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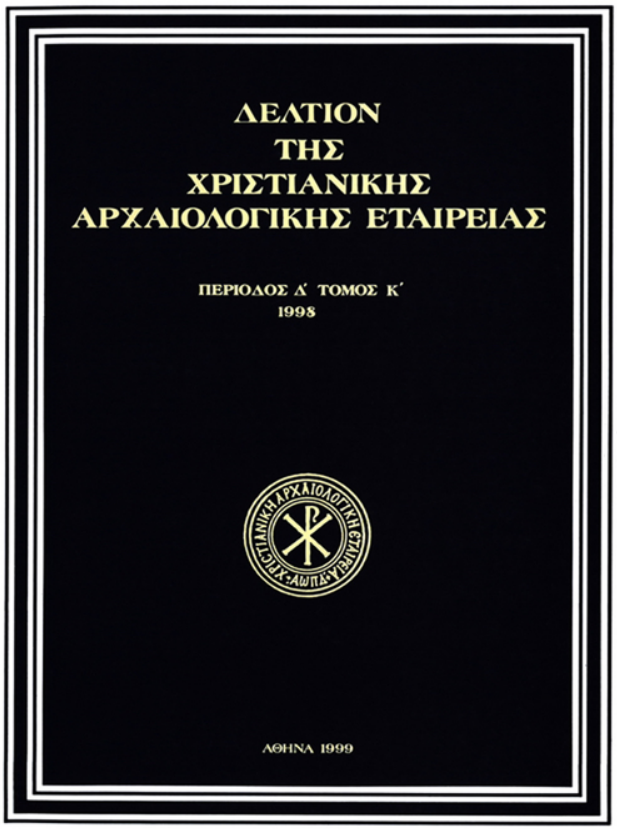

Συμβολισμός στα εβραϊκά και χριστιανικά έργα τέχνης στην ύστερη αρχαιότητα

Asher OVADIAH

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ΔΕΛΤΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΑΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΗΣ ΕΤΑΙΡΕΙΑΣ

Symbolism in Jewish and Christian Works of Art in Late Antiquity

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SYMBOLISM IN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN WORKS OF ART IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The motifs that are specifically Jewish in character form a distinct assemblage within the ornamental repertoire of the synagogue, strikingly different from other decorative elements. Despite the assessments of some scholars[1], we believe that data are insufficient in permit of any evaluation of the symbolic significance and/or apotropaic function of the Shield of David (*Magen David*) and Seal of Solomon in Capernahum synagogue (Figs 1-2). However, the incorporation and integration of those two "Jewish" motifs into general decorative repertoire emphasise their sole function as elements of architectural ornamentation[2].

Opinions are divided, with that favoured by most scholars holding that the decorative motifs in the synagogue (except for those connected with Jewish subjects) are purely ornamental and have no sort of symbolic or didactic meaning. However, there is also a minority opinion, whose major advocate was E.R. Goodenough[3], who insisted that these motifs did have a symbolic or apotropaic meaning. Goodenough does not exclude the Jewish motifs from his general view. He argues that any interpretation of the symbolism of the synagogue decorations must take into account the fact that the same or simiral motifs appear on many Jewish gravestones and sarcophagi of the 3rd to 5th centuries C.E. Nor can one, in his opinion, ignore the prevailing *Zeitgeist* which was permeated by religious symbolism, equally affecting Jews and gentiles. Just as anyone else, the Jews were desirous of apotropaic symbols, a longing achieving expression in their synagogue ornamentation.

The pagan motifs among the synagogue decorations – regardless of their possible symbolic and/or apotropaic meaning – provide conclusive evidence as to the tolerant attitude of the spiritual leaders of the Galilee and Golan congregations during the 3rd-5th centuries C.E.

We have not found any literary source or archaeological evidence to support a tendency to view decorative motifs as fraught with symbolic meaning. Within the synagogue context these motifs, especially the figurative, appear to have an architectural-decorative function only. Conceived and executed according to the aesthetic concepts of the time, these elements formed an integral part of the embellishments of the region's architecture. The repertoire of motifs in the synagogue also included some purely Jewish designs which require special consideration. Given the circumstances and socio-political conditions of the post-Second Temple period in which these synagogues were erected, one perceives in these Jewish motifs a didactic purpose and expression of Jewish identity, a desire both to adorn and remember. Thus the Temple utensils and the "Seven Species" are commemorated and at the same time brought to the forefront of the worshipper's attention.

The biblical scenes depict the Binding of Isaac (Beth Alpha) (Fig. 3), King David as Orpheus (Gaza Maiumas) (Fig. 4), Daniel in the Lions' Den (Na'aran and Kh. Susiyah) (Fig. 5), End of Days (Meroth)[4] (Fig. 6), and Noah's Ark (Fig. 7) (Gerasa in Jordan and Mopsuhestia in Cilicia, Asia Minor), Samson and Samson's foxes (Mopsuhestia in Cilicia, Asia Minor)[5]. Of the biblical scenes mentioned, Daniel in the Lions' Den at Na'aran near Jericho is of special historical interest. Although the scene was defaced, it may be identified on the basis of a clear inscription "*Daniel Shalom*". The synagogue at Na'aran was apparently built in the middle of the 6th century, during the reign of Justinian I or possibly slightly later, during Justin II's reign. The vicious attitude of the rulers towards the Jews of Eretz-Israel, with its repression and stringent royal edicts, permitted of the erection of only a very limited number of synagogues. Borrowing of the Daniel story for its visual representation in the Na'aran pavement but reflects the troubles of the time,

1. Kohl and Watzinger 1916, p. 184-185, 187ff. Goodenough VII, 1958, p. 198-200.
2. Scholem 1949, p. 243-251.
3. Goodenough I, 1953, p. 30-31, 178-179; IV, 1954, p. 3-48.
4. Mucznik, Ovadiah and Gomez de Silva 1996, p. 286-293.
5. Ovadiah 1978, p. 864-866, pls. 279 (fig. 18), 280.

Fig. 1. Capernahum, Ancient Synagogue. Relief of Shield of David (Magen David).

Fig. 2. Capernahum, Ancient Synagogue. Relief of the Seal of Solomon.

namely the instability and the precarious position of the Jewish community in the Byzantine Empire. The Jews' refusal to submit to royal decrees mirrors Daniel's resistance to the king's will, and thus certain degree of symbolism may be distinguished in the choice of Daniel in the Lions' Den for the Na'aran mosaic.

A purely pagan motif appearing on mosaic floors is the zodiac wheel with Helios in the centre[6] and personifications of the four seasons in the corners[7] (Beth Alpha, Na'aran, Ḥammath Tiberias, Ḥosefa or Ḥusifa, Sepphoris [Zippori], and apparently Kh. Susiyah as well). Karl Lehmann sees in some cases the reflection of domed ceilings on mosaic floors[8]. Perhaps this was still perceived as the mirror reflection of the domed ceiling in the synagogues where the zodiac wheel appears. The significance of the zodiac wheel as it is depicted on mosaic pavements of ancient synagogues is still obscure in the absence of literary sources or archaeological evidence as to its function. Attempts to view the wheel of the zodiac as a calendar (an acceptable explanation[9] or as fraught with cosmic symbolism, somewhat less likely)[10] are still tentative. However, an additional possibility exists, that of an astrological interpretation. The discovery of magic texts inscribed on bits of metals in the apse of the Ma'on synagogue, some of which have lately been opened, read and deciphered, together with additional amulets from Eretz-Israel (and oathing bowls from Babylonia) indicates that the border between orthodox Judaism and magical and astrological practices was somewhat blurred[11].

It appears that normative-traditional Judaism had no fear of decorative aesthetic representations either overtly expressed or indirectly indicated. By way of example, one of the Jewish dirges recited on the eve of the Ninth of Av, includes an allegorical description of the heavenly host weeping over the destruction of Jerusalem and of the First and Second Temples, with additional mention of the zodiac and its twelve signs, most truly of pagan character : "...and the heavenly host lamented... even the constellations shed tears"[12]. Then as now the image of the zodiac occupied a place in Jewish tradition. One may conclude that Jewish tradition displays a moderate and tolerant approach to art – be it relief or mosaic. Judaism has always recognised the aesthetic yearnings of mankind and has sought to harness them in the service of God. Only when aesthetic diverge into idolatrous worship are they prohibited. It is quite conceivable that the disputes among the sages resulted additionally in creating different attitudes with regard to the art and artistic values. The attitude taken by the sages towards art differs from generation to generation, fluctuat-

6. Cf. Dothan 1967, p. 130-134.
7. The Seasons also appear by themselves in the Villa at Beth Guvrin; they are depicted within round medallions which are arranged in a vertical row. See *NEAEHL* 1, 1993, p. 198 (top left).
8. Cf. Lehmann 1945, p. 1-27.
9. Cf. Avi-Yonah 1964, p. 45-57; Avi-Yonah 1965, 325-330; Avi-Yonah 1981, p. 396-397.
10. Guidoni Guidi 1979, p. 131-154. Goodenough VIII, 1958, p. 215-217.
11. Ovadiah 1987, p. 156; see also Smith 1982, p. 199-214.
12. While the date and author of this *piyyut* (hymn) are not known, its metre dates it to mediaeval times or perhaps even earlier.

Fig. 3. Beth Alpha, Ancient Synagogue. The Binding of Isaac.

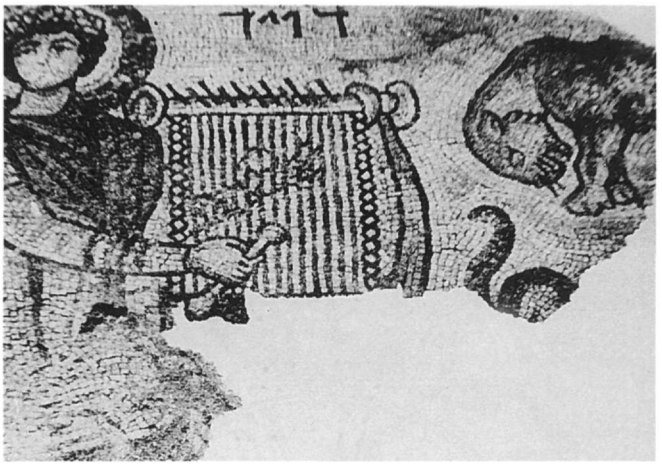

Fig. 4. Gaza Maiumas, Ancient Synagogue. King David as Orpheus.

ing according to their *Weltanschauung* and mode of thought from moderate and tolerant to orthodox and stringent. The approach of teachers of religion and spiritual leaders in the mishnaic and talmudic period to art in general and to the three-dimensional figurative in particular was also subject to variation[13].

A portion of the figurative representations in synagogues listed above are instructive in intent, a purpose achieved by the visual portrayal of some of the most famous biblical stories. In this graphic form worshippers could be taught selected episodes from the Bible[14]. We feel that to the extent that symbolism is to be found in the biblical scenes or in other motifs decorating synagogue mosaics, this symbolism must equally be distinctly expressed and clearly reflected in Jewish literary sources. Should there be no such correlation between the written material and the visual representation, it is rather the educational aspect of the mosaic representation, with the notion they are meant to convey, that should be studied. If, however, the symbol can be perceived as expressing an abstract idea, the biblical scene appearing in synagogue may to a certain extent be regarded as symbolising the ways of the Divine Providence – forgiveness and redemption. Like, for example, the *shofar* (ram's horn) that symbolises forgiveness and redemption while recalling the Binding of Isaac[15]. Should this symbolism actually be implied, it must of necessity be viewed within the relevant historical context with all its political and social realities, as well as being interpreted in its historical aspects with their primary task of bringing to mind and permanently recording[16]. It is universally acknowledged that certain circumstances give rise to specific symbolism in an attempt to derive from them strength and encouragement[17].

Christian works of art demonstrate that Christianity in its incipient stages created a unique artistic language. The transition from the dying Greek-Roman world to Christianity *triumphans* was an involved and lengthy process. At the outset paganism and Christianity existed side by side. At the end of this co-existence the art of the ancient world was exhausted, while Christian art gave birth to complex creations

13. Cf. Sukenik 1934, p. 64.

14. The same instructive value is also attributed by the Church to the portrayal of episodes from the sacred writings; see *PG*, 79, col. 577.

15. See *Genesis Rabbah* LVI 9.

16. It seems that the seven-branched *menorah* is not to be considered as symbolic, but rather as an instructive element both recalling and perpetuating the past of the Jewish world and emphasising Jewish identity. Philo of Alexandria and Josephus Flavius attributed symbolic significance to the *menorah*, regarding it as having a cosmic connotation and representing the seven planets. Philo even expands upon his symbolism, stating that the *menorah* represents the heavens which, like itself, bear lights. It must be stressed that reference here is not to the traditional orthodox sources which alone represents the tenets held by the religious establishment. It is to be noted that no hint of cosmic or other symbolism is encountered in the Mishnah and the Talmud. See Philo, *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres*, p. 216-227 (*The Loeb Classical Library*, IV, London - New York 1932, p. 390-397); Jos, *Bell.* V, p. 217 (*The Loeb Classical Library*, III, London - New York 1928, p. 66-267).

17. Cf. Landau 1979, p. 215.

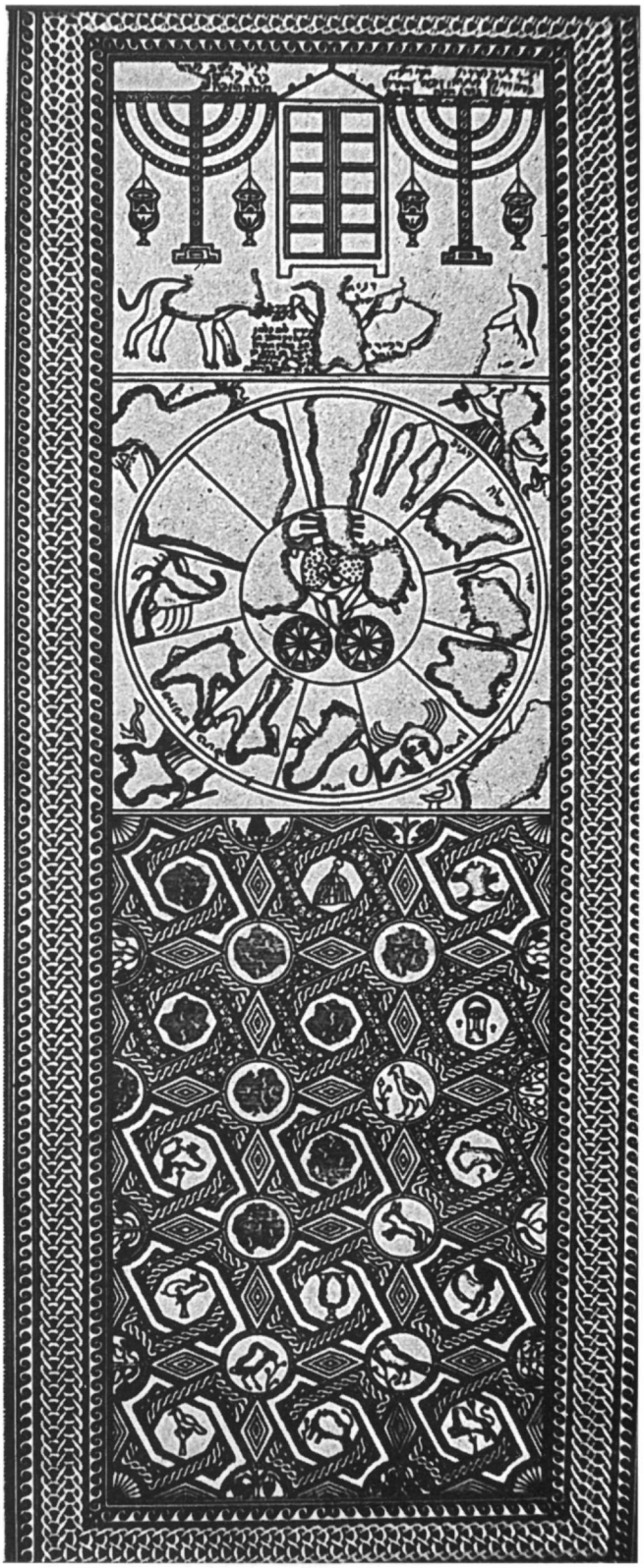

Fig. 5. Na'aran, Ancient Synagogue. Daniel in the Lions' Den.

with a new scale of imagery and an artistic language of its own. As early as the 4th century C.E. Christianity adopted the Imperial modes of expression to describe its own heavenly hierarchy, in that the modes of portraying the Caesar and his entourage are now transferred to depiction of Jesus and the Apostles; to these are added symbolic images drawn from the Bible. In early Christian art the human figure still takes pride of place, but the depictions forego the illusion of depth to develop a flat two-dimensional effect. Indeed, free monumental sculpture gradually disappears during the early Christian period, with emphasis now placed on the relief. By the 7th century C.E. monumental sculpture no longer constitutes a mean of artistic expression. Mosaic, painting, metal-work and ivory-carving are now prominent, while monumental sculpture will reapear only in the late 11th century with an impact and a new mean of expression unknown hitherto.

Christian art consciously created a visual language to depict the heavenly order. This art made no attempt to describe the real world, but rather to develop a new visual language that would serve to depict, in keeping with its own dogma, a world which it considered more real. Two-dimensional art was not intended to imitate nature – even in its idealised form – but to create a language of signs and symbols, by means of schematisation of the natural forms of man and his surrounding. Human portraits were flat, with the expression standardised rather than spontaneous. While Roman art, from which Christian art evolved, availed itself by a variety of forms for expressing any one mood, Christian art, in its rejection of Classical art, reduced the means of expression to a minimum, to the point of turning them into mere symbols. The gestures depicted by means of movement and expression in Classical art, be they sorrow, fun, mourning, ecstasy and dance, became pure convention in Early Christian art. For example, a figure standing calmly, chin in hand – this represents mourning or meditation or death; the raised hand of Jesus represents benediction, and so forth. Human emotions were no longer expressed directly, but rather by indirect means such as a flapping robe, harsh colours and the like. Spontaneous landscapes also disappear – the Garden of Eden, for example, is planted with standard selection of trees and flowers chosen as symbols, such as lily, the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. In depicting the outside, one tree and a building viewed from the outside sufficed, while interiors were represented by house furnishings, such as a curtain, a chair or a table. The real world was thus not expressed in the early Christian period; its central themes represented the hierarchies of heaven by means of recognised signs.

Christian art is thus conceptual art presenting religious dogmas, notions of heavenly hierarchies, divinity, cosmo-

Fig. 6. Meroth, Ancient Synagogue. End of Days.

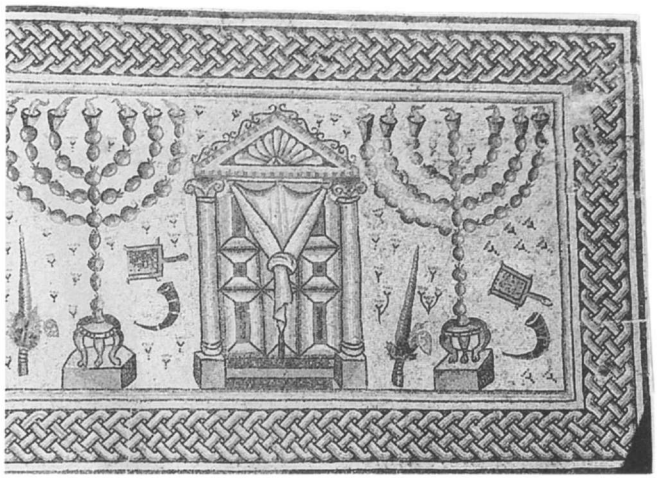

Fig. 7. Ḥammath Tiberias, Ancient Synagogue. The panel of the Noah's Ark flanked by two menorahs.

gony, ethical values, etc., both by illustrating holy stories and by depicting images borrowed from the tangible world but serving as conventional symbols and signs. The combination of illustration of parables with an agreed range of symbols created an artistic language in which the figurative motif and the symbolic image are of equal valence[18]. Early Christian art, in addition to its symbolic aspect, is also didactic in character, in that stories from the Old and New Testaments could convey to an illiterate audience the basic principles of belief and the stories of redemption and salvation.

The instructive value attributed by the Church to the portrayal of episodes from the sacred writings is reflected in the response of Nilos of Mt. Sinai to a query broached by Olympiodoros the Eparch in the early 5th century. Olympiodoros asked whether the lives of the saints to whom he sought to dedicate a church might be portrayed in paintings to be further embellished with animals and plants; Nilos replied that themes from the sacred writings should be painted so that individuals untutored in these religious works could learn of the deeds of the Church Fathers from the paintings[19].

Christian thought perceives the Church as a microcosm reflecting the macrocosm, that is, as manifestation of the hierarchical order of the kingdom of heaven. The actual church edifice was perceived by numerous theologians and historians from Eusebius onwards as a symbol reflecting or representing an idea alongside of a reality. The architectural elements of the church were assigned a symbolic significance beyond their actual existence: the ceiling or dome symbolised the sky; its supporting pillars – the Apostles or Prophets; the apse – the symbol of the light; and the facade – the *porta triumphalis* of cosmic Christianity. The philosophical essence of the church building is also revealed by a sixth-century Syriac text describing the Cathedral of Edessa – present-day Urfa in south-east Turkey; this text provides images and symbols drawn from the heavenly sphere to suit the various parts of the edifice: "Its ceiling is stretched like the heavens – without columns, vaulted and closed – and furthermore, it is adorned with golden mosaic as the firmament is with shining stars. Its high dome is comparable to the heaven of heavens; it is like a helmet, and its upper part rests solidly on its lower part. Its great, splendid arches represent the four sides of the world; they also resemble by virtue of their variegated colors, the glorious rainbow of the clouds"[20]. Other theological doctrines, deriving from the Platonic tradition, view the church building as the actual substantiation of the idea of

18. Isidore of Seville, *PL* 1862-1878. Rabanus Maurus, *PL* 1864. Ferguson 1971. De Vries 1974.

19. See above, n. 14.

20. Mango 1972, p. 58 (lines 5-7) and n. 8.

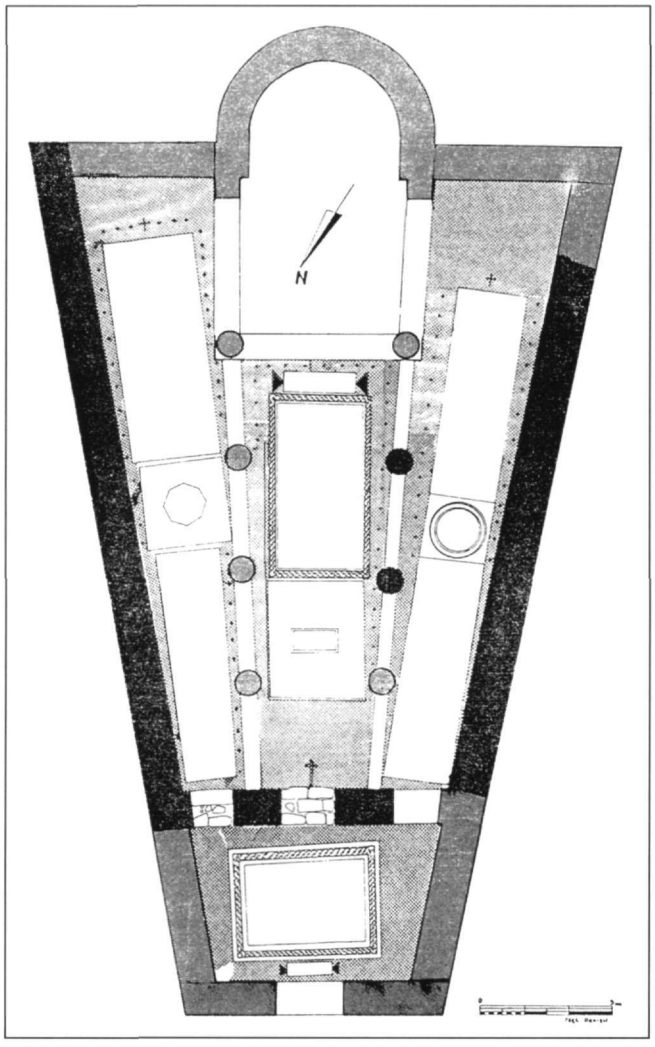

Fig. 8. Magen. Church of "St. Cyricus".

divinity. Christian commentary also perceives in the church the ship of Jesus with the congregation its passengers[21]. St. Ambrose of Milan, in his writings, compares the Church to a ship, and the Cross to a ship's mast. The miracle of the Sea of Galilee, when Christ calmed the waves and saved the vessel of the Apostles from disaster, likewise served to give the ship a symbolic religious meaning[22]. And indeed, the unusual ground-plan of the 6th century Church of "St. Cyricus" found in excavations some years ago near Kibbutz Magen in the north-western Negev, recalls the stern of a ship[23] (Fig. 8). The church's planners may have intended thereby to point up the symbolic-religious significance of the building as perceived in Christian symbolism.

Among the most emphasised architectural elements in the church is the arch leading to the apse, which was embellished with mosaic and paintings. It may be regarded as a transference to the church of the imperial triumphal arch, now representing Jesus' conquest of death. Throughout the early Christian period, Christian architects continued to add elements to the basilica, foreign to Roman architecture but fulfilling special functions in the Christian ritual. One of these elements also found in Holy Land church architecture is the transept, one of the prime inventions of early Christian architecture which cannot but attest to the originality and innovativeness of these builders. While the significance and function of the transept are unclear, one may assume that it was intended to invest the structure with the form of the cross, thus underlying the symbolic significance of the whole. It also allowed a large number of worshippers to see the altar and watch the ceremonies taking place around it[24]. In these cases where a relic was installed at the intersection of the longitudinal and latitudinal halls, access was simplified by this configuration.

Archaeological finds of early Christianity – sculpture, paintings, mosaics, etc., – abound in symbolic and allegorical significance. For indeed, Christianity developed a widely ramified system of symbols which injected new contents into forms borrowed from the Classical world[25]. Commentary on the Old and New Testaments develops making use of standard formulae: the allegorical, the historical and the literal. Jerusalem is a good illustration of these modes of interpretation: allegorically, Jerusalem is the heavenly Jerusalem, historically it represents the bitter fall of the Jewish nation and in literal terms, Jerusalem (Yerushalayim) is the perfection (*Shlemut*) of the future.

The main mode of interpretation is the allegorical, regarding the description of biblical events, figures or objects as alluding to and predicting events in the life of Jesus, His martyrdom and Resurrection. In other words, the presentation of scenes or figures from the Bible, such as

21. A fifth-century source states that a church should resemble a boat: "*navi sit similis*"; see *Constitutiones Apostolicae*, *PG*, 1, cols. 723-738.
22. See Ferguson 1971, p. 181.
23. Tsaferis and Dinur 1978, p. 26-29; Tsaferis 1985, p. 1-15.
24. Ovadiah 1970, p. 190-192; Ovadiah and Gomez de Silva 1984, p. 150.
25. Cf. Isidore of Seville, *PL* 1862-1878; Rabanus Maurus, *PL* 1864.

Fig. 9. Aquileia, Cathedral of Bishop Theodore. Jonah and the Whale (mosaic).

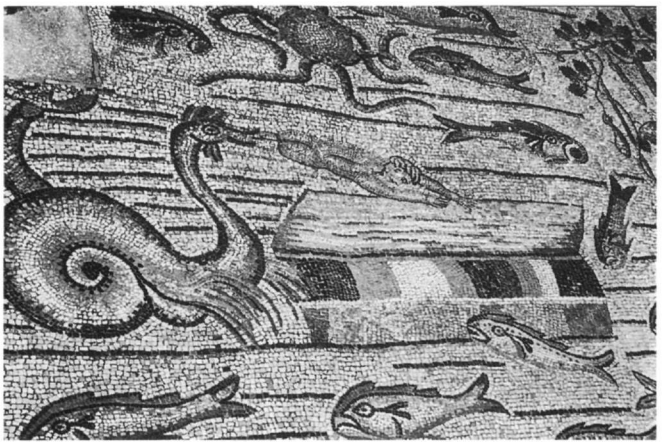

Fig. 10. Aquileia, Cathedral of Bishop Theodore. Jonah and the Whale (mosaic).

Moses and the Prophets, is never exempt from impressing a certain Christian theological perception. Thus the Crossing of the Red Sea, as depicted at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, symbolises the Baptism[26]. Abel, as at San Vitale and Sant' Apollinare in Classe in Ravenna, prefigures the sacrifice of Jesus[27]. The Binding of Isaac, as it appears at San Vitale and Christian sarcophagi, symbolises the Crucifixion[28]. The story of Jonah and the Whale is a foretaste of the Entombment and the Resurrection[29]; Jonah was three days in the belly of the Fish, as was Jesus in His tomb. The depiction of two men carrying between them a single enormous cluster of grapes (Fig. 11), illustrates part of the episode described in the Book of Numbers (13:1-25) in which Moses sent men to spy out the Land of Canaan. The tremendous size of the cluster of grapes leaves little doubt that we have here an illustration of the biblical account (Num. 13:23-24): "And they came unto the brook Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff;..." The place was called the brook Eshcol because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down thence. According to St. Augustine's interpretation, the bunch of grapes hanging on the pole prefigured the hanging of Christ on the cross, and the figures supporting the pole represent the Jewish and Christian peoples: *Ipse est enim botrus ille qui pependit in ligno*. The subject was similarly treated by his contemporary, the presbyter and monk Evagrius, and by St. Eucherius, bishop of Lyon in the 5th century[30].

Various texts show how the Church, in its attempt to overpower Orphism, tried to merge Orpheus with Jesus and to turn them into one being. This is further reinforced in *De Laudibus Constantini* by Eusebius, who compares the 'Logos' which tames mankind, with Orpheus who tames

26. Grabar 1966, p. 147 (fig. 158).
27. *Ibid.*, p. 156 (fig. 168). Bovini 1979, p. 95. *Ibid.*, p. 68 (top left and bottom).
28. Grabar 1966, p. 157 (fig. 169). Bovini 1979, p. 61. This scene also appears frequently in early Christian sarcophagi, see Wilpert II, 1932, p. 231-235, pls. CLXXX (2), CLXXXII, CLXXXIII (1-3, 5), CLXXXIV.
29. This episode appears on the mosaic pavement of the Cathedral of Bishop Theodore in Aquileia (Figs 9-10) and probably on the floor of a church at Beth Guvrin. See Grabar 1967, p. 22 (fig. 19); Ovadiah 1987, pls. X, XI (2), XII. It is also depicted on early Christian sarcophagi, see Wilpert II, 1932, p. 201-222, pls. CLXI-CLXII (2-4), CLXIII, CLXIV (1, 3-5), CLXV, CLXVI (1, 4), CLXVII, CLXVIII-CLXX (1, 4), CLXXI, CLXXII (1-3, 5-6), CLXXIII, CLXXIV (1-9), CLXXV (1-5, 7-9), CLXXVI (2), CLXXVII (1-2, 4-5), CLXXVIII, CLXXIX (2), CLXXX (2).
30. Cf. Ovadiah 1974, p. 210-213.

Fig. 11. Carthage. Relief of the spies (fragment of a sarcophagus).

wild animals. This passage of Eusebius is, no doubt, evidence of the blurring of the functional differences between Orpheus and Jesus; it helps to understand the attempt of Christians to adopt Orpheus for their religious needs and to identify him with Jesus, with the 'Logos' or with the 'Good Shepherd'[31].

Animals depicted in various artistic media, which were found in archaeological contexts of the early Christian period, have been usually invested with symbolic meaning by Church Fathers. For instance, the bird may symbolise the soul of the just, based on the third Book of Baruch (10) of the 2nd century C.E., and of the deceased in heaven as in the vision of St. Antony, the hermit. The leopard (*Panthera pardus*) is perceived as the symbol of Christ, for he sleeps during three days and then awakes with a loud roar, but it is also the symbol of the Anti-Christ. The swine sometimes symbolises a devil (Mark 5: 11ff.); if a boar, could represent a devil destroying the Lord's vineyard. The pelican symbolises the Resurrection, probably because it revives its young by sprinkling its own blood on them. According to St. Augustine, it may also symbolise the Eucharist: *magnam similitudinem carnis Christi, cuius sanguine vivificati sumus*. Another animal that can be considered as a symbol is the rabbit or hare. It stands for the humble, symbolises Easter and the Church persecuted, as well as the men who put the hope of their salvation in Christ and His Passion. The crossed fishes forming a *chi*-shape is a well-known early Christian representation which symbolises Jesus Christ as the son of God and the Saviour (IXΘYC). This symbolic significance is referred to by several Church Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, St. Augustine and St. Jerome. The fish is also considered as the symbol of the Eucharist. The peacock was already used as a symbol in the Greek and Roman period. In early Christian tradition and art it symbolises eternal life and the resurrection of the believer. According to St. Augustine, it is the symbol of immortality because its flesh does not decay. It is also the symbol of the ever-vigilant Church, the grace of the Sacrament and heavenly glory. When it has a folded tail it may symbolise remorse. The deer may symbolise the catechumen about to undergo baptism, as well as the soul desiring to come to Christ.

Although the vintage scene is a frequent genre theme in the early Christian period, which is represented in various artistic media, we must however take into consideration the symbolic meaning of the vine and the bunch of grapes. The vine symbolises Jesus Christ as mentioned in the Gospel of John: "I am the true Vine and my Father is the husbandmam" (15:. 1ff.), and "I am the Vine ye are the branches" 15: 5ff.). Grapes symbolise the Eucharist and the Resurrection, as being the opposite of the fatal Apple of death. Moreover, the vintage often symbolises the work of the good Christian in the vineyard of Christ[32].

The highly developed and sophisticated early Christian range of symbols proved, in later periods, to be indispensable for the understanding of the depictions in Christian remains and various artistic media, such as architecture, sculpture, painting and mosaic. In this connection the monumental work of Isidore of Seville (7th century) and of Rabanus Maurus (9th century), with their compilation and detailed description of a wealth of symbols, are an essential tool for grasping the mind-set and *Weltanschauung* of Chris-

31. Cf. Ovadiah and Mucznik 1981, p. 152-166.

32. Cf. Ovadiah, Gomez de Silva and Mucznik 1989, p. 33-36; Testini 1985, p. 1107-1168, pls. I-XLIV.

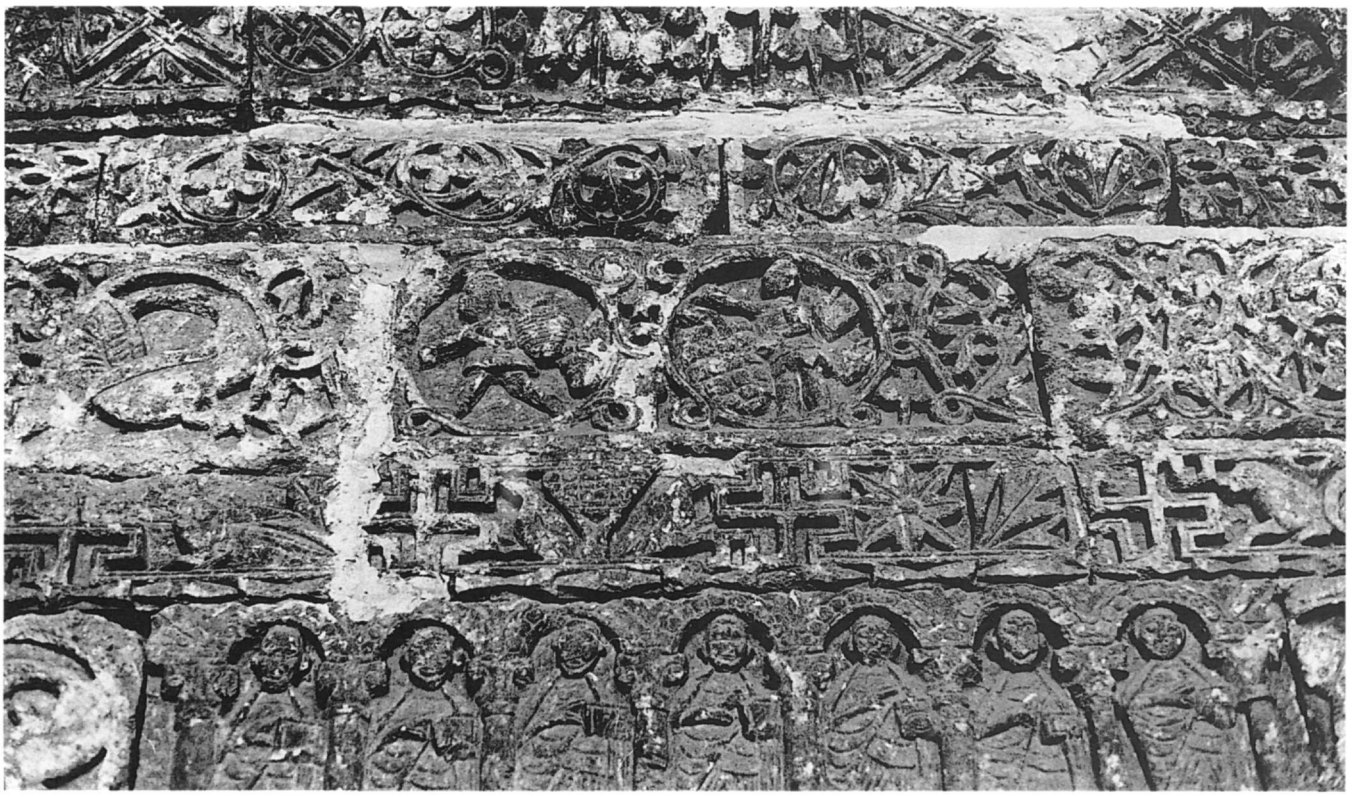

Fig. 12. Deir el-'Adra. Church, "Tympanum". Various reliefs.

tianity[33]. This religion seems to have produced systematically and intesively, more than any other in the Mediterranean basin, its symbolism and allegorical concepts. Christianity gave birth to an established symbolism which still holds fast (Fig. 12).

The symbolism and allegories of the Church Fathers are universal in character. Among their goals are the aspiration to harmony, coexistence and cooperation, even in the face of objections and disputes. These can be solved through a dialogue which forms as essential ingredient in human relations, opening the way to the solution of complex problems, to bridging gaps and diminishing and even erasing enmity, conflict and hatred between peoples and nations.

Tel Aviv University

33. See Isidore of Seville, *PL* 1862-1878; Rabanus Maurus, *PL* 1864.

ABBREVIATIONS

Avi-Yonah 1964: M. Avi-Yonah, The Caesarea Inscription of the Twenty-Four Priestly Courses, in *The Teacher's Yoke: Studies in Memory of Henry Trentham*, Waco 1964, p. 45-57.

Avi-Yonah 1965: M. Avi-Yonah, La mosaïque juive dans ses relations avec la mosaïque classique, *La mosaïque greco-romaine, Paris, 29 août-3 septembre 1963*, I, Paris 1965, p. 325-330.

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