate[41] concentrates on one basic question: Are the elements under

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an ultimate Jewish pictorial source, but revised his view later (see note 39 below). See J. Gutmann, "The Jewish Origin of the Ashburnham Pentateuch Miniatures," *Jewish Quarterly Review,* N.S. XLIV, 1953, 55–72, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 329–46.

36. H. Strauss, "Jüdische Quellen frühchristlicher Kunst: Optische oder literarische Anregung?" *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft,* LVII, 1966, 114–36, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 362–84. At the 1975 Congresso Internazionale di Archeologia Cristiana in Rome, Strauss elaborated upon his earlier view. See H. Strauss, "Jüdische Vorbilder frühchristlicher Kunst," *Atti del IX congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana, Rome 1975,* vol. II, Vatican, 1978, 451–60. He was later joined by Johannes Deckers in a rather militantly written dissertation on the mosaics of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome (Deckers, *Santa Maria Maggiore*), and later by F. Rickert, *Studien zum Ashburnham Pentateuch (Paris, Bibl. Nat. NAL 2334),* Bonn, 1986. See also H. Brandenburg, "Überlegungen zum Ursprung der frühchristlichen Bildkunst," *Atti del IX congresso internazionale di archeologia cristiana, Rome 1975,* vol. II, Vatican, 1978, 331–60; R. Stichel, "Außerkanonische Elemente in byzantinischen Illustrationen des Alten Testaments," *Römische Quartalschrift,* LXIX, 1971, 159–81; idem, "Die Namen Noes, seines Bruders und seiner Frau," *Abh. Göttingen,* 3. F. I, 12, 1979, 103–13, and recently Stichel, *Illustration.*

37. J. Gutmann, "The Illustrated Jewish Manuscript in Antiquity: The Present State of Question," *Gesta,* V, 1966, 39–44, repr. in Gutmann, *Images,* 232–40. He concluded that only the connection of the Ashburnham Pentateuch to Jewish models was convincing, based on his own analysis of a few years earlier (as in note 35).

38. This view is not shared by all scholars in the field of Christian archaeology, such as Brandenburg (as in note 36), Deckers, *Santa Maria Maggiore,* and Rickert (as in note 36).

39. Gutmann, "The Illustrated Midrash in the Dura Synagogue Paintings: A New Dimension for the Study of Judaism," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research,* L, 1983, 91–104, repr. in Gutmann, *Sacred Images* (as in note 19), VIII; idem, "Early Synagogue and Jewish Catacomb Art and Its Relation to Christian Art," in H. Temporini and W. Haase, eds., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt,* vol. II: *Principat,* Berlin and New York, 1984, 1313–42, repr. in Gutmann, *Sacred Images* (as in note 19), VII; idem (as in note 21), Introduction, IX–XL. In reaction to Rickert (as in note 36), Gutmann also reconsidered his earlier opinion about the Jewish roots of the Ashburnham Pentateuch (as in note 35). See J. Gutmann, "The Dura Europos Synagogue Paintings and Their Influence on Later Christian Art," *Artibus et Historiae,* XVII, 1988, 28–29 n. 9.

40. U. Schubert (as in note 21); K. Schubert, "Sündenfall und Vertreibung aus dem Paradies in der Katakombe der Via Latina im Lichte der jüdischen Tradition," *Kairos,* XVI, 1974, 1–13; G. Stemberger, "Die Patriarchenbilder der Katakombe in der Via Latina im Lichte der jüdischen Tradition," *Kairos,* XVI, 1974, 19–78; U. Schubert, "Eine jüdische Vorlage für die Darstellung der Erschaffung des Menschen in der sogenannten Cotton-Genesis-Rezension," *Kairos,* XVII, 1975, 1–9; A. S.-M. Ri, "Moses Motive in den Fresken der Katakombe der Via Latina im Lichte der Rabbinischen Tradition," *Kairos,* XVII, 1975, 57–80; idem, "Zum Problem einer jüdischen Vorlage bei den Mosesszenen auf der Holztüre der Basilika von St. Sabina in Rom," *Kairos,* XVIII, 1976, 218–22. See also E. Revel, "Contribution des textes Rabbiniques à l'étude de la Genèse de Vienne," *Byzantion,* XLII, 1972, 115–30, and M. D. Levin, "Some Jewish Sources for the Vienna Genesis," *Art Bulletin,* LIV, no. 3, 1972, 241–44. Later contributions by K. Schubert include "Die Illustrationen der Wiener Genesis im Lichte der Rabbinischen Tradition," *Kairos,* XXV, 1983, 1–17, and "Die Miniaturen des Ashburnham Pentateuch im Lichte der Rabbinischen Tradition," *Kairos,* XVIII, 1976, 191–212. See also M. Friedmann, "Esau Selling His Birthright in the Vienna Genesis," *Byzantion,* LII, 1982, 417–19; idem, "On the Sources of the Vienna Genesis," *Cahiers archéologiques,* XXXVIII, 1989, 5–17; idem, "More on the Vienna Genesis," *Byzantion,* LIX, 1989, 64–77.

41. In 1990 Schubert hosted a conference on this topic in Vienna. Elisabeth Revel-Neher suggested Jewish pictorial as well as textual sources for the Byzantine manu-

discussion exclusively Midrashic—that is, rooted in Jewish thought and its visual expression,[42] or did Christian commentators know these legends as well and incorporate them in their exegesis of the Old Testament? The possibility of textual exchanges has been developed in an argument that is all too eagerly used to refute the "Jewish roots" theory, especially by scholars who still regard art as an exceptional phenomenon among antique Jews.[43] As the majority of rabbinic elements cannot be found in the writings of the Fathers, this argument assumes not only that there was a fruitful, long-lasting, and widespread exchange of thought between the Rabbis and the Church Fathers but also that much of the evidence for this exchange as it relates to Old Testament iconography was contained in *lost* Patristic sources.[44] Strauss's view of a Jewish "*Volkslegendengut*," hypothetically known to Jews and Christians alike,[45] ultimately derives from the belief of nineteenth-century Jewish scholars that the Patristic interpretation of the Bible strongly depended on the Midrash.[46] Louis Ginzberg's monumental collection of *Legends of the Jews*[47] many of which seemed to point to rabbinic-Patristic contacts, represents the climax of this approach. Later scholarship, however, has taken a more cautious attitude. Geza Vermes searched for the Jewish roots of Patristic literature in the works of Josephus and Pseudo-Philo rather than in the rabbinic tradition,[48] while other scholars have studied the rabbinic traditions reflected in the writings of some of the Church Fathers primarily in light of the polemics that developed in both religions during the Late Antique period.[49] Mod-

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scripts of the Christian topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes (Vatican, Bibl. Apostolica, cod. gr. 699; Mt. Sinai, S. Catherine, gr. 1186; Florence, Bibl. Laurenziana, Plut. IX. 28), E. Revel-Neher, "Some Remarks on the Iconographical Sources of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes," *Kairos*, XXII–XXIII, 1990–91, 78–97. My own contribution to this conference was a critique of Deckers's method, demonstrated with the rabbinical elements found in the iconography of the Old Testament mosaics in the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome. See K. Kogman-Appel, "Die alttestamentlichen Szenen im Langhaus von Santa Maria Maggiore und ihr Verhältnis zu jüdischen Vorlagen," *Kairos*, XXII–XXIII, 1990–91, 27–52; Schubert and Narkiss responded to Rickert's arguments concerning the Ashburnham Pentateuch; their papers were not published.

42. In 1984 Elisabeth Revel-Neher published a comparative study on the Ark of the Covenant in Jewish and Christian art, disentangling the multifaceted textual and pictorial history of the Jewish-Christian relations reflected in texts on and visual treatments of this subject. See E. Revel-Neher, *Le signe de la rencontre. L'arche d'alliance dans l'art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècle*, Paris, 1984; see also recently idem, "On the Hypothetical Models of the Byzantine Iconography of the Ark of Covenant," in *Byzantine East*, 405–11.

43. See especially Deckers, *Santa Maria Maggiore*.

44. For extreme caution in the "reconstruction" of lost Midrashic material from Patristic texts, see already G. Bardy, "S. Jerome et ses maitres hébreux," *Revue Bénédictine*, XLVI, 1934, 145–64; also Baskin, *Exegetical Contacts*, 64.

45. He argues with the polemic of such Fathers as John Chrysostomos, criticizing but manifesting contacts between Jews and Christians; Strauss, "Anregung" (as in note 36), 129.

46. H. Graetz, "Haggadische Elemente bei den Kirchenvätern," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, III, 1854, 311–19, 352–55, 381–87, 428–30, and IV, 1855, 187–92; D. Gerson, "Die Commentarien des Ephraem Syrus im Verhältnis zur jüdischen Exegese," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, XVII, 1868, 15–33, 64–72, 98–109, 141–52; A. H. Goldfahn, *Die Kirchenväter und die Agada, I: Justinus Martyr und die Agada*, Breslau, 1873; M. Rahmer, *Die hebräischen Traditionen in den Werken des Hieronymus: Questiones in Genesim*, Breslau, 1861; idem, *Die hebräischen Traditionen in den Werken des Hieronymus: Die Commentarien zu den 12 kleinen Propheten*, Berlin, 1902; S. Funk, *Die Haggadischen Elemente in den Homilien des persischen Weisen*, Vienna, 1891.

47. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols., Philadelphia, 1909–38. A similar view is represented by S. Lieberman, *Shqi'in, Forgotten Texts* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1970.

48. G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism*, Leiden, 1961.

49. For example, V. Aptowitzer, *Kain und Abel in der Agadah, den Apokryphen, der hellenistischen, christlichen und muhammedanischen Literatur*, Vienna and Leipzig, 1922; A. Marmorstein, *Studies in Jewish Theology*, London, 1950; E. E. Urbach,

ern scholarship is often anxious not to overestimate rabbinic-Patristic contacts; in Judith Baskin's words, such an overestimation "seems better suited to twentieth-century Jewish-Christian rapprochement than to the discussion of deeply felt religious polemics."[50] It can be demonstrated that specific Jewish elements were less essential to Christian exegetical circles than earlier scholars assumed; indeed, it now appears that Christian commentators were rather indifferent toward Midrashic traditions.[51] At the same time, the Christian acceptance and modification of certain rabbinic motifs frequently caused the Rabbis to lose interest in them or to revise their former thinking about them.[52] Comprehensive studies recently undertaken by Menahem Hirshmann focus far more on hermeneutic foundations than on mutual rabbinic-Patristic influence.[53] Any study of the Midrash and Christian exegesis necessarily confronts the paradox that some of the most ardent Christian polemicists appear to have been indebted to the Midrashic tradition in one way or another. Vermes's observation on the role played by Josephus and other non-rabbinical sources in Patristic literature may someday supply a valuable key to understanding the relationships between Jewish and Christian iconography.[54] This connection, however, has not yet been sufficiently researched, and parallels between Josephus and the Fathers do not provide satisfying answers in all cases.

Rainer Stichel advocates discussing the impact of Jewish narrative art on Christian Old Testament iconography as part of the broader Jewish-Christian cultural exchange in Late Antiquity.[55] His proposal, although criticizing harshly the "protagonists" of the "Jewish roots" theory, should be understood as a desirable attempt toward contextualization, an approach that would regard the transmission of images from Jewish to Christian art as just one aspect of the various Jewish-Christian cultural exchanges and confrontations that occurred in the very religious atmosphere of Late Antiquity. The existence of Jewish narrative art is a fact, as is the existence of Jewish biblical exegesis. An important step toward such an approach has been undertaken by Herbert Kessler. In his part of a joint publication with Weitzmann on the Dura murals and Christian art and at a conference held in Vienna in 1990,[56] Kessler shifted our attention from hypothetical prototypes to the cultural, religious, and theological backgrounds of the works of art, presenting the Jewish-Christian parallels as part of the Late Antique Jewish-Christian polemical dialogue. This shift demonstrates the need to interpret

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The World of the Sages (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1984, 437ff.

50. Baskin, *Exegetical Contacts,* 61.

51. Ibid.

52. See, for example, the figures of Job, Jethro, and Balaam, as interpreted by J. Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counselors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition,* Chico, Calif., 1983; or the traditions concerning Seth, Enos, Cainan, Enoch, Methuselach, and Lamech as righteous men among sinful generations. Such traditions are known from external writings (Ben Sira 49:16, Jubilees 19:24), were adopted by Ephrem the Syrian (*Hymni de Nativitate* I, 48–56) into a christological context, then revised by rabbinic authorities (for example, *Genesis Rabbah* 25:1, vol. 1, 271f., in a discussion about Enoch). The authenticity of Ephrem's authorship of the first chapter of the hymn is not certain: see T. Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian with Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition,* Lund, 1978, 21 and 220.

53. Hirshmann, *Bible;* and idem, "The Greek Fathers and the Aggadah on Ecclesiastes: Formats of Exegesis in Late Antiquity," *Hebrew Union College Annual,* LIX, 1988, 137–65.

54. Vermes (as in note 48).

55. Stichel, *Illustration.*

56. Kessler–Weitzmann, *Dura,* 151–83, and H. L. Kessler, "Through the Temple Veil: The Holy Image in Judaism and Christianity," *Kairos,* XXII–XXIII, 1990–91, 53–77.

parallels in their cultural and historical contexts, with a sharp eye for underlying motivations, rather than solely in terms of lost sources. A similar approach was followed recently also by Gustav Kühnel in his interpretation of the iconography of the Beth Alpha mosaic in light of the Jewish-Christian relationship in the land of Israel.[57]

The Methods: The Relevance of Texts

The discussion of rabbinic elements in Early Christian Old Testament iconography raises important methodological issues. As I will show in the following examination of some problematic examples, not every text of Jewish provenance can be taken as solid evidence for a Jewish pictorial source. The assumption that a textual motif and its pictorial counterpart might have been invented independently, first by the Rabbis, then later by a Roman Christian artist of the fifth century and Eastern Byzantine artists of the sixth century (as in the case of Potiphar's wife) is highly speculative. Johannes Deckers vehemently rejects the idea of any Jewish influence on Early Christian art, and even disputes the existence of Late Antique Jewish art, arguing that Dura was an exceptional case at the periphery of Late Antique cultural life. According to Deckers, iconographic elements that reflect the Jewish tradition are due to the fact that what he calls Jewish Apocrypha (roughly equivalent to Strauss's *Volkslegendengut*) were extremely popular in Christian circles.[58] Indeed he is perfectly right: "Jewish Apocrypha" *were* well known among Christians. However, the elements discussed by the "protagonists" of the "Jewish roots" theory are rabbinic, not apocryphal. Deckers fails to distinguish between the different categories of Late Antique Jewish literature, marginalizes Dura and later Jewish art in general, and therefore completely misinterprets Jewish-Christian contacts in both literature and iconography.

The second mosaic in the fifth-century Moses cycle in S. Maria Maggiore in Rome (Fig. 4) shows Moses as a youth surrounded by a group of philosophers who are involved in a lively discussion. No such episode occurs in the Bible or in any of the rabbinic writings: the Rabbis mention Moses' supernatural talents, but they say nothing of an encounter with gentile philosophers.[59] Philo and Josephus, however, knew this story well and related it in great detail.[60] It seems also that Stephen referred to it in the Acts of the Apostles (7:22): "And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and his deeds." This motif was known also to the sixth-century Syrian Monophysite teacher Severus.[61] Deckers mentions this literary tradition and lists some of the Jewish sources, but for

57. G. Kühnel, "Gemeinsame Kunstsprache und rivalisierende Ikonographie: Jüdische und Christliche Kunst in Galiläa vom 4.–7. Jahrhundert," *Oriens Christianus*, LXXIX, 1995, 197–223.

58. Deckers, *Santa Maria Maggiore*, 278. For a critique of this marginalization of Dura Europos, not explicitly referring to Deckers but to former research on Dura in general, see Wharton (as in notes 21 and 22).

59. For example, *Exodus Rabbah* 1:20, ed. A. Shinan, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1984, 70.

60. Philo, *On Moses*, vol. VI (as in note 12), 287ff.; Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates* 2, 9, 7 (as in note 13), 265, mentions that Moses was educated with the utmost care. On some pagan views about Moses' relationship to the magicians at Pharaoh's court, see J. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism*, Nashville and New York, 1972, 134ff.

61. R. M. Tonneau, "Moses in der syrischen Tradition," in H. Cazelles, ed., *Moses*, Düsseldorf, 1963, 279f.

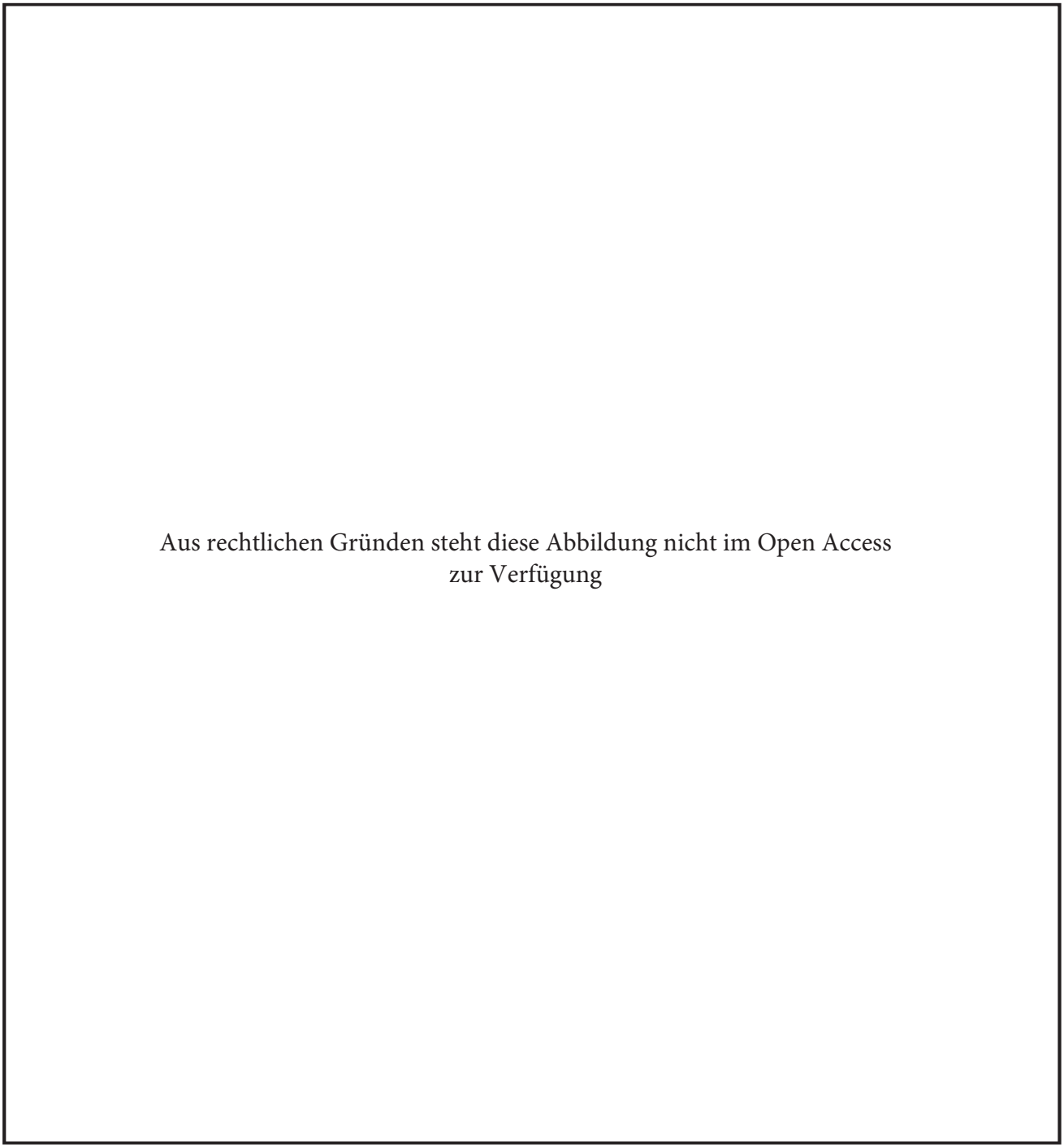

Fig. 4 S. Maria Maggiore, Rome, c. 432–435: Moses and the Egyptian Philosophers, mosaic (photo: New York, Art Resources)

the sake of his argument insists that the artist of this mosaic invented its imagery without necessarily knowing any of the written sources.[62] Had Deckers been aware of the distinction between rabbinic and Hellenistic Jewish writings, and of the history of both in the Jewish and Christian worlds, this particular picture might have supported his argument against a Jewish pictorial influence. While early Christianity was familiar with Philo and Josephus, and drew upon them for its iconography, these authors had no influence on Jewish art. The Durene iconography, for example, does not involve traditions from their writings to any significant extent. There is no need to posit a Jewish visual model for Moses and the philosophers—it is certainly a Christian invention, not an example of "Jewish iconography." But because Deckers is so anxious to reject any Jewish visual influence, he hits upon the far-fetched theory that the artist reinvented the very story that Josephus and Philo recorded four hundred years earlier.

One manifestation of Jewish-Christian cultural exchange in Late Antiquity is the acquaintance of some of the Church Fathers with the methods and contents of rabbinic exegesis, even if not to the extent assumed by early scholars. Some of the rabbinic elements under discussion could indeed have influenced Christian art through Christian texts instead of through Jewish pictorial sources. Such occurrences have to be evaluated on a case-by-case approach. Not all the Fathers had a broad knowledge of the rabbinic tradition or sufficient fluency in Hebrew or Aramaic. An acquaintance with Midrashim is, with few exceptions, limited to Oriental, especially Syrian, teachers (Ephrem, Aphrahat, and certain anonymous writers) and to those Fathers who lived in the land of Israel (Justin Martyr, Origen, and Jerome, for example). Their acquaintance with rabbinic learning often arose from polemical motives: they wanted to beat the Jews with their own weapon.

The Syrian community of Nisibis probably had its origins in the activities of Jewish-Christian merchants.[63] Ephrem was born there around 306 and lived there until 363. He died in Edessa in 378. Syriac is an eastern Aramaic dialect, and the rabbinic and the Syriac traditions exhibit some linguistic relationships.[64] Nisibis may therefore have provided especially fruitful soil for cultural exchange, nonpolemical as well as polemical, and Ephrem may have incorporated Jewish exegetical elements in his hymns and commentaries that had been appropriated by the Syriac Christian community long before his time. Sten Hidal studied the impact the Jewish tradition had on Ephrem and does not believe that Ephrem had direct contacts with Jewish scholars. Rather, he suggests that the Jewish exegetical motifs in his work had already become part of the heritage of the Syriac church, and that Ephrem was probably unaware of their Jewish roots.[65]

Justin Martyr, who grew up during the first half of the second century in a pagan family in Sichem, was acquainted with rabbinic learning, especially with that of his own time. He

62. Deckers, *Santa Maria Maggiore,* 134.

63. K. E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns,* New York, 1989, 5ff.

64. S. Brock studied Syrian texts and their linguistic relationship to the Aramaic *Targumim,* in "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies,* XXX, 1979, 212–32, repr. in S. Brock, ed., *Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature, and Theology,* London, 1992, III.

65. S. Hidal, *Interpretatio Syriaca. Die Kommentare des Heiligen Ephräm des Syrers zu Genesis und Exodus mit besonderer Berücksichtigung ihrer auslegungsgeschichtlichen Stellung,* Lund, 1974, 137ff.

probably knew the rabbinic hermeneutic rules, particularly the seven rules of Hillel.[66] On the other hand, he used the Greek text of the Old Testament,[67] and his deepest debt appears to have been to Hellenistic Judaism, above all to Philo. It is difficult, however, to clearly separate the Philonic influence on Justin from the rabbinic.[68] Justin's familiarity with rabbinic thought, which should not be overestimated,[69] came from his living in the land of Israel, and apparently depended on personal contacts rather than on his doubtful knowledge of Hebrew. His interest was primarily polemical.[70] Similarly, it is hard to differentiate the Hellenistic Jewish elements from the rabbinic elements in Origen (185–250). Toward the end of his life he lived in Caesarea, where he must have established contacts with Jewish scholars.[71] Origen distinguished three levels of biblical exegesis—the historical, the moral, and the spiritual—of which the Jewish commentators reached only the first. His attitude toward these commentators can be described as competitive rather than merely polemical.[72]

The dominant figure in this context is Jerome (c. 347–420). Born, raised, and educated in the West, he chose a monastic life in Bethlehem, where he translated the Bible into Latin. He knew Hebrew and incorporated rabbinic traditions into his commentaries on the Old Testament. However, in some of them he may have relied on Origen rather than directly on Jewish sources.[73] He probably did not use sources in Hebrew,[74] but depended largely on a baptized Jew who taught him the language and apparently was the major source for Jerome's knowledge of rabbinic thought.[75] On a historical interpretative level, Jerome relied frequently on Jewish traditions, but his motivation was, if not strongly polemical, at least, as with Origen, competitive.[76]

The Ashburnham Pentateuch is one of those works of art that has often been associated with the Jewish tradition. Many of its miniatures seem to reflect rabbinic tales.[77] According to Genesis (25:22), Jacob and Esau were struggling in Rebecca's womb, and she therefore asked God for advice. One of the miniatures of the Ashburnham Pentateuch illustrates this episode: the pregnant Rebecca kneels before an altar in a templelike building, while two men are discernible at the left (see Verkerk Fig. 1). The Rabbis, uncomfortable with the idea of a woman communicating directly with God, instead had her consult the *Beth Midrash*—the rabbinical

66. W. A. Shotwell, *The Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr*, London, 1965, 93. Shotwell generally believes that Justin was strongly dependent on rabbinic sources. For a critique of his approach, see J. Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Christian-Jewish Argument in Fourth Century Iran*, Leiden, 1971, 189.

67. Shotwell (as in note 66), 97.

68. Shotwell (ibid., 102ff.) puts more weight on the rabbinic tradition than on Philo, challenging Goodenough's view about a strong Philonic influence on Justin; E. R. Goodenough, *The Theory of Justin Martyr*, Jena, 1923, and idem (as in note 21), vol. 1, 47ff. See also Neusner (as in note 66), 189ff.

69. Ibid., and Baskin, *Exegetical Contacts*, 66.

70. This is made especially clear by Hirshman, *Bible*, 28ff.

71. For an elucidation of these contacts and Origen's knowledge of the Jewish tradition, see N. R. M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976.

72. Hirshman, *Bible*, 54ff.

73. Bardy (as in note 44), 145f.

74. E. F. Sutcliffe, "S. Jerome's Hebrew Manuscripts," *Biblia*, XXIX, 1948, 195–204.

75. Hirshman, *Bible*, 78.

76. For more details, see ibid., 74ff.

77. See Gutmann, "Ashburnham Pentateuch" (as in note 35), Hempel, "Miniaturen" (as in note 35), or K. Schubert, "Ashburnham Pentateuch" (as in note 40).

school—of Shem, the son of Noah. This school of Shem is frequently mentioned in the rabbinic tradition[78] and the specific tale about Rebecca occurs in various Midrashim from all periods.[79] A further tradition, also rabbinic, plays a role in this composition. Shem was frequently identified with Melchizedek and therefore regarded as a prefiguration of priesthood.[80] This could explain the templelike structure of the depicted building, which otherwise should be simply a school, a *Beth Midrash.* The story of Rebecca seeking advice from Melchizedek appears to have been known to the Fathers as well, especially to Syrian authors.[81] Since the Ashburnham Pentateuch also contains rabbinic elements that were unknown to the Fathers, its reliance on a Jewish prototype has frequently been postulated. We may have here, then, the interesting case of a Christian reintegration of an originally Jewish image or literary tradition. Despite the possibility of a Jewish prototype, which she neither accepts nor rejects, Dorothy Verkerk has convincingly demonstrated that the Exodus scenes in the Ashburnham Pentateuch involve many Christian liturgical and typological aspects.[82] We might assume, then, that a Jewish model was reinterpreted to emphasize the priestly character of Melchizedek, which in Christian liturgy has a meaning that goes beyond the biblical and rabbinic narratives. Marcel Simon has shown that when Melchizedek, whom the Rabbis first identified with Shem, became a Christian prototype of the priesthood, he was, in effect, "abandoned" by the rabbinic commentators.[83] This miniature can be seen as a visual demonstration of this process. We do not know, however, whether this transmission occurred on a literary level or a pictorial level, or both.

An examination of the Christian cycles under discussion reveals that the majority of rabbinic elements cannot be traced in Patristic literature. Neither the story of Potiphar's wife pretending to be ill nor the tradition that Jacob took three or four stones appears in Patristic commentaries. In another wall painting in the catacomb at the Via Latina in Rome, Abraham is depicted receiving the three messenger angels (Gen. 18; Fig. 5). It is unusual in that Abraham is shown seated. A rabbinic commentary explains that, because Abraham was still in pain from his circumcision three days earlier, he was allowed to remain seated.[84] Another mural in the same catacomb shows the priest Pinehas killing Zimri and Cozbi (Fig. 6), an Israelite man and a Midianite woman accused of unlawful fornication (Num. 25:8). According to rabbinic sources, either six or twelve miracles happened during this episode to prevent the priest from

78. For example, *Targum Pseudojonathan* Gen. 25:27; *Tanhuma (Buber), wayishlah* 9, vol. I, S. Buber, ed., Vilna, 1885, repr. Jerusalem, 1964, 84a; *Babylonian Talmud, Megilla* 17a; *Genesis Rabbah* 68:5, vol. III, 4.

79. This legend appears as early as the Aramaic *Targumim,* for example, in *Targum Pseudojonathan* on Gen. 22:22, and later in *Genesis Rabbah* 63:6, vol. II, 354.

80. For example, *Targum Pseudojonathan* Gen. 14:18, and *Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim* 32b.

81. See Gutmann, "Ashburnham Pentateuch" (as in note 35), 340; K. Schubert, "Ashburnham Pentateuch" (as in note 40), 202, and K. Schubert in Schreckenberg–Schubert (as in note 14), 257. The tradition appears in the Syrian *Cave of Treasures* 31:5f., ed. A. S.-M. Ri, *La caverne des trésors. Les deux recensions syriaques* (CSCO 486), Louvain, 1987, and also in a Syriac text published by A. Levine, *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis from a Syrian Manuscript on the Pentateuch in the Mingana Collection,* London, 1951, 299f.

82. D. H. Verkerk, "Liturgy and Narrative in the Exodus Cycle of the Ashburnham Pentateuch," Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1992; idem, "Exodus and Easter Vigil in the Ashburnham Pentateuch," *Art Bulletin,* LXXVII, no. 1, 1995, 94–105, and in her chapter in this volume.

83. M. Simon, "Melchisédech dans la polémique entre Juifs et Chrétiens et dans la légende," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses,* 1937, 58–93, repr. in M. Simon, *Recherches d'Histoire Judeo-chrétien,* Paris, 1962, 101ff.

84. *Babylonian Talmud, Baba, Metsia* 86b.

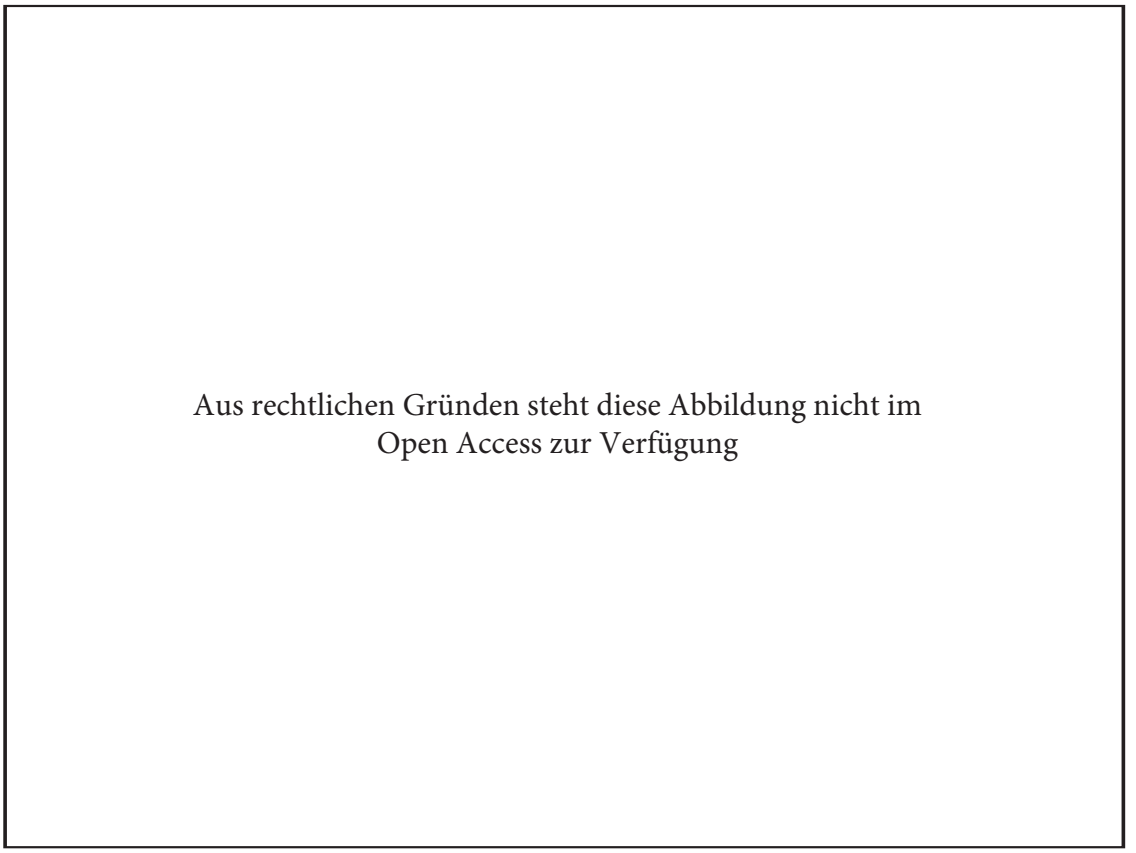

Fig. 5 Catacomb at the Via Latina, Rome, early fourth century: Abraham Receiving the Three Angels, wall painting (photo: Rome, Istituto Suore Benedettine di Priscilla)

ritually polluting himself with the blood and corpses of the guilty couple. One of these miracles, which allowed Pinehas to hold the spear upright to demonstrate the punishment to Zimri's fellow Israelites without staining himself with the sinners' blood (Fig. 7),[85] is shown in the catacomb mural. These examples, to name only a few, do not appear in Patristic texts.[86]

A minority of Jewish iconographic elements are borrowed from Hellenistic or external writings. A pseudepigraphic text says that even when Joseph was imprisoned (Gen. 39:20off.), Potiphar's wife continued trying to seduce him.[87] This motif is known also from rabbinic texts[88] and rendered pictorially in the Vienna Genesis (Fig. 8), where a female figure is seen standing next to Joseph's prison and talking to a male figure, apparently a guard.[89] The rabbinic context is ambiguous,[90] the pseudepigraphic source more suitable, and, in view of the Christian

85. *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 82b.

86. For further examples, see K. Schubert, "Wiener Genesis" (as in note 40), idem, "Ashburnham Pentateuch" (as in note 40), and Kogman-Appel (as in note 41).

87. Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Joseph 9:1, H. F. D. Sparks, ed., *The Apocryphal Old Testament,* Oxford, 1984, 587.

88. *Genesis Rabbah* 87:10, vol. III, 236, see Levin (as in note 40), 241.

89. For an interpretation of the female figure as Potiphar's wife, see J. Gutmann, "Joseph Legends in the Vienna Genesis," *Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies,* vol. IV, 1973, 183f.; Weitzmann, "Question" (as in note 33), 86; Levin (as in note 40), 241. Revel (as in note 40), 128, identifies the woman as Joseph's future wife, Aseneth.

90. See K. Schubert, "Wiener Genesis" (as in note 40), 11.

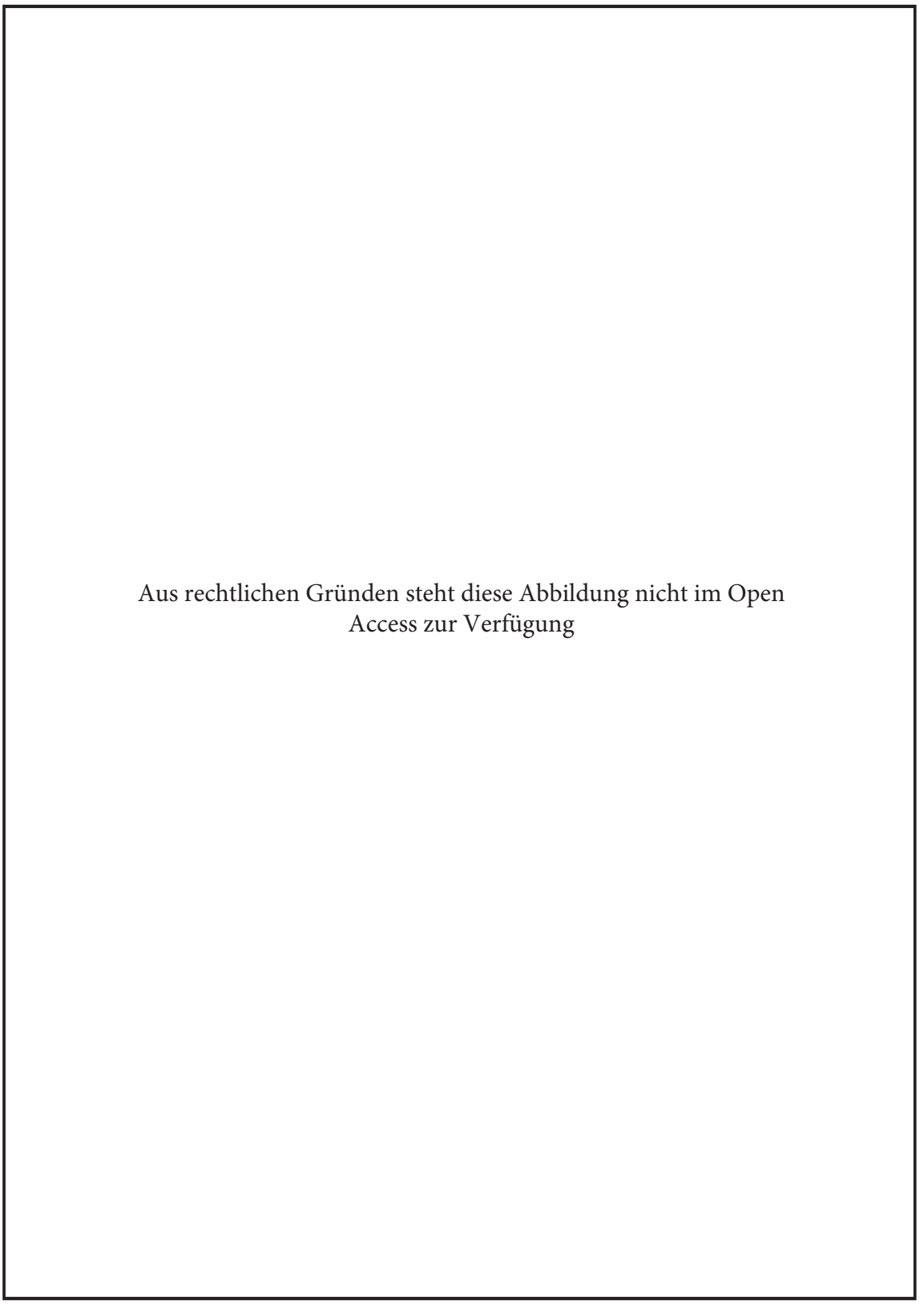

Fig. 6 Catacomb at the Via Latina, Rome, early fourth century: Pinehas Kills Zimri and Cozbi, wall painting (photo: Rome, Istituto Suore Benedettine di Priscilla)

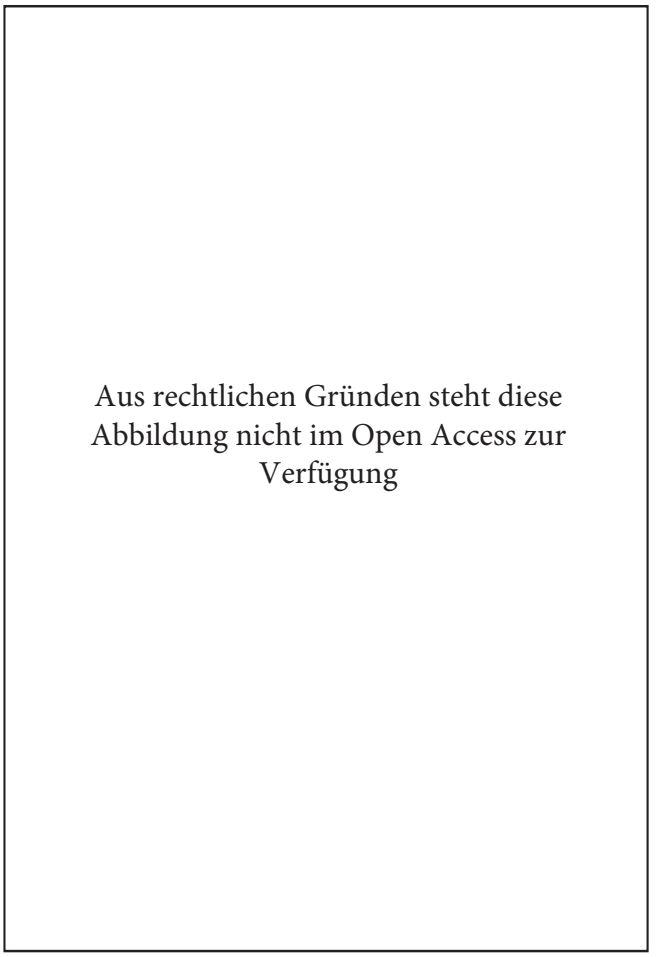

Fig. 7 Pamplona Bible in Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, former collection Oettingen-Wallerstein, MS I, 2, lat. 40, 15, fol. 78r, Spain, late twelfth century: Pinehas Kills Zimri and Cozbi (after Bucher)

interest in pseudepigraphic writings and their rejection by Judaism, a Christian origin for this image seems more likely. The pseudepigraphic *vita Adae et Evae* describes how Adam and Eve built a hut and lamented their expulsion from paradise for seven days.[91] A miniature in the Ashburnham Pentateuch (Fig. 9) illustrates this motif. Numerous Jewish sources in Hellenistic, external,[92] and rabbinic[93] texts, as well as the New Testament (Gal. 4:29), mention the tradition of a quarrel between Isaac and Ishmael, so the struggling brothers depicted in the Ashburnham Pentateuch cannot be regarded as evidence for a Jewish pictorial prototype.[94]

A relatively small group of rabbinic elements appearing in Early Christian art seem to have been known to the Fathers. The Syriac tradition appears to have played a dominant role in their transmission. Fruits of such contacts influenced Early Christian iconography in Rome. A painting in the catacomb on the Via Latina shows Cain and Abel with their offerings in the

91. *Vita Adae et Evae* 1:1, Sparks (as in note 87), 147.

92. Josephus Flavius, *Antiquitates* (as in note 13), 1, 12, 3, vol. IV, 107, mentions Sarah's fear that Ishmael could harm Isaac after their father's death. Therefore she initiated Hagar's dismissal.

93. *Genesis Rabbah* 53:11, vol. II, 247; *Tanhuma, Shemot,* ed. Levin and Epstein, Jerusalem, 1972, 8a.

94. (As in note 35), fol. 18r.

Fig. 8 Vienna Genesis, sixth century, p. 33: Joseph in Prison (photo: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek)

presence of Adam, Eve, and the serpent (Fig. 10). The rabbinic tradition mentions sexual intercourse between Eve and the serpent,[95] and some sources imply that the serpent fathered Cain.[96] Ephrem the Syrian refers to this as well.[97] Both the rabbinic tradition and Ephrem also mention an encounter between Laban and the Haranites, whom he invites to Leah's wedding. An invitation is briefly mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 29:22), but Laban's conversation with the Haranites is described in the commentaries.[98] This conversation is illustrated in a mosaic in the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore (Fig. 11). Another mosaic, not preserved but known from a seventeenth-century drawing (Fig. 12),[99] showed the meeting between Aaron and Moses (Exod. 4:27) in the presence of Moses' wife, Zipporah. The Bible says nothing of Zipporah being present on this occasion, but it mentions that she accompanied Moses to Egypt. The rabbinic tradition adds that, because of Aaron's intervention at their meeting, she was sent back to her father. This motif was known also to Ephrem.[100] Whether this triple relationship

95. *Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat* 145b–146a.
96. *Targum Pseudojonathan,* Gen. 4:1.
97. For sources, see Kronholm (as in note 52), 223.
98. *Genesis Rabbah* 70:19, vol. III, 41f., and Ephrem's commentary on Gen. 27:3, Hidal (as in note 65), 123.
99. Vatican, Bibl. Apostolica, cod. Barb. lat. 4405, fol. 23.
100. *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Amaleq* 3 on Exod. 18:2, J. Neusner, *Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael: An Analytical*

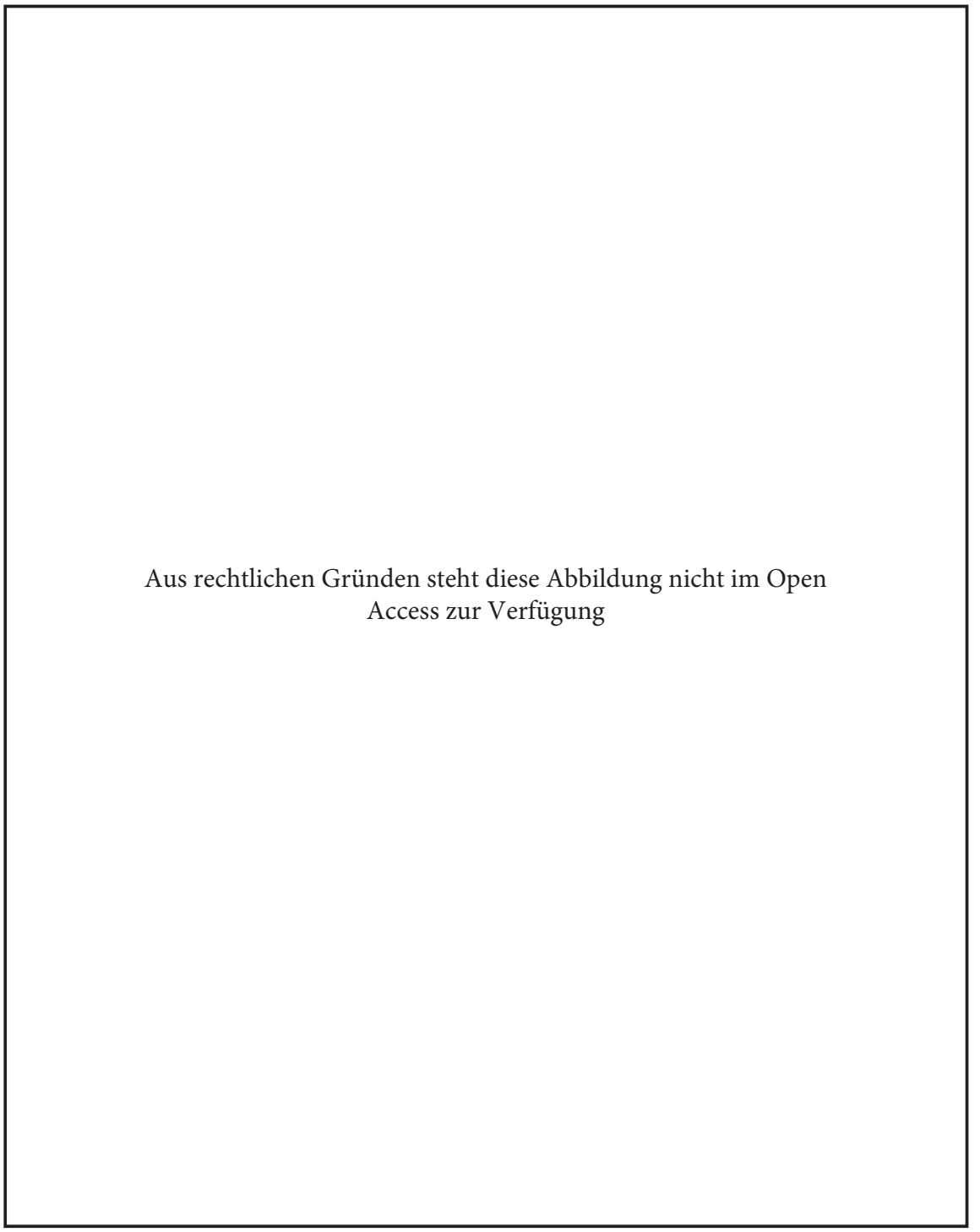

Fig. 9 Ashburnham Pentateuch, sixth–seventh century, fol. 6r: Adam and Eve Lamenting (photo: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale)

Fig. 10 Catacomb at the Via Latina, Rome, early fourth century: Cain and Abel with Their Offerings, wall painting (photo: Rome, Istituto Suore Benedettine di Priscilla)

between Early Christian iconography, rabbinic sources, and Syrian teachers is explained by the iconography having originated in the East or by Ephrem's texts having reached Rome during or shortly after his lifetime cannot be determined. Ephrem's work was read and appreciated in the West, and some of his writings were translated into Latin at an early period; however, we do not know precisely when.[101] In any event, the circumstances indicate an exchange of ideas and texts between Syria and Rome that probably included pictorial sources. The Vienna Genesis and the Ashburnham Pentateuch both reveal traces of Syrian contacts: some of the former are iconographically related to the illustrations of a Syriac Joseph story,[102] while the latter's depiction of Rebecca at the *Beth Midrash* of Shem illustrates a story well known to Syrian writers.

Translation, Atlanta, 1988, vol. II, 23f., and Ephrem's commentary on Exod. 4:5, Hidal (as in note 65), 127.

101. See McVey (as in note 63), 4f. I thank Peter Maser for his comment at the Vienna conference, September 1990.

102. Pächt (as in note 35).

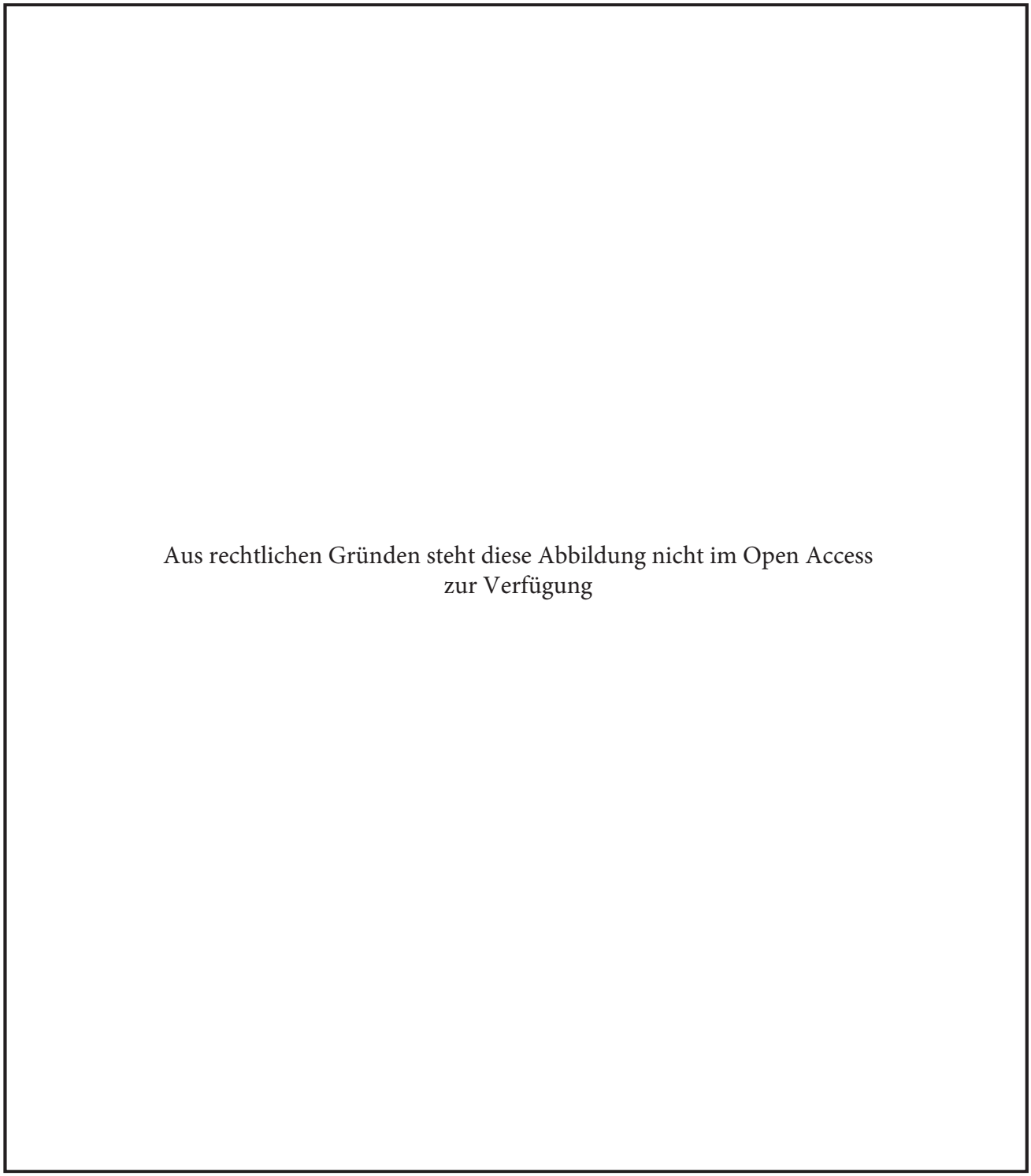

Fig. 11 S. Maria Maggiore, Rome, c. 432–435: Laban Invites the Haranites to Leah's Wedding, mosaic (photo: New York, Art Resources)

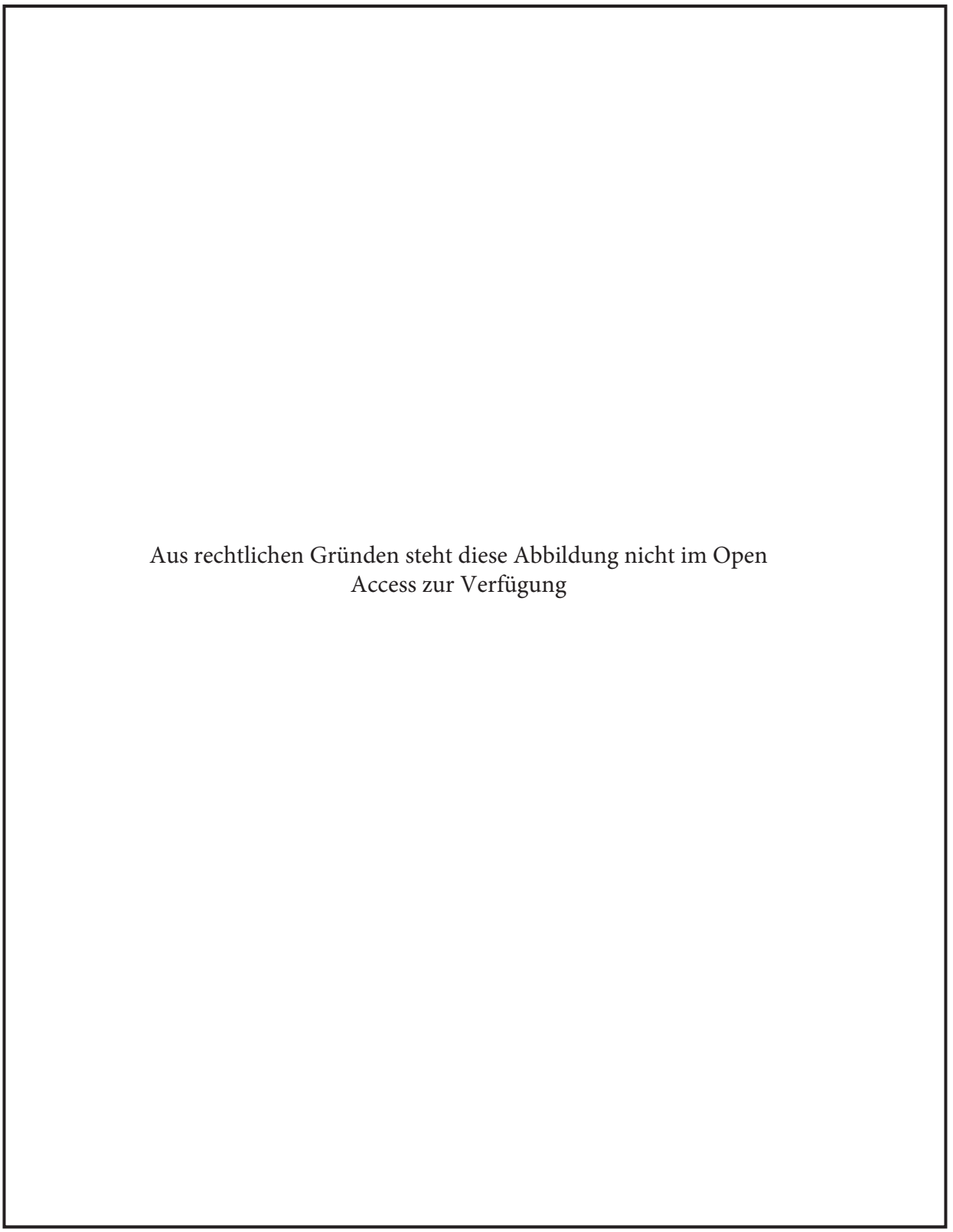

Fig. 12 S. Maria Maggiore, Rome, c. 432–435: The Meeting of Moses and Aaron, drawing after mosaic (after Waetzold)

Again, we do not know where and how these contacts were established;[103] whether in the East or the West,[104] whether on a textual or a pictorial level.

Since the majority of rabbinic iconographic elements in Early Christian art do not appear in Patristic, Hellenistic Jewish, or external writings, it is possible that a number of them were appropriated from Jewish pictorial models. This raises the question of whether these elements signify a conscious borrowing of Jewish iconography in order to enhance certain programs of a typological or polemical nature, or whether they were incorporated by artists ignorant of their specifically rabbinic character. In many cases—especially in narrative cycles—the latter seems more probable. The rabbinic elements rarely concern the main iconographic essence of a picture and never interfere with its main Christian thematic aspects. Normally they appear as supplementary figures or objects whose appearance, though unfounded in the biblical text, is not of crucial importance for the imagery. From the point of view of a Christian artist unaware of the rabbinic tale, it makes little difference whether Potiphar's wife sits in her bed or stands in the door of her house. In some cases, however, as Kessler has demonstrated, specifically Jewish elements were incorporated consciously into Christian iconography as part of the Jewish-Christian polemical dialogue (see above).

The explanation for the occurrence of rabbinic elements in Christian art hitherto always involved the assumption of Jewish illuminated manuscripts in Late Antiquity. Until no such manuscripts are discovered, this assumption will remain hypothetical. Rejecting this hypothesis, however, means rejecting any influence of Jewish biblical iconography on the development of Christian Old Testament cycles and falling back on the equally unsubstantiated hypothesis that most of the rabbinic elements in Early Christian art were transmitted through the lost writings and oral teachings of the Church Fathers. Moreover, the fact that a rabbinic motif was known to the Fathers does not automatically rule out the possibility of a *Jewish* pictorial rendering as well. The legend of Hiel, for example, was known to Ephrem;[105] nevertheless, its depiction at Dura undoubtedly represents the translation of a rabbinic exegetical motif into visual language within a purely Judaic context.

103. To this group of rabbinic elements a further motif, frequently quoted in this context, can be added: in the Byzantine Octateuchs, Eve is tempted by a camel-like serpent: see Weitzmann, "Septuagint" (as in note 33), 52f. This element is also known from the *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*, ed. G. Friedländer, London, 1916, repr. New York, 1981, 92, and Syriac texts, for example, in the *Cave of Treasures* (as in note 81). See M. Bernabò, "Miniatura bizantina e letterature siriaca. La riconstruzione di un ciclo di miniature con una storia vicina alla 'Caverna dei Tresori,'" *Studi Medievali* ser. III, XXXIV, 1993, 717–37, and idem, "Searching for Lost Sources of the Illustration of the Septuagint," *Byzantine East*, 331; see also C. O. Nordström, "Elementi ebraici nell'arte cristiana," in *Gli ebrei nell'alto Medioevo* (Settimane di Studio del centro Italiano di Studi sull' alto Medioevo, Spoleto, 1978), Spoleto, 1980, 974. Bernabò, *Miniatura*, ibid., discusses further examples.

104. See Verkerk's suggestion of an Italian provenance for the Ashburnham Pentateuch in "Liturgy" (as in note 82) and in her chapter in this volume.

105. Ephrem, commentary on 1 Kings 18:19, see Gutmann, "Midrash" (as in note 39), 96.

The Question of Continuity

This leads us to another question concerning Jewish-Christian relationships in Old Testament iconography: the frequently discussed question of whether a continuity of Late Antique Jewish iconography can be observed in Jewish and Christian cycles of the Middle Ages. In his earlier works, Kurt Weitzmann postulated a common Jewish prototype for the Dura murals and the centuries-later cycles of the middle Byzantine Octateuchs. Recently, though, he altered his conclusion, suggesting that the prototype was an illustrated Septuagint of Hellenistic origin. He did not determine the milieu, whether Jewish or Christian, to which it belonged and believed it was accessible to both Christians and Jews, and that the painters of Dura supplemented it with a specifically Jewish model.[106] Here I am not concerned with the existence of the postulated Septuagint prototype but rather with the additional Jewish source (or sources) and its possible afterlife beyond the third century. Was this source the same or closely related to the one that has often been postulated for the wall paintings in the Via Latina catacomb, the Vienna Genesis, and the Ashburnham Pentateuch? Did the postulated Jewish source of Dura have any influence on later Jewish art? In short, was there a continuity from Late Antique Jewish pictorial sources to later works of art, as Otto Pächt and Kurt Weitzmann believed, as well as such scholars of Jewish art as Bezalel Narkiss, Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, and Ursula and Kurt Schubert?[107] Or should we rather believe that the addition of specific Jewish elements to the given iconography of a model was accomplished individually by Jewish artists familiar with the rabbinic exegetical tradition?[108]

No paradigmatic conclusion can be drawn. Every rabbinic element appearing in Christian or Jewish art has its own history: some form links in a chain of iconographic tradition, but many do not; some can be analyzed as aspects of a Jewish-Christian dialogue, but many cannot. Above the Torah-shrine on the western wall of the Dura synagogue, a program was established[109] in which the Binding of Isaac was incorporated into a depiction of the Temple and its implements (Color Plate VII).[110] Another Late Antique Jewish example of the Binding of Isaac is found in the sixth-century synagogue of Beth Alpha in the lower Galilee, where it

106. Kessler–Weitzmann, *Dura,* 143ff.

107. Pächt (as in note 35), Weitzmann, "Question" (as in note 33), idem, "Septuagint" (as in note 33), and idem in Kessler–Weitzmann, *Dura;* B. Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah: A Fourteenth-Century Illuminated Hebrew Manuscript in the British Museum,* London, 1970, 44ff. Sed-Rajna believes that the cycles of the group of fourteenth-century Passover Haggadot from Spain "must be based on ancient iconographic traditions preserved in a Jewish environment." She suggests "a direct link between ancient and medieval Jewish tradition," G. Sed-Rajna, *The Hebrew Bible in Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts,* New York, 1987, 8; see also idem, "Further Thoughts on an Early Illustrated Pentateuch," *Journal of Jewish Art,* X, 1984, 29–31, and "Haggadah and Aggadah: Reconsidering the Origins of the Biblical Illustrations in Medieval Hebrew Manuscripts," *Byzantine East,* 415–23; K. and U. Schubert, *Jüdische Buchkunst,* Graz, 1984.

108. K. Kogman-Appel, "The Sephardic Picture Cycles and the Rabbinic Tradition: Continuity and Innovation in Jewish Iconography," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte,* LX, 1997, 451–82.

109. For details and the character of this program, see Kessler, in Kessler–Weitzmann, *Dura,* 154–84.

110. This juxtaposition—in Kessler's view expressing the Jewish claim that God's covenant still held after the destruction of the Temple (ibid., 157)—is based on the tradition in 2 Chron. 3:1 that Mount Moriah is to be identified with the Temple mount.

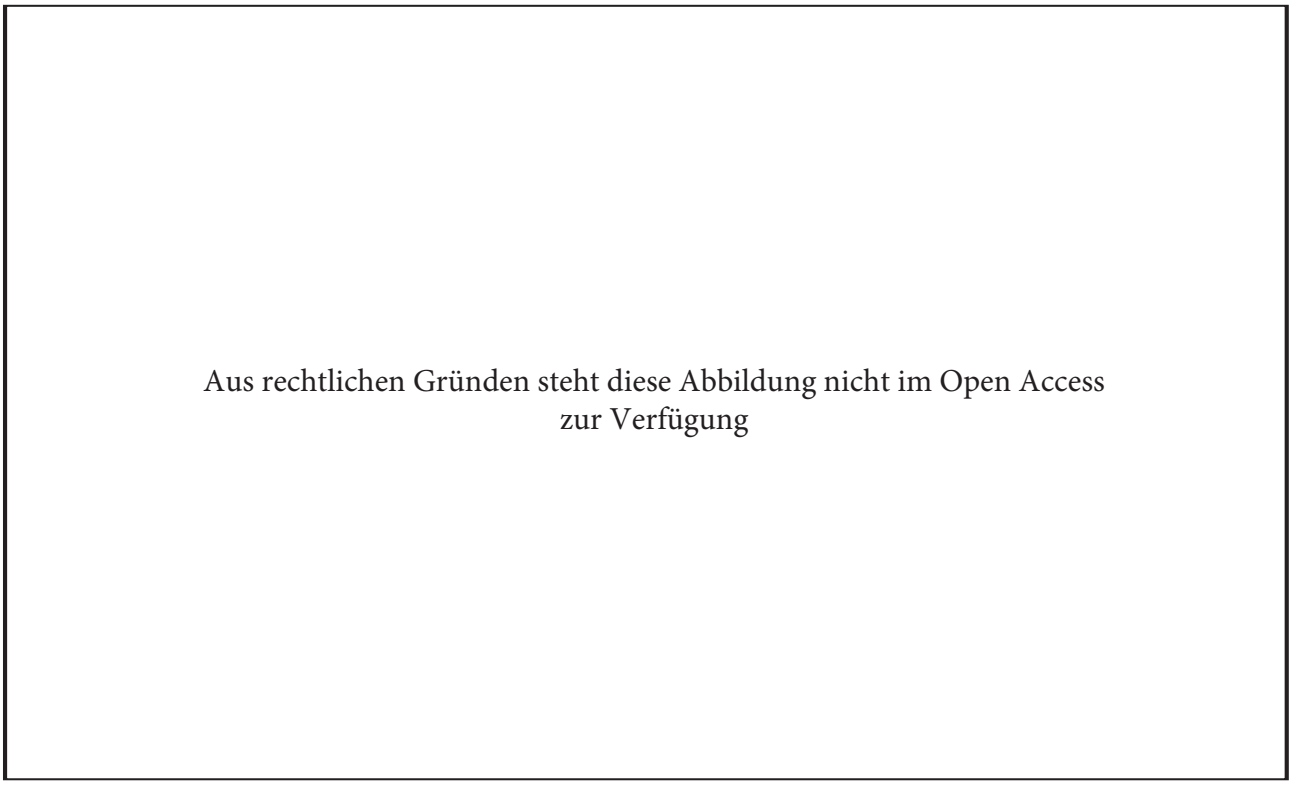

Fig. 13 Synagogue of Beth Alpha, Israel, sixth century: Binding of Isaac, mosaic (after Sukenik) (photo: Jerusalem, Authorities for Antiquities)

is also related to a depiction of the Temple implements (Fig. 13). Although the same idea seems to underlie both programs, the two examples have little in common visually. Both involve rabbinic motifs, but in different ways.[111] They illustrate different moments of the episode and arrange the details in completely different compositions. The mural at Dura shows a tent in the upper-right corner with a person at its entrance who is probably to be identified as Ishmael.[112] This detail is not found in any other depiction of the Binding of Isaac.[113]

Three rabbinical elements appear in the Dura version of the Infancy of Moses (Exod.

111. In both examples the ram appears next to a tree instead of a thicket (Gen. 22:13). This is due to the translation of the *Targum Onqelos,* Gen. 22:13, *Targum Onqelos, to Genesis,* ed. and trans. B. Grossfeld, Wilmington, 1988, which mentions a tree. In Beth Alpha, however, the ram is bound to the tree, an element that cannot be clearly discerned in the Dura wall painting, but which has a parallel in a mural in the chapel of El Baghawat, L. M. Therel, "La composition et le symbolisme de l'iconographie du Mausolée de l'Exode a El-Bagawhat," *Revista di archeologia cristiana,* 45, 1969, 223–70. This can also be explained by the rabbinic tradition that the ram was created on the sixth day of creation and destined from the beginning to be sacrificed by Abraham; see, for example, *Targum Pseudo-jonathan,* Gen. 22:13; *Tanhuma shelach* 14 (as in note 93), vol. II, 70a. Apart from the chapel in El Baghawat, this element is unknown in later Christian and Jewish art. For further background on the Late Antique Jewish iconography of this scene, see M. Bregman, "The Depiction of the Ram in the Aqeda Mosaic at Beth Alpha," *Tarbitz,* LI, no. 2, 1982, 306–9.

112. See U. Schubert (as in note 21), 54f.

113. In El Baghawat (as in note 111), Sarah (according to an inscription) observes the scene, but there is no tent.

1:15–2:9; Fig. 14): Pharaoh's counselors at the right,[114] Pharaoh's daughter personally retrieving the basket,[115] and the identification of the midwives at the right with Miriam and Jochebed at the left (all wear exactly the same costume).[116] Only Pharaoh's counselors, who are also well known in Christian tradition,[117] appear in later Christian and Jewish art: we find them, for example, in the Ashburnham Pentateuch[118] and in a Hebrew manuscript known as the Golden Haggadah from fourteenth-century Catalonia.[119] The peculiar rendering of the naked princess standing in the water is unknown in later cycles,[120] as is the identification of the midwives with Miriam and Jochebed.

The previously mentioned tradition of Hiel beneath the altar of the prophets of Ba'al (see Figs. 1 and 2) has no later parallels. Another series of scenes at Dura, depicting the story of Purim, includes a portrait of King Ahasuerus sitting on King Solomon's throne (Fig. 15). The design of Solomon's throne, featuring various species of animals on its steps, and the tradition

114. *Targum Pseudojonathan,* Exod. 1:15; *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 106a.

115. Prior to its vocalization and punctuation by the Masoretes in the eighth and ninth centuries, the biblical text was ambiguous as to whether the princess or one of her maidservants actually rescued the child from the river. The Late Antique rabbinic commentaries seem to favor the princess. For example, the *Targum Onqelos,* Exod. 2:5, *Targum Onqelos to Exodus,* ed. and trans. B. Grossfeld, Wilmington, 1988, and some other texts add a legend about her being affected by leprosy and advised to relieve her pain in the river. While doing so, she discovered the basket with Moses and upon touching it was instantly healed, for example, *Exodus Rabbah* 1:23 (as in note 59), 75; *Babylonian Talmud, Sota* 12b.

116. According to the rabbinic interpretation, the midwives disobeyed Pharaoh's order to kill the newborn Hebrew males (Exod. 1:17) because they were Jochebed and Miriam, Moses' mother and sister. See *Targum Pseudojonathan* on Exod. 1:5; *Babylonian Talmud, Sota* 11b.

117. Baskin (as in note 52), 7ff.

118. (As in note 35), fol. 56r.

119. Golden Haggadah, London, Brit. Lib., MS Add. 27210, c. 1320, fol. 8v; Narkiss (as in note 107).

120. In a group of fourteenth-century Sephardic Haggadot, three or four naked women are shown in the water: Golden Haggadah (as in note 119), fol. 9r; its "sister" manuscript, London, Brit. Lib., MS Or. 2884, fol. 10r; the Kaufmann Haggadah, Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Collection, MS A 422, fol. 9v. This iconography is followed also in a sixteenth-century Venetian Jewish picture Bible, Warsaw, Jewish Historical Institute, Cod. 1164, fol. 73 (now lost). A similar rendering can be observed in the Pamplona Bibles, Amiens, Bibl. municipale, MS Lat. 108, fol. 49r, and Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek, formerly Harburg, Collection Oettingen-Wallerstein, MS 1, 2, lat. 40, fol. 39r. This iconography has been associated with the Dura painting, for example, by F. Bucher, *The Pamplona Bibles: A Facsimile Compiled of Two Picture Bibles with Martyrologies Commissioned by King Sancho el Fuerte of Navarra (1194–1234), Amiens, Manuscript Latin 108 and Harburg, Ms. I, 2 lat. 40,* New Haven and London, 1970, 79 and chap. 6, n. 15, followed by U. Schubert, "Die Auffindung des Mosesknaben im Nil durch die Pharaonentochter sowie die Darstellung der vierten Plage in den beiden Pamplona-Bibeln im Licht der jüdischen Ikonographie," *Aachener Kunstblätter (Festschrift für Hermann Fillitz zum 70. Geburtstag),* 1994, 285–92; see also Narkiss (as in note 107), 62. A group of later, medieval Christian cycles also shows a naked woman in the river reaching out for the basket with the infant. These examples, however, are based on Josephus's version of the episode, where the woman is a maidservant; see a fragment in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 724; Paris, Bibl. Nat., cod. lat. 8846, fol. 2r, or Paris, Bibl. d'Arsenal, MS 5211, fol. 30r; A. Heimann, "The Last Copy of the Utrecht Psalter," in *The Year 1200: A Symposium,* New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975, 319. The appearance of one or more naked figures in the water is believed by the above scholars to have its roots in the Dura mural. For another view, see J. Gutmann, "Josephus' Jewish Antiquities in Twelfth-Century Art: Renovatio or Creatio," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte,* LXVIII, 1985, 434–41, repr. in idem, *Sacred Images* (as in note 19), IX; and recently J. Zahlten, "Eine nackte Prinzessin rettet Moses: Zur Metamorphose eines ikonographischen Motivs hellenistisch-Jüdischer Herkunft," in B. Carden et al., eds., *Flanders in a European Perspective: Manuscript Illumination Around 1400 in Flanders and Abroad,* Leuven, 1995, 659–72.

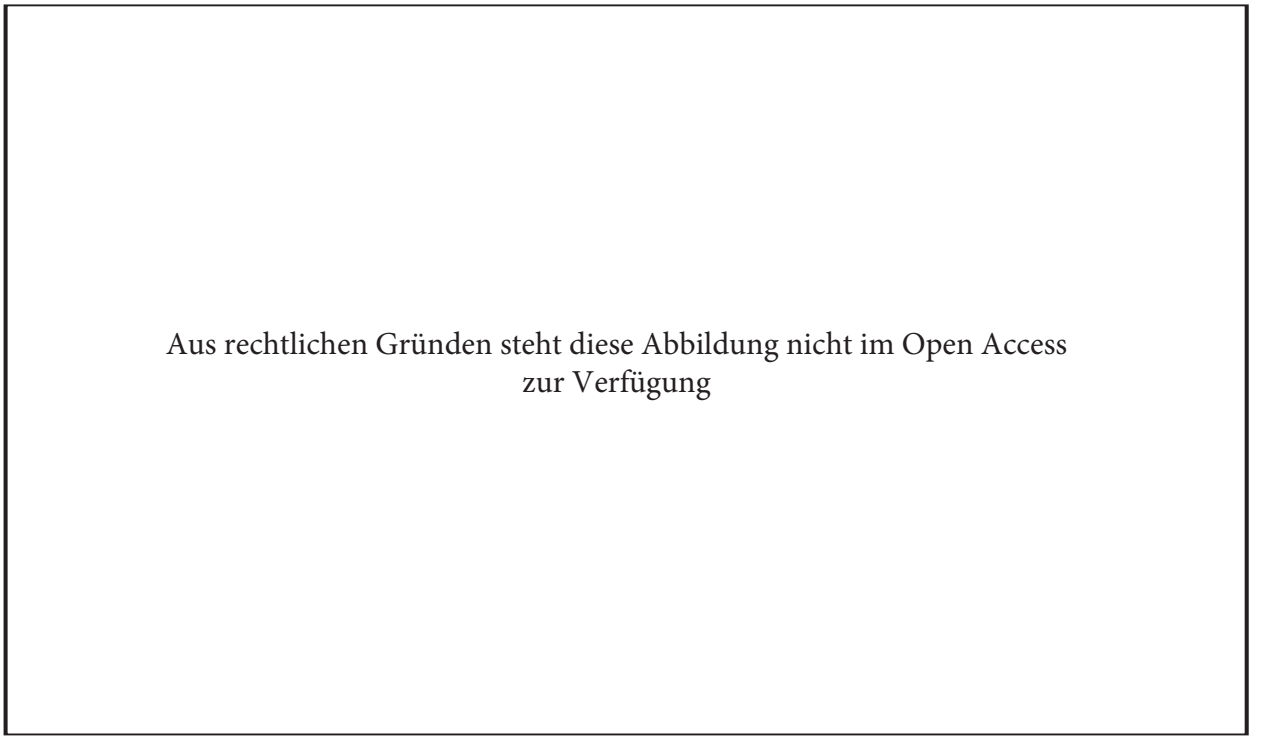

Fig. 14 Synagogue of Dura Europos, Syria, c. 245: Moses' Infancy, wall painting (after Goodenough)

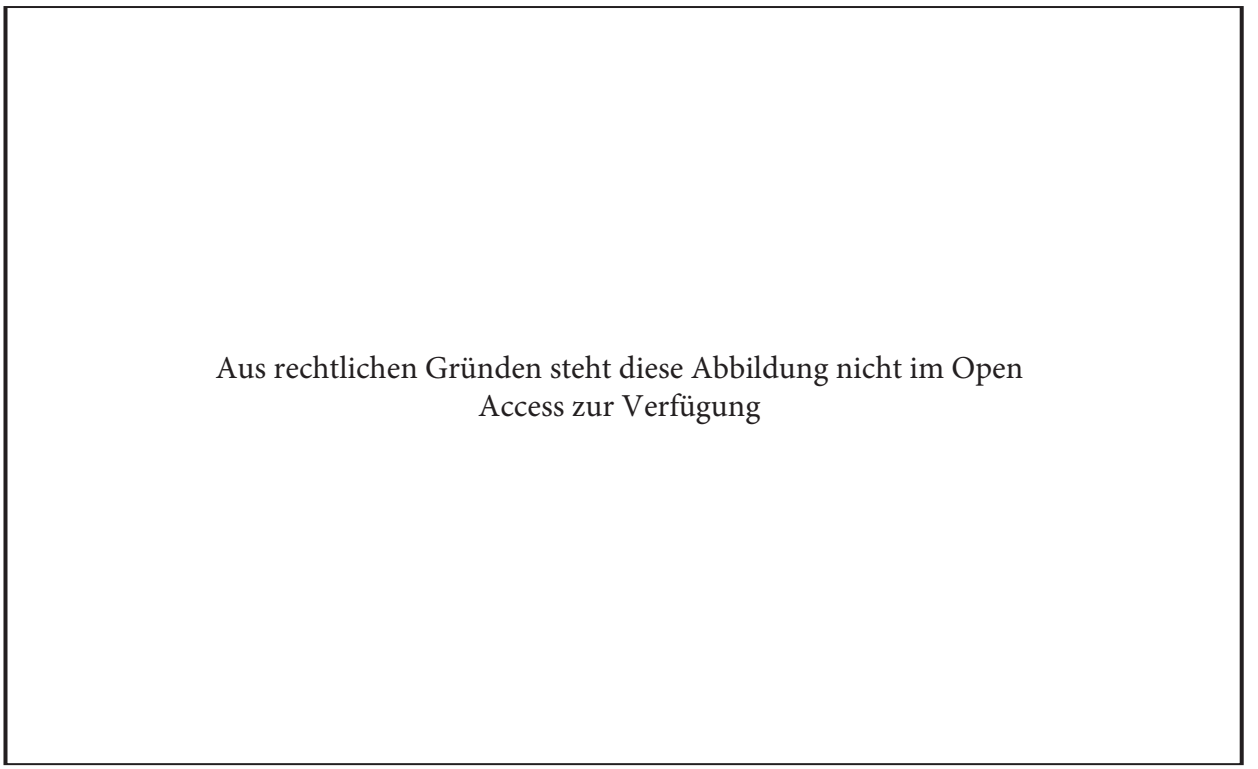

Fig. 15 Synagogue of Dura Europos, Syria, c. 245: The Story of Purim (King Ahasuerus), wall painting (after Goodenough)

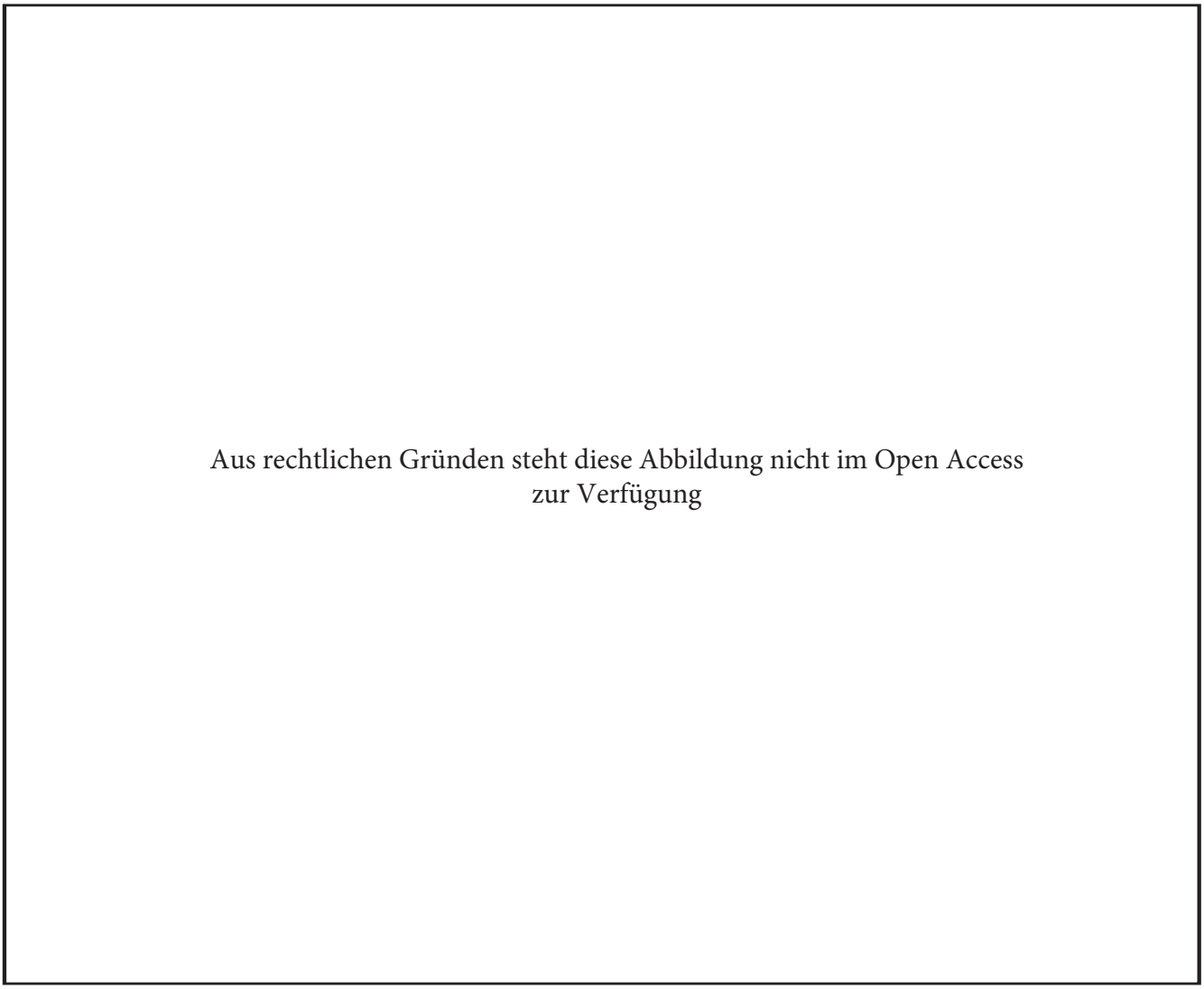

Fig. 16 Tripartite *Mahzor,* Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Collection, MS A 384, fol. 183r, fol. 183r, southern Germany, early fourteenth century: King Solomon (photo: Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences)

that Ahasuerus sat upon it are borrowed from the so-called Second *Targum* on Esther.[121] A similar throne based on the same source is shown in a portrait of Solomon in an early fourteenth-century prayer book from southern Germany, the Tripartite *Mahzor* (Fig. 16).[122] Because the two images are separated by more than a millennium, do not illustrate the same biblical episode, and lack other pictorial elements that might indicate an iconographic rela-

121. Esther 1:2; ed. B. Grossfield, *The Two Targums of Esther,* Collegeville, Pa., 1991. For further thoughts on this mural and the written and oral tradition it reflects, see Wharton (as in note 21), 45ff.

122. This prayer book consists of three volumes preserved in Budapest, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Kaufmann Collection, MS A 384, London, Brit. Lib., MS Add. 22412; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Mich. 619.

tionship, we cannot assign them to a common tradition: the thrones may well be independent designs based on the same rabbinic source.

It is clear, then, that the majority of specifically Jewish elements in the Dura iconography was not followed by a continuous iconographic chain in later Christian and Jewish art. Instead of indicating a Jewish pictorial model, they may well have been created for the later monuments by artists familiar with contemporary rabbinical exegesis.[123] Such independent creation became common in later Jewish art, where most of the rabbinic elements are iconographic innovations designed to emphasize the specifically Jewish character of the cycles.[124]

Somewhat more continuity seems to be observable in the rabbinically related iconography of Early Christian art. It would be wrong, however, to establish a rule in this matter. Some Midrashic insertions were influential in later Christian and Jewish art; others were not.[125] For example, the iconographic details of the mosaics in the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore that seem to indicate the involvement of a Jewish model in the patriarchs and the Exodus cycles do not belong to any widespread iconographic tradition. The wall paintings in the catacomb at the Via Latina, on the other hand, exhibit elements well known from later cycles: the stones beneath Jacob's head in Bethel (Color Plate VI), for example, have numerous parallels in medieval Christian art, and the scene is similarly rendered in the Antependium of Salerno,[126] in the Old English Hexateuch[127] and in a mosaic in the Cathedral of Monreale in Sicily.[128] A very common iconographic formula appears in the depiction of Moses' discovery by Pharaoh's daughter.[129] The painting shows three fully dressed women on the riverbank, the first of whom—apparently the princess—reaches out with her arms to touch the basket containing the infant. This image reflects the Jewish understanding of the Hebrew text, according to which the princess personally rescued the child instead of sending her maidservant to fetch the basket.[130] This

123. Gutmann, "Midrash" (as in note 39). For a different view relating the art of the Dura synagogue to a pre-Talmudic messianic movement in Babylonian Judaism, see Neusner (as in note 21), 155–92.

124. Kogman-Appel (as in note 108); idem, "The Iconography of the Biblical Cycle of the Second Nuremberg and the Yahuda Haggadah: Tradition and Innovation," *Proceedings of an International Symposium "The Old Testament as Inspiration in Culture" Held in Prague 1995* (forthcoming).

125. See, for example, Bezalel Narkiss's study "Pharaoh Is Dead and Living at the Gates of Hell," *Journal of Jewish Art,* X, 1984, 6–13, which presents a number of pictorial renderings of the Crossing of the Red Sea involving the rabbinic motif of Pharaoh's survival. It should be pointed out, however, that the examples discussed have little in common besides a shared textual, extrabiblical source.

126. Cathedral of Salerno, c. 1180, R. Bergman, *The Salerno Ivories: Ars Sacra from Medieval Amalfi,* Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1980, fig. 17.

127. London Brit. Lib., Cod. Cotton Claudius B. IV, 11th century, fol. 43v, C. R. Dodwell and P. Clemoes, eds., *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch,* Copenhagen, London, and Baltimore, 1974.

128. E. Kitzinger, *Mosaics of Monreale,* Palermo, 1960, pl. 46. Still later examples in Jewish art reflect the tradition that Jacob rested his head on twelve stones, for example, in the Second Nuremberg Haggadah, Jerusalem, Schocken Library, MS 24087, fol. 34r, Franconia, 1465–70, and in its sister manuscript the Yahuda Haggadah, Jerusalem, Israel Museum, MS 180/50, fol. 33r; K. Kogman-Appel, *Die Zeite Nürnberger und die Jehuda-Haggada: Jüdische zwischen Tradition und Fortschritt,* Frankfurt am Main *Illustratoren* (forthcoming). An example from the Duke of Alba Bible from 1422 from Castile, which was designed under rabbinic advice, follows the tradition of four stones, Madrid, Palacio de Liria, fol. 43v, J. Schonfield, ed., *La Biblia de Alba,* Madrid, 1992. For the rabbinic sources of this manuscript, see C. O. Nordström, *The Duke of Alba's Castilian Bible,* Uppsala, 1964.

129. A. Ferrua, *The Unknown Catacomb: A Unique Discovery of Early Christian Art,* Florence, 1991, fig. 57.

130. See above note 115.

formula frequently occurs in later Christian[131] and Jewish art;[132] it differs, however, from the version at Dura. Parallels to the depiction of Pinehas killing Zimri and Cozbi (see Fig. 6) can be found in the two Pamplona Bibles (see Fig. 7)[133] and in the fifteenth-century Castilian Bible of the Duke of Alba.[134] Other rabbinic elements in the wall paintings of the Via Latina catacomb do not, however, belong to a continuous iconographic tradition.[135] No parallels, for example, of Abraham being seated while receiving the three messengers are known from later cycles (see Fig. 5). Another painting shows Jacob and his sons traveling to Egypt in two-wheeled carriages pulled by oxen, a detail not found in the Bible (Gen. 45:19) but in one of the *Targumim.* There are no later parallels for this.[136]

The rabbinic elements in the Vienna Genesis are especially peculiar. Many of these have been analyzed by scholars in the past, but most of them have no later parallels. An exception is the above-mentioned depiction of Potiphar's wife pretending to be ill and seducing Joseph (Color Plate V), which has various parallels in Late Antique and medieval Jewish and Christian art (see Fig. 3).[137] Another exception is Joseph meeting an angel on his way to Dothan—as explained in rabbinic commentaries—instead of a man, as indicated in the biblical text (Gen. 37:15). The angel is shown in the Vienna Genesis[138] and in Sephardic examples of the fourteenth century.[139] These examples have led some scholars to conclude that the entire iconography of the Sephardic Haggadot derives from Late Antique pictorial sources, which in turn were based on Jewish pictorial models.[140] Elsewhere, however, I have established that, apart from the Joseph scenes, the majority of Jewish elements in the iconography of the Sephardic cycles do not go back to earlier pictorial sources and that no general conclusion about the relationship between the Sephardic and Early Christian cycles can be drawn.[141] If the Vienna Genesis was based on a hypothetical Jewish prototype, we must assume that this prototype had

131. For example, on the fourth-century Brescia casket, Brescia, Museo Civico, W. Volbach, *Early Christian Art,* Munich, 1958, pl. 87.

132. For example, in the Sarajevo Haggadah, fol. 20r, *The Sarajevo Haggadah,* ed. E. Werber, Belgrade, 1985. Before the outbreak of the Bosnian war in 1992, the Sarajevo Haggadah was preserved in the National Museum of Sarajevo, during the war in the vaults of the National Bank.

133. Amiens (as in note 120), fol. 65r; Augsburg (as in note 120), fol. 78r.

134. (As in note 128), fol. 128r. See L. Kötzsche-Breitenbruch, *Die neue Katakombe an der Via Latina (Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Ergänzungsband IV),* Münster, 1976, 85ff.

135. On the question of continuity and discontinuity in the Via Latina catacomb, see W. Tronzo, *The Via Latina Catacomb: Imitation and Discontinuity in Fourth-Century Roman Painting,* University Park, Pa., 1986.

136. *Targum Pseudojonathan,* Gen. 45:19; Ferrua (as in note 129), fig. 59.

137. The motif recurs in later medieval Jewish examples from Spain. The miniatures in the Golden Haggadah (as in note 119), fol. 6v, its sister manuscript in London, (as in note 120), fol. 7v, and the Sarajevo Haggadah (as in note 132), fol. 13v, show Potiphar's wife, as in the Vienna Genesis, sitting in her bed while trying to pull Joseph toward her. This motif also appears in Crusader manuscripts (London, Brit. Lib., MS Add. 15268, fol. 54r; Dijon, Bibl. municipale, MS 563, fol. 4v; Brussels, Bibl. Royale, MS 10175, fol. 68v, see H. Buchthal, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem,* Oxford, 1957, pl. 94) and in exemplars of late medieval German chronicles of the world, such as S. Gall, Bibl. Vadiana, MS 302, fol. 32v.

138. (As in note 25), 30.

139. See the Golden Haggadah (as in note 119), fol. 5r, and its sister manuscript (as in note 120), fol. 6v. For rabbinic sources, see, for example, *Targum Pseudojonathan,* Gen. 37:15.

140. Pächt (as in note 35), 253; Schubert, "Wiener Genesis" (as in note 40), 9f.; K. and U. Schubert (as in note 107), 44ff.

141. Kogman-Appel (as in note 108).

no further influence on later Christian art or on other contemporary cycles. Such an assumption puts the whole question in a different light: the rabbinic elements of the Vienna Genesis cannot be regarded as constituting a paradigmatic occurrence; instead, they represent a particular phenomenon, characteristic of the cultural exchange only in the area of the manuscript's provenance. A specific cycle might have been copied from a Jewish prototype, of which only a few parts became iconographic conventions observable in other areas at later dates. Many aspects of the iconography of the Ashburnham Pentateuch cycle show that it is well rooted in a fairly common iconographic tradition;[142] however, most rabbinic elements do not form part of this tradition and possess no parallels.

Conclusions

Jewish-Christian contacts in Late Antiquity were a reality. The present discussion involves two different fields in which these contacts are manifest: biblical exegesis and Old Testament iconography. If we assume contacts on the exegetical level—often driven by polemical attitudes—we should not be surprised to find evidence for such contacts on a pictorial level as well. Both religions had reservations about figurative art during the first and second centuries; both religions later experienced a change of mind. Christianity was not a visual culture from the beginning. Is it not possible that a cultural exchange between the two rival religions was more easily undertaken at the practical, everyday level of artistic workshops involving visual models than at the theoretical, exegetical, and theological levels?

Rabbinic iconographic elements lead different lives in Jewish and in Christian art. In Jewish art they are typically developed directly from the Midrashic writings or an oral tradition in order to emphasize the Jewish character of a cycle or to create a specific religious, sometimes political program. Only rarely are they transmitted from cycle to cycle through copying. In Christian art, however, elements rooted in a Jewish pictorial or textual tradition either reflect the Jewish-Christian polemical dialogue or indicate the existence of a Jewish pictorial model. Our present knowledge does not allow us to characterize, date, or localize such models: any attempt to specify such a model as being an illuminated manuscript, a model book,[143] or a monumental cycle would be hypothetical and often speculative, as would any attempt to determine a date or a provenance. We are unable to say more than that it is plausible that to some extent Jewish pictorial models influenced the development of Early Christian Old Testament iconography. This influence took place in different contexts and under different circumstances; however, we should rule out the rabbinic elements in the Dura wall paintings from any involvement in this process. The fact that there is not always a continuity of such elements in Christian art is a matter of some significance: these motifs were probably eliminated as Chris-

142. Verkerk, "Liturgy" (as in note 82) and in her chapter in this volume.

143. As suggested by M. L. Thompson, "Hypothetical Models of the Dura Paintings," in Gutmann (as in note 21), 31–52.

tianity and Judaism drifted further apart, and this would not have occurred if they had been thoroughly absorbed by Christianity in—often lost—Patristic writings. The relatively few rabbinic elements that recur in Christian art as members of an iconographic chain were apparently introduced by artists unaware of their Jewish exegetical origins. In this way, they became standard parts of the image transmitted from the model and were immune to christological modifications and innovations. Although this is not the rule in the creation and development of Old Testament iconography, it is one aspect of the versatile cultural and creative processes involved in cyclic painting. The presence of rabbinic motives in Early Christian Old Testament iconography attests to Jewish-Christian cultural exchanges on two levels that cannot be clearly separated from each other: between the Church Fathers and Rabbis, on one hand, and between Jewish and Christian artists, on the other. The geographic *Sitz im Leben* of such contacts was the eastern Mediterranean, especially Syria and the land of Israel. This was the region where rabbinic exegesis was established, where Jewish narrative art flourished, where Jewish Christianity existed in the shadow of both religions, and where scholarly contacts between the Rabbis and the Fathers took place.

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