

FIG. 1. Detail from *Resurrection in the Valley of Life*, a panel of the Ezekiel mural in the synagogue at Dura Europos. Image from Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue, The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. A. R. Bellinger et al. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1956), plate 70. Images used by permission.

The Ezekiel Mural at Dura Europos

A Witness of Ancient Jewish Mysteries?

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

One of the most stunning archaeological finds of the last century was the accidental discovery in 1920 of the ruins of Dura Europos,¹ “a frontier town of very mixed population and traditions”² located on a cliff ninety meters above the Euphrates River in what is now Syria. This Hellenistic city had been abandoned following a Sassanian siege in AD 256–57 and was eventually buried by the shifting sands. Among the structures uncovered by excavation was a small Jewish synagogue with elaborately painted walls, preserved only because the building had been filled with earth as a fortification during the siege.

The purpose of this article is to draw greater attention to the Ezekiel cycle, depicted in an important mural found in the synagogue. In particular, this article agrees with Yale religion scholar Erwin R. Goodenough that early Jewish mysticism plays a central role in the program of decoration for this synagogue. If such an interpretation is sustained, the art of the Dura synagogue constitutes the most convincing physical evidence available that the Jewish mysteries described in ancient sources may have had a tangible expression in ritual.

Following a brief account of the discovery of the synagogue and the general significance of its artwork, I will review some of the Dura paintings that attracted the attention of Goodenough and also Hugh Nibley. Both of these scholars interpreted the artwork surrounding the Torah shrine in the Dura murals as revealing heavenly ascent as a central theme in the program of these synagogue decorations, especially in light of the writings of Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, a Jewish scholar of the first century. I will then discuss the main features of the Ezekiel paintings, using Goodenough’s detailed descriptions of each panel complemented with findings from more

recent research and my own analysis. The analysis will highlight significant themes in the Ezekiel mural relevant to resurrection and heavenly ascent. Throughout this discussion, themes relating to Latter-day Saint temple worship will become apparent. I will conclude with a brief review of recent research in which I will argue that Goodenough's overall interpretive

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I've always been interested in the way art can illuminate religion. Sometimes, of course, things can simply be said better in pictures than in words. In other cases, like at Dura Europos, art and architecture become just about the only means to look into the hearts and minds of ancient believers. For example, it is only in recent years that scholars have been able to locate convincing textual confirmations of the kind of worship that had been hinted at in the art of the Dura synagogue. Even after the discoveries of relevant texts, one has a sense of intimacy with the Jews of Dura through the synagogue paintings that is hard to re-create through reading.



I remember the sense of excitement I had when I ran across photographs of the Ezekiel mural while doing research for my commentary on the Book of Moses. Here was something from a remote time and place that spoke to me deeply. When I read Goodenough's descriptions of the paintings, I realized the magnitude of what his erudition had achieved without the benefit of the recent explosion of scholarship on relevant topics. Of course, in addition, there are practically no dark corners of ancient studies in which an LDS scholar can poke around without encountering Hugh Nibley as a welcome companion. Like Kilroy, he always seems to have gotten everywhere first. Surprisingly, however, though Nibley, like Goodenough, had recognized the importance of the Dura tree of life panel, he had apparently overlooked the equally stunning significance of the Ezekiel mural. In the year that marks the hundredth anniversary of Hugh Nibley's birth, I feel it an honor to be able to place a small stone on the mountain of his scholarship.

framework for the paintings at Dura, while generally rejected at the time it was advanced, can now be seen as having anticipated recent trends in scholarship on the liturgical practices of relevant strands of Judaism, especially those focused on the temple and its priesthood.

The Dura Europos Synagogue

Originally built as a private house in a residential neighborhood, the synagogue's exterior was modest and unimpressive. However, the elaborate and well-preserved nature of many of its inner wall decorations was both astonishing and unprecedented. As described by Rachel Hachlili, "The four walls . . . were covered with remarkable wall paintings to a height of almost [seven meters]. . . . The paintings that survived include about 58 narrative episodes in 28 separate panels, 60% of the original."³ After excavation in 1932–33, the painted walls and roof of baked-brick tiles were moved to Damascus, where they were reassembled and became the principal exhibit of the National Museum.

Clark Hopkins vividly describes the moment the walls were revealed to view:

I clearly remember when the foot of fill dirt still covering the back wall was undercut and fell away, exposing the most amazing succession of paintings! Whole scenes, figures, and objects burst into view, brilliant in color, magnificent in the sunshine. . . .

. . . All I can remember is the sudden shock and then the astonishment, the disbelief, as painting after painting came into view. The west wall faced the morning sun which had risen triumphantly behind us, revealing a strange phenomenon: in spite of having been encased in dry dust for centuries, the murals retained a vivid brightness that was little short of the miraculous. . . .

A casual passerby witnessing the paintings suddenly emerging from the earth would have been astonished. If he had been a Classical archaeologist, with the knowledge of how few paintings had survived from Classical times, he would have been that much more amazed. But if he were a biblical scholar or a student of ancient art and were told that the building was a synagogue and the paintings were scenes from the Old Testament, he simply would not have believed it. It could not be; there was absolutely no precedent, nor could there be any. The stern injunction in the Ten Commandments against the making of graven images would be sufficient to prove him right.⁴

While scholars have debated the question of what meaning, if any, lay behind the selection and depiction of the scenes in the paintings,⁵ there is no disagreement as to the importance of the find. Jo Milgrom called the Dura synagogue the "first major Jewish artistic monument ever unearthed"

and noted that “extensive figural decoration of similar complexity does not appear in Christian art until the fifth century.”⁶ Mikhail Rostovtzeff said it was “the Pompeii of the Syrian Desert.”⁷ Goodenough observed that “before the discovery of the Dura synagogue in 1932 anyone would have been thought mad who suggested that Jews could have made such a place of worship.”⁸ Nevertheless, subsequent discoveries of Jewish art throughout the Mediterranean world, and especially in Israel, have confirmed that the art of the Dura synagogue was not an isolated phenomenon.⁹

To Goodenough, the art and layout of the synagogue suggested a group with a “mystical” orientation to worship, specifically involving the liturgical experience of heavenly ascent.¹⁰ Eminent Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner sees such a development at Dura as no surprise, given that in this region around AD 220–50 other significant religious movements with strong mystical components were also taking form.¹¹ It should be remembered, however, that detailed descriptions of corresponding ideas relating to “Jewish mysteries” were already to be found centuries earlier in the writings of Philo—writings whose core elements may go back to the First Temple period and arguably relate to its distinctive rites and theology.¹²

The Synagogue Murals

Whatever limited awareness most LDS readers may have of the Dura Europos synagogue paintings is probably due to the writings of Hugh Nibley. Nibley concurred with Goodenough’s reaction to the discovery, further remarking:

In these impressive murals we see such unexpected things as the bread and wine of the Messianic meal [figs. 6 and 7], reminding us of the sacrament; we see the wandering of Israel in the desert with the waters of life flowing in twelve miraculous streams, with “the head thereof a little way off” (1 Nephi 8:14) to each of the tribal tents [fig. 2].¹³

Due to the number and complexity of the synagogue’s wall decorations, it will be impossible to describe most of them in any detail here. However, I will briefly introduce two example murals (figs. 2 and 3) that depict story details not found in the Bible. Both of these murals attracted Hugh Nibley’s interest. Then I will discuss the perspectives of Goodenough and Nibley on the important Torah shrine and tree of life paintings in order to set the context for a more extensive description of the Ezekiel mural below. The mural titles used in the captions are Goodenough’s designations.

Two example murals. In the first mural (fig. 2), Goodenough observed that the garment Moses wears, which matches the lining of Aaron’s priestly robe, “seems to be saying that Moses is here functioning on the Aaronic



FIG. 2. *The Well of the Wilderness: Moses Gives Water to the Tribes*. Located on the far left side of the synagogue's west wall, in the second of three rows of murals. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 59.



FIG. 3. *The Ark versus Paganism*. Located on the west wall, far right, second row. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 56.



FIG. 4. *The Torah Shrine*. Located in the lower center of the west wall. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 51.

level.”¹⁴ John Lundquist has discussed this image in connection with the idea of the Law as a source of living waters.¹⁵

In the second example (fig. 3), Nibley found it significant that this mural contained “the oldest authentic example” of a depiction of the Ark of the Covenant, showing it as a “‘small tent’ mounted on a wagon drawn by oxen.”¹⁶ In another work, he pointed out the three men in “robes standing behind the departing wagon [who] direct the oxen with their fingers. Goodenough . . . cautiously identifies the three men as those who appeared to Abraham and therefore represent God himself.”¹⁷

The Torah shrine and the reredos. In the center of the west wall of the synagogue was a feature designated as the Torah shrine (fig. 4). “It contained a niche into which a scroll of the Pentateuch was placed”¹⁸ and was topped by a large scallop shell, a symbol that marked the sanctity of the Torah contained beneath it.¹⁹ Immediately above the niche was a mural filled with symbols of Jewish worship (fig. 5): the menorah (left), a representation of the Temple in Jerusalem (center), and the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham (right).

In front of the altar, a ram is caught in the thicket, and behind it is what appears, at first glance, to be someone in a tent. Although the figure



FIG. 5. Jewish symbols and a depiction of Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac painted directly above the Torah shrine. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 51.

is often identified as Sarah,²⁰ it is difficult to see why she would have been included in this scene. Moreover, were the figure intended to represent a female, one would expect a head covering and colored clothing, as with other Jewish women shown in the Dura murals.²¹ Intriguingly, Margaret Barker interprets this detail of the painting of Abraham's sacrifice as "a figure going up behind a curtain held open by a disembodied hand—the symbol of the LORD. Since the temple curtain represented access to the presence of God, this seems to depict Isaac going to heaven."²² In support of her conclusion, Barker cites Jewish and early Christian texts suggesting that, in the *Akedah*, Isaac literally died, ascended to heaven, and was resurrected. Of course, the themes of "death" and "resurrection" could just as easily fit a ritual context. Goldstein observed that the Torah shrine was replete with "symbols of immortality or resurrection."²³

As interesting as the other panels were, however, Nibley concluded, like Goodenough, that "the most important representation of all is the central composition that crowns the Torah shrine, the ritual center of the synagogue."²⁴ This mural, which Goodenough called the *reredos* (an ornamental wall behind an altar), had been "repainted several times, until it finally pleased whoever was designing it."²⁵ The "successive alterations show that great attention was paid to the problem of what should be represented in it."²⁶

Directly above the shrine, as if springing directly from the Law itself, is depicted a splendid tree [fig. 6] beneath whose sinuous and spreading boughs the twelve sons of Israel stand around their father Jacob; while sheltered by the branches on the other side [he]²⁷ is seen conferring his blessing upon Ephraim and Manasseh [fig. 8]. . . . "Out of the Torah shrine . . . grew the tree of life and salvation which led to the supernal throne."²⁸

Nibley cited Goodenough's observation that the figure represents both a tree and a vine, imagery that is paralleled in the Book of Mormon.²⁹ "The olive tree that stands for Israel in the Book of Mormon imagery is also a vine; it grows in a vineyard, is planted, cultivated, and owned 'by the lord of the vineyard.'³⁰ Nibley saw the same "free-and-easy identifications" in the Dura art as in the Book of Mormon.

Making an unprecedented appearance in Jewish synagogue art was the figure of Orpheus, the sweet singer of Greek mythology:

At Dura we see high in the branches of the tree the familiar figure of Orpheus as he sits playing his lyre to a lion and a lamb [figs. 7 and 8]. The earliest Christian art is fond of the figure of Orpheus, . . . [who] usually sings to a lion and a lamb, as in the Dura synagogue.³¹

Goodenough suggested that this Orpheus figure at Dura "was probably called David," through whose "heavenly, saving . . . music . . . Israel could be



FIG. 6. Sketch by Henry Pearson depicting the earliest rendition of the tree in the reredos. Image from E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols., Bollingen Series 37 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953–1968), vol. 11, figure 73. Images courtesy Princeton University Press.

glorified.”³² In this picture, Goodenough maintained, the artist was trying to show “the glorification of Israel through the mystic tree-vine, whose power could also be represented as a *divine love* which the soul-purifying music of an Orpheus figure best symbolized.”³³ Nibley connected this Orpheus figure in a tree with the tree representing “the love of God” that Lehi and Nephi saw in vision (1 Ne. 11:21–22), with Alma’s “song of redeeming love” (Alma 5:26), and with the “new song” sung by the hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed before the throne of God (Rev. 14:3).³⁴

Goodenough did not see the paintings at Dura but viewed them in their later, restored form at the museum. The reredos, however, presented unique difficulties. It was one of the first paintings uncovered, “and the archeologists had briefly a very clear view of the overpainting. In the excitement of the moment they made no immediate attempt to photograph it. In two hours, to their consternation, the exposure to the glaring sun began to make the underpainting show through the overpainting.”³⁵ The various layers of paint became so blurred together that Goodenough called the resulting image “hopelessly confused.” Thus, his interpretation of the reredos relied heavily upon the sketches and descriptions of Comte Robert du Mesnil, Herbert Gute, and Henry Pearson, who saw them in their earlier condition.³⁶ Though the state of the reredos makes it impossible to reconstruct the course of its development definitively, there were arguably three stages of composition:

Earliest rendition. Figure 6 is a sketch made by Pearson, who removed the murals from Dura and restored them before they went on exhibit in Damascus. This sketch shows his conception of the earliest version of the reredos, with the tree growing directly out of the Torah shrine.

First repainting. Figure 7 shows Gute’s conception of an intermediate design in which the tree seems to have originally grown out of a large wine bowl rather than the small vase shown in figure 6. When the table and the feline figures were added to the left and right of the tree, the vase seems to have been painted over and a heavier trunk added. Goodenough saw ritual significance in the addition of the flanking figures, taking the objects on the table at left to represent ceremonial bread, and the serpent-topped felines as decorations for a wine bowl. A figure of King David, depicted as Orpheus and accompanied by animals,³⁷ was then painted among the branches, and a throne scene appeared at the top.

Second repainting. Figure 8 shows Gute’s reconstruction of the reredos as it appeared when he was making his copies, during the second year of the excavation. In this final modified version, the scene was divided into an upper and lower part by an awkward horizontal band separating the top and bottom parts of the tree. At the lower left, Jacob is shown lying

on his bed giving his last blessing to his twelve sons and, at lower right, his blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh.³⁸ Kurt Schubert, stressing the messianic-eschatological aspects of the painting, saw the Lion as a symbol of the King Messiah figure seated on the throne (Genesis 49:9–10) and the depiction of the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh as a probable reference to the “second messianic figure, . . . the Messiah from the house of Joseph-Ephraim who was destined to suffer and die.”³⁹ In the top scene,

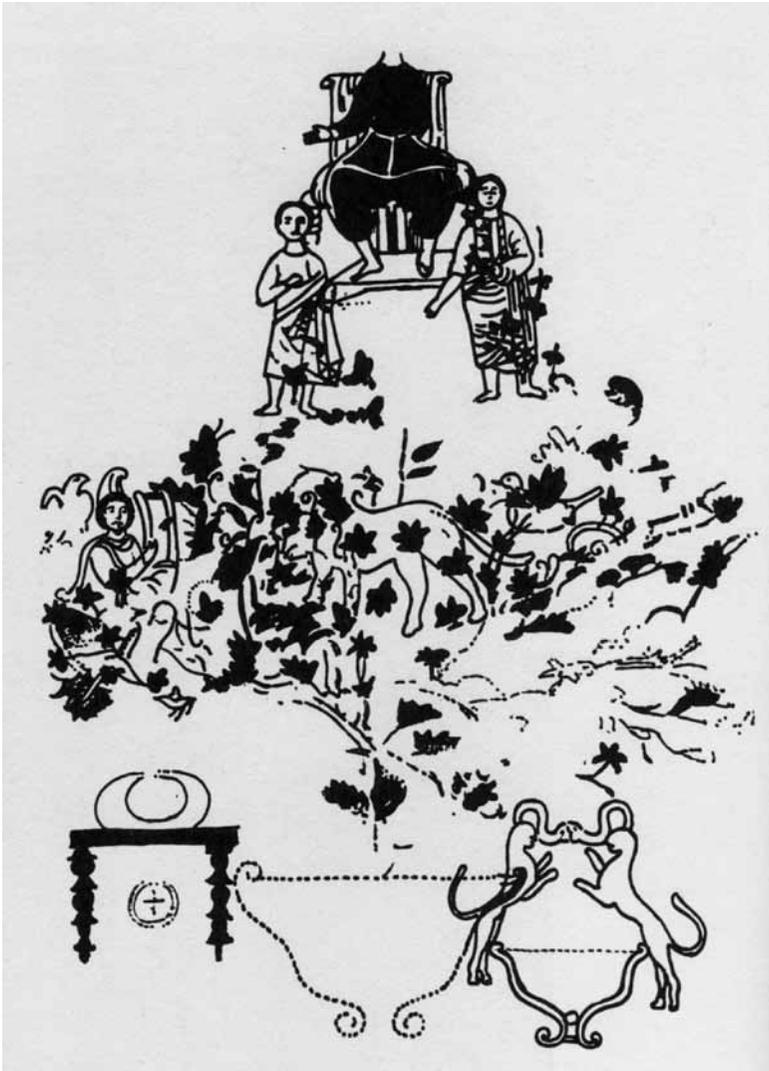


FIG. 7. Sketch by Herbert Gute depicting an intermediate repainting of the reded. Image from Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, fig. 74.



FIG. 8. Painting by Herbert Gute, a reproduction of the reredos as it appeared in 1933–1934. Image from Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, fig. 323.

Goodenough saw the thirteen who had been blessed by Jacob—the sons of Israel with Ephraim and Manasseh representing Joseph in double measure—exalted in the presence of God and his two divine throne attendants.

Eliciting parallels to Lehi's vision in 1 Nephi 1, Nibley saw significance in the Dura throne scene (fig. 8) as follows:

Above “the tree of life and salvation which led to the supernal throne” was depicted the throne itself, in a scene in which God is shown enthroned in heaven, Persian fashion, surrounded by his heavenly hosts. Goodenough finds the idea both surprising and compelling: “The enthroned king surrounded by the tribes in such a place reminds us much more of the Christ enthroned with the saints in heaven . . . than of any other figure in the history of art.” . . . As this is the high point in the Dura murals, so was it also in Lehi's vision.⁴⁰

Four portraits. While the throne scene emphasizes the divine reward of Israel as a *people*, the theme of *individual exaltation* appears also. Goodenough saw it in four portraits that surround the reredos (fig. 9).⁴¹ The prominent position of these paintings and the fact that they are the only

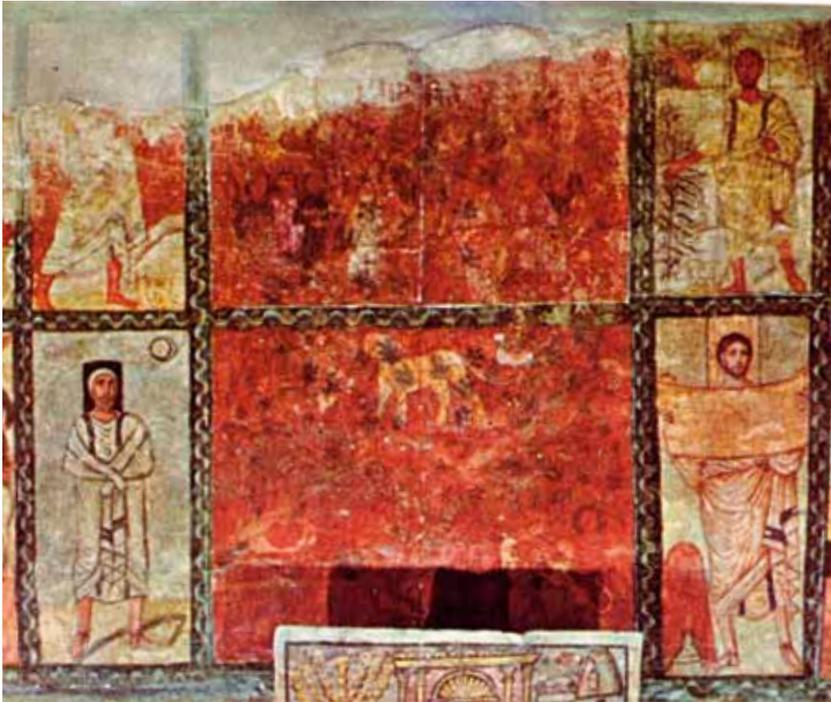


FIG. 9. The reredos surrounded by four portraits of Moses. Image from Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, detail from plate 1.

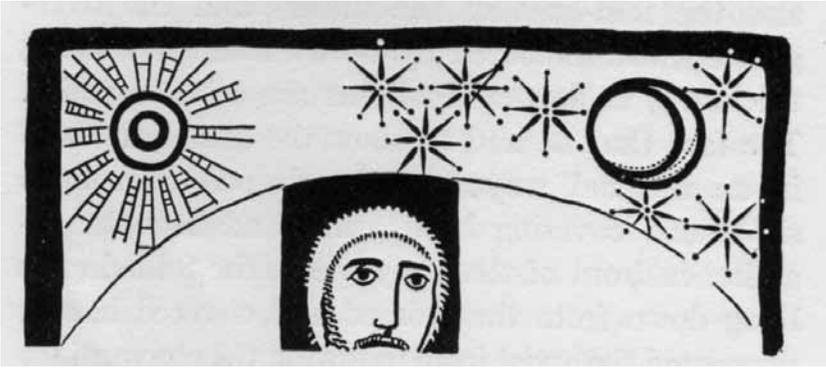


FIG. 10. Sketch of Sun, Moon, and Stars Surrounding the Final Portrait of Moses. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, p. 236.

individual portraits found anywhere in the synagogue suggest their importance. In each case, Goodenough identified Moses as the subject,⁴² as he is shown in what seem to be the progressive sacred experiences of (1) the burning bush, (2) the receipt of the Tablets of the Law, and (3) the reading of the Law⁴³—“exactly the incidents most stressed in the mystic account of Moses by Philo.”⁴⁴ The final portrait (4) shows a figure standing on the earth with the sun, moon, and seven stars (planets) above his head (fig. 10). The representation of the sun is unique in its depiction of laddered rays, recalling the well-known symbolism of the “divine ladder that connects man to God.”⁴⁵ Goodenough concluded that the subject is again Moses, “now in old age and ascending to heaven,”⁴⁶ a theme that is much more at home in the mystical Judaism of the priestly temple-oriented groups than in the more rabbinically oriented traditions.

In his description of the great and final song of Moses, Philo, in fact, gave the most plausible extant account of a scene matching this portrait, a description that would have powerfully evoked for Dura synagogue worshippers the Orpheus theme in the adjacent tree of life mural:⁴⁷

Having discoursed . . . to his subjects and the heir of his headship, [Moses] proceeded to hymn God in a song in which he rendered the final thanksgiving of his bodily life for the rare and extraordinary gifts with which he had been blest from his birth to his old age. He convoked a divine assemblage of the elements of all existence and the chiefest parts of the universe, earth and heaven. . . . With these around him he sang his canticles with every kind of harmony and sweet music in the ears of both mankind and ministering angels: of men that as disciples they should learn from him . . . : of angels as watchers, observing . . . and scarce able to credit that any man imprisoned in a corruptible body could like the sun and moon and

the most sacred choir of the other stars attune his soul to harmony with God's instrument, the heaven and the whole universe.⁴⁸

In the context of this interpretation, the fourth portrait of Moses in the Dura synagogue constitutes not only a witness to his own exaltation, but also an implicit invitation to all those in the congregation to follow him. In his discussion of late Second Temple Jewish mysticism, Goodenough summarized Philo's descriptions of "two successive initiations within a single Mystery," constituting "a 'Lesser' Mystery in contrast with a 'Greater,'" as follows:

For general convenience we may distinguish them as the Mystery of Aaron and the Mystery of Moses. The Mystery of Aaron got its symbolism from the great Jerusalem cultus. . . . The Mystery of Moses . . . led the worshipper above all material association; he died to the flesh, and in becoming re clothed in a spiritual body moved progressively upwards . . . and at last ideally to God Himself. . . . The objective symbolism of the Higher Mystery was the holy of holies with the ark, a level of spiritual experience which was no normal part of even the high-priesthood. Only once a year could the high-priest enter there, and then only . . . when so blinded by incense that he could see nothing of the sacred objects within. The Mystery of Aaron was restricted to the symbolism of the Aaronic high-priest. . . . In a striking passage Philo contrasts this type of priest with Moses, who . . . became the true initiate . . . , hierophant of the rites . . . , and teacher of divine things.⁴⁹

Philo taught that the experience of Moses was not meant to be unique; rather, he exemplified a pattern that previously had been followed by Abraham and would continue afterward for all who belonged to true Israel.⁵⁰ In his role as "teacher of divine rites," wrote Philo, "[Moses] will impart to those whose ears are purified. He [the one who receives these rites] then has ever the divine spirit at his side, taking the lead in every journey of righteousness"⁵¹ or, in the translation of Goodenough, "to lead one along the 'whole Road,' the entire way to perfection."⁵²

According to Philo, . . . in Moses the "hierophant" the gulf between mortal and immortal, the cosmic and the human, has been bridged. In the presence of the sun, moon, and stars a man has sung the perfect song while yet in the body, and the faith of the angels themselves has been strengthened. Yet this great person, even as he was in the height of his grandeur, could not forget his loving-kindness to the people, and while he rebuked them for their sins, he gave them such instructions and advice that the future became full of hopes which must be fulfilled. . . . The question before us, however, is not how Philo thought but how the worshipers in the synagogue thought, or at least the elders who paid to have these extraordinary paintings on its walls.⁵³ . . . The central reredos painting seems to tell us that the leading Jews of Dura had a burning desire to leave the savagery of

bestial desires and follow the leadership of the great hierophants—Jacob at the bottom, David-Orpheus on the way, to the supreme Three at the top of the tree of life. The greatest priest-hierophant of all, for this sort of Judaism, was Moses himself, and that he should be presented in the four crucial aspects of his career was entirely fitting. Philo had himself been “initiated under Moses” and it seems to me quite likely that the Elder Samuel [who built the synagogue] may have been so “initiated” also.⁵⁴

Hinting at the possibility of such ritual in the Dura synagogue, Goodenough noted: “In [a] side room were benches and decorations that mark the room as probably one of cult, perhaps an inner room, where special rites were celebrated by a select company. . . . So far as structure goes, it might have been the room for people especially ‘initiated’ in some way.”⁵⁵

Goodenough’s controversial speculations about initiation rites at the Dura synagogue receive support from Crispin Fletcher-Louis’s subsequent findings on what he calls the “angelomorphic priesthood” of the Qumran community. At Qumran, Fletcher-Louis envisages the possibility of

a liturgical or cultic context for the apotheosis [that] could, in theory, be entirely compatible with . . . a real mystical or visionary experience. . . . It is . . . likely, given the cosmological significance attached to the cult, that the regular, even *routinized*, worship of a Jewish community which *considers itself* not heterodox but orthodox, would foster the belief in personal experiences of mystical transcendence and apotheosis.

. . . Before his fall Adam was ontologically coterminous with God’s own Glory. His originally divine humanity is recovered when (the true) Israel worships her god in a pure cult—a restored cosmos in miniature. And, so, by the same token she, especially her priesthood, recovers the previously lost Glory of God in the same context. In worship the boundary between heaven and earth is dissolved and the Qumran community are taken up into the life of that which they worship.⁵⁶

Convinced that this perspective, first attested by evidence at Qumran, applies more generally to the wider study of Jewish mysticism over the centuries, Fletcher-Louis notes that in current research “the role of the temple and the priesthood has slowly come to the fore,” seeing the “religious experiences attested in the apocalypses” as expressions “*of the divine encounter believed to take place in and through Israel’s temple worship, especially priestly offices.*”⁵⁷ Elliot Wolfson specifically describes this kind of experience as a “visionary ascent to the heavenly throne and the participation in the angelic liturgy [that] would have been a preoccupation of a priestly group who, in the absence of an earthly temple, turned their attention to its celestial counterpart.”⁵⁸ Jewish “magical” texts give related evidence of ritual, with “an emphasis on the name of God, . . . the presence of angelic intermediaries, and . . . the invocation of divine names and use of ritual practices for

the needs of specific individuals.”⁵⁹ While it goes beyond the scope of the present article, Goodenough’s identification of a possible ritual for these synagogue paintings is also consistent with a growing body of literature discussing ritual initiations in Hellenistic mystery religions and early Christian traditions.⁶⁰

Ritual Ascent in the Ezekiel Mural

We are now prepared to examine the mural of the prophet Ezekiel, which offers further clues about the way in which the elements of heavenly ascent—and perhaps an accompanying ritual of ascent—may have been conceived by the designers of the Dura synagogue.

The Dura Europos depiction of its Ezekiel story-cycle runs the entire twenty-five-foot length of the north wall (fig. 11). Goodenough noted that this mural is the “largest single painting in the synagogue. . . . To have been given so much space it must have had great importance in the mind of the person who designed the decoration.”⁶¹ Kraeling also considered the work “the greatest and most important composition” among all the murals.⁶² A figure of Ezekiel appears eight times here.

Tripartite structure. Goodenough saw the painting as a structure of three main panels, with stages of ascent and descent being indicated by differences in the background color:

The total design . . . emphasizes most conspicuously that the first three figures of Ezekiel and the broken mountain have a light background, as does the final scene of his arrest and execution, but that between these a central section stands sharply set off by its dark background. The contrast seems to tell us that the ordinary Ezekiel existed in the realm of death at each end, a realm sharply different from that of heaven-given life where figures in the white dress of sanctity can and do come into their full exaltation.⁶³

Three changes of attire. Ezekiel is shown wearing three types of clothing as these scenes unfold. His changes in clothing can be interpreted as a progression representing three different degrees of existence, just as initiates following in his footsteps would be “identified at each stage with the spiritual existence of that stage.”⁶⁴ The three types of clothing also recall the tripartite structure of the Jerusalem temple as interpreted in apocalyptic and Gnostic Christian writings, and the changing of the high priest from colored to white garb before entering the holy of holies in Jewish practice.⁶⁵ According to Philo, the greater initiation allowed Moses, “when stripped of his distinguishing [multicolored] robes, clad in simple white,”⁶⁶ to abide in God’s presence “while he learns the secrets of the most holy mysteries,”⁶⁷ and to be “changed into the divine, so that such men become kin to God and truly divine.”⁶⁸



FIG. 11. *The Cycle of Ezekiel*. The full mural spans the entire lower section of the north wall.

Christopher Morray-Jones notes that the threefold structure of the temple in 1 Enoch 14 “reflects a cosmology of three heavens,” which was only later “displaced by a more complex model of seven heavens.”⁶⁹ Significantly, he also points out similar ideas in Philo.⁷⁰ George MacRae highlights a passage in the Gnostic Gospel of Philip, II, 3, that associates the three parts of the temple with three different sacraments:

It builds on the concept that one moves toward the divine presence as one moves successively through the outer courts of the temple toward the inner Holy of Holies, to which only the priest has access. Consequently the order in which the courts are identified with sacraments becomes very important. The initiatory rite of baptism is the outermost one. The rite of redemption, whatever that may have consisted of, is the second one. And it is the bridal chamber, the rite of which was the supreme rite for the Valentinian Gnostic, which is the approach into the presence of God himself.⁷¹

Despite significant differences, initiation rites in Greco-Roman mystery religions also shared the idea of “three stages of purification, illumination, and mystical unification.”⁷² In their portrayals of these stages, an upward physical movement often paralleled a ritual heavenly ascent from darkness to increasingly greater light.

Right hands. A prominent feature of the first two panels of the painting (fig. 11) is a series of five divine right hands, “the first clenched in the hair



Note changes in background color. Image from Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, plate 21.

of the prophet,⁷³ and the remaining four open and extended toward him. These hands, which may have ritual significance,⁷⁴ recall the Lord saving Israel “with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm” (Deut. 26:8),⁷⁵ a motif frequently exemplified in other murals of Dura.⁷⁶ Sometimes, in Jewish and early Christian art, the hand of God served as a visual representation of the divine voice speaking from the heavens.⁷⁷ Here, however, and in at least one other Dura panel, the “hand from heaven” is specifically associated with the “revivication of the dead,”⁷⁸ a theme not unknown in the Psalms.⁷⁹ In a formula repeated throughout the rabbinical literature, the “key of the revival of the dead” is mentioned as one that “the Holy One . . . has retained in His own hands”⁸⁰—though this mural clearly shows that it can be delegated to others. As in Ezekiel accounts found elsewhere, the hand is extended to him “as if to give a command” and also “to give strength to perform his task”⁸¹—here evidently to bring the dead to a full measure of eternal life.

Reversal of the hands. Goodenough observes that two of the extended hands in the first panel are portrayed with “palms forward. In contrast over the scenes at the right the [two] divine hands are turned, still right hands, but with the nails of each finger carefully indicated to make them certainly right hands, though their position is reversed. I cannot believe that this had no significance to the artist who so carefully showed the detail.”⁸² This

reversal may suggest a change in the relationship of Ezekiel to God as he moves from the earthly to the heavenly realms, corresponding to the “well-known shifting of garments from left to right in initiation ceremonies (e.g., of the tassel on the mortarboard at graduations)”⁸³ or the Jewish prayer shawl or robe that “is draped over one shoulder and then over the other.”⁸⁴ The imagery also recalls Philo’s description of two successive initiations discussed above.

Such changes may be seen as either prefiguring or actually bringing about a kind of resurrection, rising from one state of existence to another. About this aspect of the Ezekiel mural, Margaret Barker has remarked:

The idea of resurrection is certainly present; we do not know how resurrection was understood in the first temple, but resurrection was an expectation of the priests; i.e., that they were resurrected when they came into the presence of God at their consecration, and then returned to the world. This would explain Ezekiel returning to the world to face martyrdom [in the final panel of the mural].⁸⁵

In any event, Goodenough concluded that something like what he calls Philo’s “higher mystery” “played a highly important part in the Judaism of Dura.”⁸⁶

Events in the Ezekiel Mural

We turn now to a discussion of the specific sequence of events depicted in the mural.

Divine commissioning. The Ezekiel story-cycle begins in the leftmost panel with a picture of an olive tree⁸⁷ bearing prominent fruit and three drawings of Ezekiel wearing typical Persian or worldly clothing (fig. 12). As Goodenough describes, “The heavenly hand lifts the first figure of Ezekiel by the hair of his head into this place of human fragments,”⁸⁸ sending the prophet forth, with authority, from a garden of life to preach to those who are physically or spiritually dead.

The second figure of Ezekiel is shown fulfilling God’s command to prophesy to the bones (Ezek. 37:2–7)—and implicitly also, of course, initiating a demonstration of divine resurrection for the benefit of his living audience.⁸⁹ “In the painting, the prophet’s right hand is open in a gesture of exposition toward the bones.”⁹⁰ His left hand points forward while the hand of God is extended above him.

In the third depiction of Ezekiel, he “turns to the right, pointing across his body with his right hand to a third hand of God above him. With his open left hand the prophet seems to call attention to a strange mountain beside him.”⁹¹ “The mountain is split down the middle, and a small tree with



FIG. 12. *The Valley of Death and The Mountain of Transition*, the first panel in the Ezekiel mural. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 69.

exaggerated fruit grows at the top of each half.”⁹² This image of separation and judgment may recall the prophesied destruction of groves used for idol worship (Ezek. 6:13; 20:28, 47) or perhaps represents two of the trees of Eden (Ezek. 31:8–9, 16, 18).⁹³ Goodenough explained:

A castellated citadel topples upside down from the crest of the hill at the right, a building with two openings, apparently a door and a window. . . . The artist seems to be showing the [body] pieces going through the first half of the mountain, crossing the chasm, and in the second half being miraculously reassembled as whole corpses, for three such corpses lie on their backs within it. . . . Ezekiel stands at the right of the mountain, his left hand out as though he were preaching, or saying “Lo,” his right hand again lifted up toward the hand of God. He still wears the Persian costume, but his elaborately embroidered red smock has become a relatively plain one in light pink.⁹⁴

Calling forth the dead. In the middle of the mural, the second main panel takes the viewer into the realm of resurrection in the valley of life. Ezekiel is shown wearing a much simpler garment than before, its color changed from red to a light pink that may symbolically represent a stage of increasing purity “from the blood and sins of this generation,” as Isaiah describes it (Is. 1:16; compare D&C 88:75). Next, Ezekiel stands in a white robe with his right arm raised, as a heavenly host comes down to touch the heads of the deceased (fig. 13). According to the description of Goodenough, in this scene “the three assembled corpses again lie one above another, and



FIG. 13. *Resurrection in the Valley of Life*, the left half of the second panel in the Ezekiel mural. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 70.

the Greek figure of Psyche with butterfly wings stands at their heads, her hands out as though just about to grasp the head of the corpse at the top. Three other Psyche figures fly down from above. Scholars generally agree in identifying these figures with the four winds, which in the story breathe upon the corpses and give them the breath of life, so that they live.⁹⁵

Continuing with his interpretation, Goodenough described the fifth figure of Ezekiel as “supervising this miracle . . . , his right hand pointing with two fingers extended toward the descending Psyches. . . . That the prophet has taken on a new status at this stage seems obvious from his change of robes. Just as important is the peculiar two-finger gesture, which appears only here in the Dura paintings.”⁹⁶ We know, wrote Goodenough, “that it was not only used for the hand of the god, but was probably a cultic gesture in his mysteries. . . . The gesture would seem to indicate that Ezekiel is working a comparable miracle by bringing life to the corpses.”⁹⁷ One may compare the gesture of Ezekiel in his fifth appearance (in figs. 13 and 15) with a Byzantine ivory plaque in the British Museum that shows Christ raising the dead using a nearly identical gesture (fig. 14).⁹⁸

Worship of the heavenly assembly. Between the fifth and sixth figures of Ezekiel “stand ten much smaller figures, all in the same [Romanized] Greek dress, who presumably represent the bones now fully restored to life.



FIG. 14. *Christ Awakens the Bones through the Prophets*. Image from Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, fig. 305.

They raise their hands, palms forward at shoulder height” (fig. 15).⁹⁹ Some interpreters have advanced the idea that the ten individuals represent the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel.¹⁰⁰ However, as Goodenough pointed out, “it is hard to think that Judah and Benjamin should still be the unassembled ‘bones’ beside them.”¹⁰¹ Instead—relating the ten columns of the heavenly temple to the symbolism of ancient prayer circles, angelic liturgy in the heavenly ascent (*hekhalot*) literature, and the Jewish prayer quorum (*minyan*)—Kurt Schubert reminds us that ten, a symbol of perfection,¹⁰² was the “full number for a liturgical congregation.”¹⁰³ Schubert explained the nearby body parts that have not been rejoined as symbolizing “those groups of sinners, which according to Rabbinic understanding, have

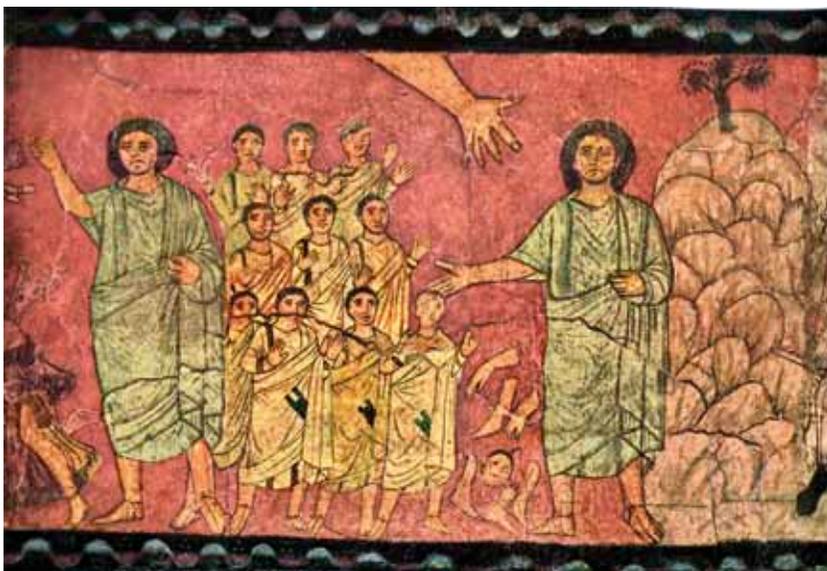


FIG. 15. *The Exaltation of Resurrected Israel in the Valley of Life*, the right half of the second panel in the Ezekiel mural. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 71.

no part in the resurrection.”¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, wrote Goodenough, the “ten who come into glory are the true Israel, . . . the mystic Jews. . . . The point of the ‘true Israel’ is that it consists of people who ‘see God.’ They are ones who have become ‘unwritten laws.’”¹⁰⁵

Goodenough noted the special markings of “clavi” and “gams”¹⁰⁶ on the “Greek robe of *chiton* [belted tunic] and *himation* [cloak]” worn by the ten (see also the gammadia on the garment of Moses in figure 2). From his observations, Goodenough concluded, “Only those who appeared to be heavenly beings or the greatest saints of Judaism, mystic saviors, wear this clothing.”¹⁰⁷

The reunited mountain and tree of life. Goodenough continued: “At the right of this [sixth] figure of Ezekiel . . . towers another mountain with a tree on it; this time the mountain stands intact, not riven like the first one. The contrast will seem possibly to have meaning.”¹⁰⁸ On the face of it, the idea expressed in the Ezekiel mural seems to be that the mountain is first split to release the dead (fig. 12), and then it is brought back together again and made whole (fig. 15). The image of the primordial mound being split in two to allow men “to spring forth like vegetation” is found in Near Eastern art and temple architecture.¹⁰⁹ All this imagery seems quite compatible with Jewish conceptions of resurrection as rebirth, “the earth being as a womb which shall give birth to them that are in their graves.”¹¹⁰ Goldstein

concludes that the “unriven mountain is a restored mountain in the [future] Age of Restoration.”¹¹¹

Additionally, one might argue that this panel represents the idea that the two trees on the split mountain, one or perhaps both of them olive trees,¹¹² have been brought back together into one. The resulting single tree seems to be vigorously sprouting new branches or fruit. In the *Zohar*, the foundation text for later Jewish *kabbalah* mysticism, the originally unified tree of life and tree of knowledge is split by the transgression of Adam and Eve, though a promise is given that these trees would one day be made one again.¹¹³ Alternatively, in the context of Ezekiel 37, one might be tempted to regard these two trees as an allusion to the two “sticks” or trees of Ezekiel 37:15–20 being reunited in token of the restoration of the House of Israel.¹¹⁴ Note that the Hebrew word for “stick,” *etz*, is the same word for “tree.” This interpretation is consistent with the overall theme of the final design of the Dura tree of life mural (fig. 8), with the separate blessings of the two divisions of Israel at the bottom of the tree and their joint exaltation around the throne at the top.

On pain of death. The final panel of the Ezekiel mural (fig. 16) presents a problem because it was painted twice, but, as Goodenough observed, “much of the original has come through the second coat of paint, so that



FIG. 16. *The Death of Ezekiel*, the third panel in the Ezekiel mural. Image from Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, plate 72.

we have a very good idea of what both looked like.”¹¹⁵ In both renditions, two figures representing Ezekiel are shown—the seventh and eighth depictions of the prophet in the mural—but only the final Ezekiel figure was repainted. The seventh Ezekiel figure “kneels and clings to the side of a large yellow altar. . . . An armed soldier wearing a helmet grasps [him] from behind.” The eighth Ezekiel figure is then shown bending over, “his scabbard hanging down between his legs, while a standing figure in the same costume grasps his hair with the left hand and raises a sword, obviously in the act of beheading him.”¹¹⁶ The tradition that Ezekiel was beheaded “does not appear in either the Old Testament or the rabbinical writings, but does in Christian documents,”¹¹⁷ including Hebrews 11:37, which speaks of prophets who were “stoned,” “sawn asunder,” and “slain with the sword.” This verse may “summarize a current Jewish tradition of the deaths of the three major prophets, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel,”¹¹⁸ as depicted in the Roda Bible, with Jeremiah being stoned, Isaiah being sawn asunder, and Ezekiel being slain with a sword (figs. 17–19). This final story scene seems to illustrate the requirement that those who would attain the glory of the way of life must prove their faithfulness “at all hazards,”¹¹⁹ including, if required, the sacrifice of their own lives.

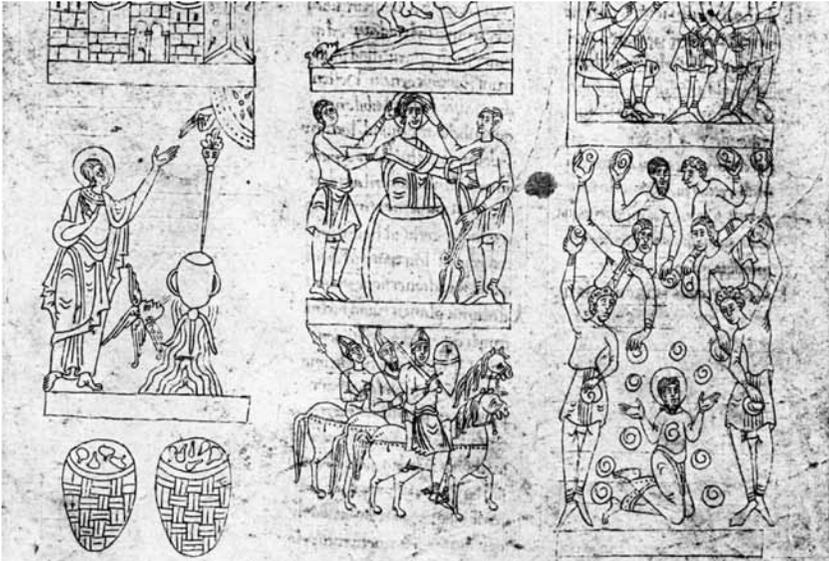


FIG. 17. *Jeremiah's Career, Stoned at the End* (Roda Bible). Image from Good-enough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, detail from fig. 308.

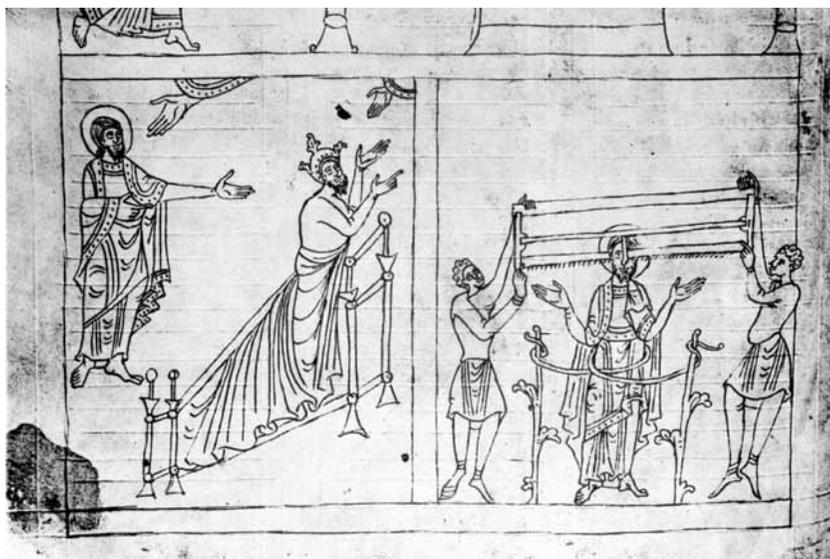


FIG. 18. *Isaiah's Career, Sawed in Two at the End* (Roda Bible). Image from Good-enough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, detail from fig. 307.

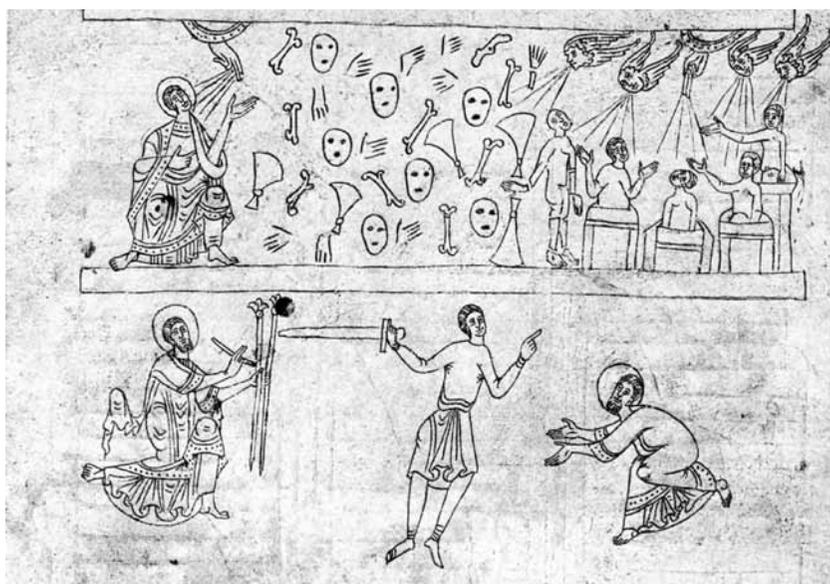


FIG. 19. *Ezekiel's Career, Beheaded at the End* (Roda Bible). Image from Good-enough, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 11, detail from fig. 309.

Summing up the content of the Ezekiel mural and its relationship to the mystic's goal of ascent to the *merkavah*, or heavenly chariot-throne, Goodenough wrote:

Merkabah mysticism . . . primarily centers in an ascent into a heavenly region, and then a descent or return to the sorry world of earthly reality, and when we have this conception in mind we see that here is what the painting really has told us. The heavenly hand comes upon the prophet to take him into the world of death and desolation. Here he preaches until the bones of human decay come together and pass through a great barrier to another realm—the realm where Psyches give men a new life, and where their new life means that they, like the now triumphant prophet, wear the great robe of sanctity. Ezekiel cannot stay there, however, but must go back to the other side of the mountain again, there in his earthly garb to meet his earthly and mortal fate, meet it from the very Jewish leaders whose apostasy he had bitterly upbraided.¹²⁰

Scholarly Assessment of Goodenough's Studies

Goodenough's studies of Philo and of Jewish mysticism, undertaken over a period of thirty years, were controversial when they were published and have been largely neglected in the years since his passing in 1965. Yet more than two decades after his death, in reviewing the arguments of Goodenough's critics, Jacob Neusner could still speak of him as the "greatest historian of religion America has ever produced" and the "one towering figure" in the study of Judaism through art.¹²¹

If not concurring with Goodenough's specific conclusions about the beliefs and practices of the Jewish group who built the synagogue, a majority of scholars at least agree on the more general idea that "most of the scenes at Dura have some connection to messianic redemption and resurrection."¹²² However, apart from disagreements on specific details of interpretation,¹²³ scholars have debated issues such as the following regarding Goodenough's overarching perspective:

- *Was "mystical Judaism" a distinct departure from rabbinic tradition?* Some scholars have argued that the differences between these groups should have been represented by Goodenough more as a "confused gradation" than as a dichotomy.¹²⁴ Ithamar Gruenwald also observed that Jewish mystical literature is associated "with the 'heart of Judaism' of the period and not with marginal, heterodox groups."¹²⁵ Though such opinions, if sustained, might weaken Goodenough's arguments for a polarization between the beliefs and practices

of rabbinic and mystical Judaism, they also would provide evidence, as do studies of synagogue art throughout the region,¹²⁶ that mysticism was more pervasive than once had been thought, thus strengthening the plausibility of Goodenough's interpretations for the Dura murals.

- *How valid were Goodenough's comparisons of the synagogue paintings to pagan art?* Writing soon after Goodenough published his studies, Elias Bickerman criticized his comparisons of the synagogue's images to Dionysiac imagery in pagan art.¹²⁷ Although agreeing with Bickerman that such comparisons are generally "inappropriate," Jodi Magness has more recently made the important point that a "mystical interpretation of another sort is supported by the Qumran literature and by *hekhalot* (heavenly ascent) literature, much of which was unavailable at the time Goodenough wrote. In fact, this is the type of Jewish literature that Goodenough supposed must have existed but was not preserved."¹²⁸ As argued above, the theme of heavenly ascent is central to Goodenough's interpretation of the Ezekiel mural.
- *How widespread was the influence of ideas resembling those of Philo?* Lee Levine has discounted Goodenough's reliance on Philo, seeing the interpretations of the latter as "sui generis and not reflective of what was going on in most Jewish circles of antiquity."¹²⁹ However, according to Luke Johnson, what neither supporters nor opponents of Goodenough can now deny is the "pervasive use by Philo of language that takes its origin in the mysteries yet is employed with direct reference to the practice and self-understanding of Judaism," in essence, "a conceptualization of Judaism as Mystery."¹³⁰ Countering Levine's claim that Philo was *sui generis*, an increasing body of evidence reveals important affinities between Philo's writings and pseudepigraphic writings of the same period,¹³¹ supporting Goodenough's accounting for similarities to Philo in terms of analogous independent developments.¹³²
- *Were specific ritual practices associated with mystic Judaism?* John Collins failed to see sufficient evidence for distinctive Jewish mystic *ritual*, but his extensive review of mystic Judaism and its literature largely substantiates and expands upon Goodenough's arguments regarding Jewish mystic *philosophy*.¹³³ More recent studies do, however, provide evidence that

Jewish mystic philosophy was sometimes incorporated in ritual practices. For example, based on their analysis of Qumran and other groups, Fletcher-Louis¹³⁴ and Morray-Jones¹³⁵ argue for cultic practices resembling in important respects those posited by Goodenough for Dura.

- *Was the congregation at Dura capable of conceiving a program of decoration reflecting the philosophy of mystic Judaism?* Joseph Gutmann is “fairly certain” that such a program “would have been totally incomprehensible to the small congregation of probably unsophisticated and unintellectual Jewish merchants and the other Jewish inhabitants residing at Dura.”¹³⁶ Anticipating such arguments, Goodenough posited the existence of an elite subset of the synagogue’s membership¹³⁷ who would have initiated the program for the synagogue’s decoration. From her studies of art in this and other Palestinian synagogues, Magness argues for the perpetuation of such an elite in the line of the Zadokite priests, “whose literature had virtually disappeared from Jewish tradition until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls.”¹³⁸ Note that ceiling tiles from the Dura synagogue indicate that a priest named Samuel was its builder,¹³⁹ and one of the Moses figures surrounding the reredos has an inscription that labels the prophet as “son of Levi,”¹⁴⁰ emphasizing his priestly lineage rather than his father’s name. All this, not to mention the fact that Philo himself is generally assumed to have been a priest, suggests that “Dura reflects a trajectory of priestly tradition.”¹⁴¹

Despite the history of controversy, as recently as 2007, Robert Goldenberg noted the continued importance of Goodenough’s views on Dura, observing that “other leaders in the field have roundly disputed his proposals, but Goodenough’s arguments were weighty and his evidence was impressive. The matter remains unresolved.”¹⁴² Goodenough’s assessment of his own work still remains largely true today: “Alternative interpretations have been suggested for details, but none attempted for the evidence as a whole.”¹⁴³

Summary and Conclusions

While not without their faults or their critics, Goodenough’s classic studies of Jewish symbolism in the Dura Europos synagogue and of possible ritual elements in Philo’s thought provide valuable perspectives not found anywhere else in such detail. His studies, containing some important ideas

that are being confirmed by new research, bring to light the importance of temple themes in some strains of Judaism that were contemporary with Jesus Christ and early Christianity. While further work is called for in this regard, it may be suggested that such presentations of these ancient themes in these artistic and philosophical forms may have made it very natural for some Jews to accept Christianity when it became known to them.¹⁴⁴ In fact, Goodenough went so far as to argue that “Christianity cannot be explained apart from the preparation within the form of Judaism that Philo reveals.”¹⁴⁵

Goodenough’s comprehensive studies of the symbolism of the Dura Europos synagogue reveal striking echoes with the ideas of Philo, giving visual evidence of the possibility that similar concepts from others influenced by the same religious currents may have manifested themselves in the actual ritual practice of some Jews of the Diaspora. Barker¹⁴⁶ and others¹⁴⁷ have since expanded Goodenough’s conclusions to show that Philo’s “essentially Jewish”¹⁴⁸ descriptions may even reflect knowledge drawn from First Temple Judaism. It is hoped that these materials, which cry out for further attention from scholars of Judaism and early Christianity, will themselves, like Ezekiel’s bones, be reassembled from the four corners of the world and “resurrected” for further study and discussion.

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1. “The local name of the town was ‘Dura’ [literally ‘fort’]; when Alexander the Great conquered the area, the town received the Graeco-Macedonian name ‘Europos.’” Jonathan A. Goldstein, “The Judaism of the Synagogues (Focusing on the Synagogue of Dura-Europos),” in *Judaism in Late Antiquity, Part 2, Historical Syntheses*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Brill, 1995), 110. The frequently used hyphenated form “Dura-Europos” is a modern invention.

2. Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, 13 vols., Bollingen Series 37 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953–1968), 10:197. (Two editions of this work exist: the complete edition cited here and an abbreviated edition cited in note 11. Unless otherwise specified, future references will cite the complete edition published by Pantheon.)

3. Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 103, accessed at <http://books.google.com/books?id=cKGpa-FJ3XsC>.

4. Clark Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos*, ed. Bernard Goldman (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1979), 130–31. The significance of the “visual midrash” of the Dura synagogue in light of Jewish views of art is discussed in Jo Milgrom, “The Dura Synagogue and Visual Midrash,” in *Scriptures for the Modern World*, ed. Paul R. Cheesman and C. Wilfred Griggs, Religious Studies Monograph Series, vol. 11 (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984), 29–59.

5. See Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2d ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 176–77, for a summary of some of the various opinions on this question. See also Joseph Gutmann, “Programmatic Painting in the Dura Synagogue,” in *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation (1932–1992)*, ed. Joseph Gutmann (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 137–40.

6. Milgrom, “Visual Midrash,” 31.

7. Cited in Milgrom, “Visual Midrash,” 31.

8. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:197.

9. For good summaries of recent finds, see, for example, Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*; Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

10. For discussions of issues relating to the definition of Jewish and early Christian mysticism, see Elliot R. Wolfson, “Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions from Qumran: A Response to Bilhah Nitzan,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 85, no. 1–2 (July–October 1994): 185–202, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1454961>; April D. DeConick, “What Is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 1–24.

11. For example, Babylonian Manichaeism, Mithraism, and the Sassanid renovation of Zoroastrianism. See Jacob Neusner, editor’s foreword, in Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Jacob Neusner, abr. ed., Bollingen Series (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), xxix. For a view of religious interaction at Dura Europos, see Lucinda Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria*, ed. R. Van Den Broek, H. J. W. Drijvers, and H. S. Versnel, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, Volume 138 (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

12. Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 114–33; see also John Eugene Seach, *Ancient Texts and Mormonism*, 1st ed. (Murray, Utah: Sounds of Zion, 1983), 56–68.

13. Hugh W. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, ed. John W. Welch, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies [FARMS], 1988), 189. Compare Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:33.

14. See Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:171. Note that the King James translators rendered Exodus 28:39 inaccurately. Consistent with most modern Bible translations, Goodenough describes Aaron’s robe as being “checked.” Also of significance, as Nibley pointed out, is the symbolism of the square on the left shoulder

of this vestment. Hugh W. Nibley, "Sacred Vestments," in *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 110, caption to figure 26. Goodenough makes his note about Moses exceptionally "functioning on the Aaronic level" because more typically in Philo, and arguably in other murals at Dura, Moses is used as a type of participation in the "Greater" mystery in contrast to Aaron's "Lesser" or "Lower" mystery. This contrast is represented in the difference in the priestly robes worn. From the dress of Moses in this mural and other evidence, Goodenough concluded that here "the tribes were taken into the Lower Mystery." Erwin R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1935), 210; see also 99–100, 209.

15. John M. Lundquist, "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 83–117, see especially 88, fig. 7. Jonathan A. Goldstein uses Numbers 11:11–29 to explain why illumination flows only to the tents of two of the Israelites. Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 129–30.

16. Hugh W. Nibley, "Tenting, Toll, and Taxing," in *The Ancient State: The Rulers and the Ruled*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 74 n. 15.

17. Hugh W. Nibley, "Rediscovery of the Apocrypha and the Book of Mormon," in Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos*, 239, caption to figure 47; compare Hugh W. Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2004), 1:152, drawing on Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:91–96. The symbol of the square again appears on the robe of the leftmost of the three angelic figures.

18. Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 118.

19. See Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:66. Used as a symbol of the resurrection since Greco-Roman times, a sculpture of a scallop shell also appears in the celestial room of the Salt Lake Temple immediately above the veil. James E. Talmage, *The House of the Lord: A Study of Holy Sanctuaries Ancient and Modern* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912; reprint Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 132, plate 22. In other ancient contexts, it was also used to represent fertility. Compare this with the scallop shell shown over the veil in a depiction of the Jerusalem Temple in Khirbet Samara, an ancient Samaritan synagogue. William J. Hamblin, "Temple Mosaic from Khurbet Samara," in Hamblin of Jerusalem, <http://hamblinofjerusalem.blogspot.com/2010/01/temple-mosaic-from-khirbet-samara.html>.

20. See, for example, Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:67–77.

21. Moon observes that Jewish women "depicted in the synagogue frescoes wear pink, brown, beige, and beige-yellow—not white, forbidden by the Mishnah. White, we should explain, was exclusive to men, especially to those of status, as the figures of Moses and others in the frescoes attest. . . . [In addition,] Jewish women were required to cover their head." Warren G. Moon, "Nudity and Narrative: Observations on the Frescoes from the Dura Synagogue," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 596–97.

22. Margaret Barker, *Temple Themes in Christian Worship* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 28.

23. Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 118.

24. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 189.

25. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:160.

26. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:78–79.

27. Nibley incorrectly has the name “Joseph” here, though Goodenough, consistent with scripture, has Jacob giving the blessing.

28. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 189; see also Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 1:135, 137. Nibley is quoting Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:200. For LDS perspectives on this topic, see Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and Ronan J. Head, “Mormonism’s Satan and the Tree of Life,” *Element: The Journal of the Society for Mormon Philosophy and Theology* 4, no. 2, forthcoming; Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, *In God’s Image and Likeness* (Salt Lake City: Eborn Books, 2010), 163–68, 188–89, 228, 295–96, 462, 591–95, 748–49.

29. See John A. Tvedtnes, “Vineyard or Olive Orchard,” in *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob* 5, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 477–83.

30. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 189, 191. See, for example, Jacob 5:8.

31. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 191.

32. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:201.

33. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:201 (emphasis added). See parallels in Philo’s description of Moses’s cosmic hymn, discussed below.

34. Nibley connected the Orpheus theme to the ancient annual celebration of the new year, the *hilaria*, which “was the occasion on which all the world joined in the great creation hymn, as they burst into a spontaneous song of praise recalling the first creation.” Further associating this event with the Day of Atonement reiterated in the image of the sacrifice of Isaac shown in figure 5, he notes that the Greek term for “mercy seat” is *hilasterion*—the place of the *hilaria*. Hugh W. Nibley, “The Meaning of the Atonement,” in *Approaching Zion*, ed. Don E. Norton (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 563–66, drawing on Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:89–104. See also Nibley, *Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, 2:228–30.

35. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:78.

36. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:78–79.

37. Among literary sources cited by Goodenough to associate David with this unidentified figure is a Coptic Christian text where David “lies upon the bed of the tree of life and holds in his right hand the golden plectrum, in his left the *pneuma*-lyre as he assembles all the angels to hail the Father.” Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:102. Michael Avi-Yonah writes that Goodenough’s once-controversial identification of Orpheus with David “has been brilliantly vindicated by the discovery of the Gaza synagogue mosaic pavement (dated 509) in which a royal figure is shown surrounded by animals, while playing the lyre, and is described expressly as ‘David.’” Michael Avi-Yonah, “Goodenough’s Evaluation of the Dura Paintings: A Critique,” in Gutmann, *Dura-Europos Synagogue*, 119. For a summary of scholarly views on the identification of David with Orpheus, see Jas’ Elsner, “Double Identity: Orpheus as David. Orpheus as Christ?” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 35 (March/April 2009), available online at <http://members.bib-arch.org/publication.asp?PubID=BSBA&Volume=35&Issue=2&ArticleID=8>.

38. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:105. “The reredos finally represented the foundation of Israel as a people, and their ultimate glorification through the tree-vine and Orpheus. The symbol of bread and wine could be assumed: it was now the hope and ascent of Israel which the congregation looked at as they worshiped.”

Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:162. “If for both Christians and pagans the vine referred to the divine power made available to take one to heaven, . . . the chances are overwhelming that the vine meant here not Israel itself but the hope of Israel, the hope that Jews would come to salvation through the Jewish God who was to his people what the vine represented to others. ‘I am the Vine, ye are the branches’ (John 15:5) may originally have been a mystic description of the relation between God and Israel.” Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:80–81.

39. Kurt Schubert, “Jewish Pictorial Traditions in Early Christian Art,” in *Jewish Historiography and Iconography in Early and Medieval Christianity*, ed. Heinz Schreckenberg and Kurt Schubert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 173. For more on Messiah ben Joseph, see Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts: Jewish Legends of Three Thousand Years* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 165–70; Trevan G. Hatch, “Messiah ben Joseph: Jewish Traditions and Legends of a Latter-day Restorer,” in *The 2007 Brigham Young University Religious Education Student Symposium* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2007), 37–56; John A. Tvedtnes, “Joseph Smith: The Lord’s Anointed,” *Meridian Magazine*, <http://www.meridianmagazine.com/jsbicentennial/051223js.html>.

40. Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 192, quoting Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:200, 201.

41. Goodenough elaborates: “The difference between Jewish mysticism and Jewish messianic eschatology is essentially that in eschatology the cosmic as well as the personal transition is stressed, the destruction of the bad in all men along with the universal achievement of the good. [The tree of life panel], with its sacraments at its base, its great tree-ladder, the saving means of divine music and harmony—all leading to the Three at the top—present a scheme of salvation that need not await any ‘far off, divine event.’ It was to be consummated for everyone in the heavenly future, to be sure, but the design represented what those who painted it thought Judaism offered both here and hereafter to the faithful.” Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:104. In this interpretation, Goodenough’s studies anticipated what Fletcher-Louis calls the “third phase” of apocalyptic scholarship, where stories of heavenly ascent are seen as attesting “the kind of revelatory encounter with the heavenly mysteries for which any Jew, Jewess, or proselyte might hope.” Crispin Fletcher-Louis, “Religious Experience and the Apocalypses,” in Frances Flannery, Colleen Shantz, and Rodney A. Werline, eds., *Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, *Experientia*, Volume 1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 126, 144.

42. Virtually all scholars accept the first two portraits as being of Moses. Weitzmann and Kessler argue that the third figure is Jeremiah, standing beside the covered ark and displaying the scroll of the new covenant, and that the fourth portrait is Isaiah (Isaiah 60:19–21). Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art*, *Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection* 28 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1990), 170–73. However, Fine, who parts with Goodenough’s interpretations in most other respects, agrees that the third portrait is also Moses. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World*, 178–79. Kraeling, however, identified wing panel 3 as Ezra reading the law and wing panel 4 as Abraham receiving the promise. Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report 8, Part 1*, ed. A. R. Bellinger, F. E. Brown, A. Perkins, and C. B. Welles (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1956), plates 77 and 78. Goodenough

gives several reasons to conclude that the fourth figure would represent the same character as the first three. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:115. Goldstein also supports Goodenough's identifications; "Judaism of the Synagogues," 122.

43. The third portrait shows a typical scene of Moses reading the Law, "except that at Dura, Moses' audience is omitted, and Moses stands alone, so that he reads the Law to the living audience in the synagogue before him. . . . Moses [is] presented as the mystic hierophant reading the *hieros logos* he graciously brought to Jews. That Moses reads the mystic text as a mystagogue means not that the Scriptures were literally kept secret, but that to these Jews in Dura, as to Philo, the true meaning of Scripture, the allegorical, was to be presented fully only to those 'initiated.'" Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:113–14.

44. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:118.

45. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:115.

46. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:116.

47. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:101, 116–18.

48. Philo, "On the Virtues (*De Virtutibus*)," in Philo, ed. and trans. F. H. Colson. 10 vols. and 2 supplements, *Loeb Classical Library* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–53), 8:207.

49. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 95, 96. See Philo, "On the Giants (*De Gigantibus*)," in Philo, 2:473. See C. T. R. Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel in Ancient Judaism and Some Early Christian Writings: From Victorious Athlete to Heavenly Champion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 156–219, regarding Philo's explanation of the name Israel as meaning "the one who sees God."

50. Margaret Barker, *The Hidden Tradition of the Kingdom of God* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 7, 38–47.

51. Philo, "On the Giants," in Philo, 2:473. See Erwin R. Goodenough, *An Introduction to Philo Judaeus*, 2d ed., rev. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962), 147–48.

52. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 214 n. 105. See John W. Welch, *The Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 57–62, and John W. Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount in the Light of the Temple* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2009), 116–20, for discussions of the ritual significance of the concept of "perfection."

53. Goodenough was always careful not to strictly equate Philonic Judaism with the mystical Judaism he supposes to have found in the synagogue. Though the "probable conclusion is that the Jews (not, I believe, the whole congregation) who decorated the synagogue had accepted the symbols because they had come to interpret Judaism much as Philo had done," an examination of the paintings makes clear that they "had read much apocalyptic literature Philo had not read, and had accepted many haggadic legends Philo probably never heard of." Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:122.

54. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:118, 121, 122. Observes Hayward, "Philo saw nothing improper . . . in describing Moses as a hierophant: like the holder of that office in the mystery cults of Philo's day, Moses was responsible for inducting initiates into the mysteries, leading them from darkness to light, to a point where they are enabled to see [God]." Hayward, *Interpretations of the Name Israel*, 192, emphasis in original.

Philo said the following about his initiation: "I myself was initiated [*muētheis*] under Moses the God-beloved into his greater mysteries [*ta megala mysteria*],"

and readily became a disciple of Jeremiah, “a worthy minister [*hierophantēs*] of the holy secrets.” Philo, “On the Cherubim (*De Cherubim*),” in *Philo*, 2:37.

55. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:198; see also 12:190–97. Often criticized for his interpretations, Goodenough showed ambivalence in his writings about the terms “initiation” and “mystery,” speaking in his early writings in ways that at least sometimes seemed to imply a literal ritual, while in his last writings leaning toward a figurative sense of the word. Robert S. Eccles, *Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough: A Personal Pilgrimage*, Society of Biblical Literature, Biblical Scholarship in North America, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1985), 64–65.

56. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 56, 212–13, 476, emphasis in original.

57. Fletcher-Louis, “Religious Experience,” 132, 133, emphasis in original. On the rise of temple terminology and forms in the synagogues and the expanded centrality of prayer during the Amoraic period, see Jodi Magness, “Heaven on Earth: Helios and the Zodiac Cycle in Ancient Palestinian Synagogues,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 59 (2005): 23.

58. Wolfson, “Mysticism,” 202.

59. Magness, “Heaven,” 41.

60. See discussion in Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, 663–93, 756–81. See also Brent J. Schmidt, “Utopia and Community in the Ancient World” (PhD diss., University of Colorado at Boulder, 2008).

61. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:179.

62. Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1956), 202.

63. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:195–96.

64. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 96. Seach sees similarities to the gathering of Israel at Sinai in three groups: “the masses at the foot of the mountain, where they viewed God’s ‘Presence’ from afar; the Seventy part way up; and Moses at the very top, where he entered directly into God’s presence.” Seach, *Ancient Texts and Mormonism*, 2d rev. ed. (n.p., 1995), 660; see also 568–77, 661, 807–9. For a summary of parallels in the imagery of merkavah mysticism and the experience of Israel at Sinai, see Magness, “Heaven,” 35 n. 238. Ephrem the Syrian, an early Christian scholar, saw the imagery of clothing in the story of Adam and Eve and the symbolism of the Jerusalem Temple as “a means of linking together in a dynamic fashion the whole of salvation history; it is a means of indicating the interrelatedness between every stage in this continuing working out of divine Providence,” including “the place of each individual Christian’s baptism [and other ordinances] within the divine economy as a whole.” Sebastian Brock, in Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 350–63), *Hymns on Paradise*, trans. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1990), 66–67.

65. Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 123.

66. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*, 96.

67. Philo, “On the Giants,” in *Philo*, 2:473.

68. Philo, *Philo Supplement 2: Questions and Answers on Exodus*, 10 vols. and 2 supplements, ed. and trans. Ralph Marcus, Loeb Classical Library (Cam-

bridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), supplement 2:70; see Eccles, *Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, 60–61; Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo*, 147–53. The extent to which Philo intended to imply a literal deification of Moses is a matter of scholarly debate. Russell provides a useful history and overview of Jewish and early Christian beliefs relating to deification. Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, ed. Gillian Clark and Andrew Louth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). While both admitting many evidences suggesting that Philo’s view of deification might be taken at face value and also recognizing the influence of Philo’s teachings on later Christian teachings on the subject, he nevertheless agrees with the consensus of most modern scholars that “Philo is unwilling to say that Moses is a god except by title or analogy.” Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 64. Russell, however, does see stronger ideas of deification analogous to early Christian views in some strands of Palestinian Judaism and later rabbinic mysticism. Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 65–76. For additional discussion of traditions of Moses’s deification, see Wayne A. Meeks, “Moses as God and King,” in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 354–71, and Welch, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 25–27.

69. Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, “Divine Names, Celestial Sanctuaries, and Visionary Ascents: Approaching the New Testament from the Perspective of Merkava Traditions,” in *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 306–7.

70. Philo, *On the Special Laws Book 1 (De Specialibus Legibus)*, in *Philo*, 7:137.

71. George MacRae, “The Temple as a House of Revelation in the Nag Hammadi Texts,” in *The Temple in Antiquity*, ed. Truman G. Madsen (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1984), 184–85. For additional detail and an overview of research on the Valentinian sacraments, see Gaye Strathearn, “The Valentinian Bridal Chamber in the Gospel of Philip,” *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 1 (2009): 83–103. Intriguingly, Darren Iammarino concludes that “the bridal chamber in the Valentinian community is actually the same type of ascent ritual that [is] encountered in the ritual of Sethian baptism,” which he takes to be of Jewish, pre-Christian origin. He also compares the Sethian ritual to the Gnostic Christian initiation espoused by the community that produced the Gospel of Thomas and possibly related documents, and observes that “both seem to have a rite of ascent that led to a mystical vision and revelation.” Darren Iammarino, “Similarities between Sethian Baptism and the Bridal Chamber of Thomas Gnosticism and Valentinianism,” *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (2009): 36, 39.

72. Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions*, trans. Brian McNeil (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 99; compare William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely, *Solomon’s Temple: Myth and History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 119, 121. The idea of three degrees of initiation within primordial traditions from other cultures is also discussed in John M. Lundquist, “Fundamentals of Temple Ideology from Eastern Traditions,” in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 677–78, 680–81. From a ritual perspective, these three parts roughly correspond to van Gennep’s classic stages of separation (*préliminaire*),

transition (*liminaire*), and reintegration (*postliminaire*). Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge, 1960).

73. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:182 n. 85.

74. Recall, for example, the series of four *kusta* handclasps, corresponding to four rites leading to the presence of God, in Mandaean liturgy. See E. S. Drower, ed., *The Thousand and Twelve Questions (Alf Trisar Shuialia)* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1960), 255–56. Likewise, the series of “five signs and five mysteries” are expressed by the “right hand” and the “embrace” in Manichaean ritual. Iain Gardner, ed., *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, vol. 37, ed. J. M. Robinson and H. J. Klimkeit (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 43–46. See also Iammarino, “Similarities,” 24–40.

75. David Larsen comments that temple imagery is especially noticeable in Psalm 63, including possible references to waters of life, seeing God in the temple, prayer with uplifted hands, a sacred meal, dream incubation, the wings of cherubim in the Holy of Holies, an ascent of the soul by aid of God’s right hand, and judgment. Although more research is needed, the depiction might be seen as a heavenly ascent or at least an experience comparable to Isaiah 6.

Also, although contained in very poetic and figurative imagery, Psalm 139 seems to allude to heavenly ascent or otherworld journeys led by God’s right hand. David J. Larsen, email to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, January 2, 2010.

76. See discussions of this motif by David Rolph Seely in his “The Image of the Hand of God in the Exodus Traditions” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1990); “The Image of the Hand of God in the Book of Exodus,” in *God’s Word for Our World: Biblical Studies in Honor of Simon John De Vries*, ed. J. Harold Ellens and others (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 1:38–54; and “The Image of the Hand of God in the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 140–50. In the Dura mural of the parting of the Red Sea, like in the mural of Ezekiel, both a right hand and a reversed right hand appear to be shown.

77. Nibley explains: “In a stock presentation found in early Jewish synagogues as well as on very early Christian murals, ‘the hand of God is represented, but could not be called that explicitly, and instead of the heavenly utterance the *bath kol* [echo, distant voice, whisper] is given.’ . . . In early Christian representations the hand of God reaching through the veil is grasped by the initiate or human spirit who is being caught up into the presence of the Lord.” Nibley, “Meaning of the Atonement,” 561–62.

78. Harald Riesenfeld, *The Resurrection in Ezekiel 37 and in the Dura-Europos Paintings*, Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift, vol. 11 (Uppsala, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1948), 34.

79. David Larsen comments that this theme can be perceived in Psalm 18:3–16 (the king should be seen as dead, at least ritualistically); 108:6; compare 20:6; 60:5; 74:11; 138:7. David J. Larsen, email to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, January 2, 2010.

80. Riesenfeld, *Resurrection in Ezekiel 37*, 12.

81. Riesenfeld, *Resurrection*, 33.

82. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:182–83 n. 85.

83. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment*, 2d ed., The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley, 16, eds. John Gee and Michael D. Rhodes (Salt Lake City and Provo: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2005), 443.

84. Daniel Rona, *Israel Revealed: Discovering Mormon and Jewish Insights in the Holy Land* (Sandy, Utah: Ensign Foundation, 2001), 194. An excavation of a Christian burial site in Egypt has produced evidence that some burials included “plain linen garments, but the many strands of linen ribbon wrapped around the upper half of the body are gathered together into a complex knot.” The knot was found either on the left or, more commonly, on the right shoulder, indicating priestly authority. C. Wilfred Griggs and others, “Evidences of a Christian Population in the Egyptian Fayum and Genetic and Textile Studies of the Akhmim Noble Mummies,” *BYU Studies* 33, no. 2 (1993): 225–26.

85. Margaret Barker, email to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, June 11, 2007.

86. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 12:188.

87. Goldstein, “Judaism of the Synagogues,” 146.

88. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:180. See Ezekiel 37:1; compare Ezekiel 8:2; 28:13–19. The scattered bones may suggest the Persian practice of exposing rather than burying the dead. Nicholas Thomas Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 125 and 125 n. 169.

89. Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48*, in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, ed. Robert L. Hubbard Jr. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 376.

90. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:181.

91. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:182; see Ezekiel 6:2–7; compare 36:1–7.

92. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:183. The mountain is surely meant to represent the Mount of Olives, which is destined to cleave in two at a crucial moment in the last days (Zech. 14:4; D&C 45:48, 133:20). The *Targum to the Song of Songs* 8:5 envisions the mountain as the site of the resurrection of all Israel: “When the dead rise, the Mount of Olives will open and all Israel’s dead will come up out of it, also the righteous who have died in captivity: they will come through a subterranean passage and come up from under the Mount of Olives.” Cited in Riesenfeld, *Resurrection*, 31; see also Howard Schwartz, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 504–6; Robert P. Gordon, “The Targumists as Eschatologists,” in *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Versions: Selected Essays of Robert P. Gordon*, ed. Robert P. Gordon (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006), 308.

93. Note that the tree in Revelation 22:2 “is rather ambiguously described in twofold aspect planted on either side of the river of the water of life.” Jennifer O’Reilly, “The Trees of Eden in Mediaeval Iconography,” in *A Walk in the Garden: Biblical, Iconographical and Literary Images of Eden*, ed. Paul Morris and Deborah Sawyer (Sheffield, U.K.: JSOT Press, 1992), 176. So, these two trees may depict two halves of the same tree, just as the mountain on which it stands has been split in two.

94. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:183. See Ezekiel 32:5; 35:1–8; 37:7; 38:20.

95. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:183. See Ezekiel 37:9–10. The allusion to the four winds in this passage requires additional explanation. Chester points out that *ruach* is used in verses 5–6, 9–10 with various meanings, including “breath, wind or spirit (and the deliberate further play on this in the climax of the section in v.

14, where *ruach* obviously must mean the [divine] Spirit)—can be understood as having deliberate echoes of the Genesis creation narratives [see Gen. 1:2; compare Moses 2:2, 3:7]. . . . [Moreover] the ‘four winds’ . . . denote the four corners of the earth, [which gives *ruach*] a specifically and deliberately cosmic scope. . . . Overall, then, the *ruach* of Ezekiel 37 contains at least hints of all these different—although overlapping—dimensions: the breath necessary for human life, the cosmic, creative divine Spirit, and the eschatological divine Spirit.” Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 125–27; see also Schubert, “Jewish Pictorial Traditions,” 187–88. The implication, then, drawn by Chester from this and related texts is that “those who are delivered . . . , and not just a few individuals, will take on a transformed and heavenly angelic state, in the end time, at the point of decisive eschatological intervention.” Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation*, 144. For an example of a similar motif in Christian art, see the creation cupola in the basilica of San Marco, Venice, where a small winged figure is shown assisting God in animating the lifeless Adam, immediately following his creation. Penny Howell Jolly, *Made in God’s Image? Eve and Adam in the Genesis Mosaics at San Marco, Venice*, California Studies in the History of Art, Discovery Series 4, ed. Walter Horn and James Marrow (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), plate 6.

96. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:183–84. In classic iconography, this gesture represented the spoken word; in medieval Christian art, the meaning changed to that of blessing. H. P. L’Orange, *Studies on the Iconography of Cosmic Kingship in the Ancient World* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Caratzas Brothers, 1982), 171–83.

97. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:184. See Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament: History, Culture, and Religion of the Hellenistic Age*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 1:187, for the suggestion that this gesture may have been appropriated by the Jews of Asia Minor from their pagan neighbors. Note that the power to raise the dead is delegated to Ezekiel, rather than performed by God himself. Riesenfeld, *Resurrection*, 32. Riesenfeld suggests that God’s delegation of the task of resurrection to Ezekiel is paralleled by Christ’s raising of Lazarus (see 38 n. 7, noting a sarcophagus carved with a combination of these stories), just as some of Jesus’ miracles are similar to miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha. “It is perhaps more than chance that the miracles of revivification performed, according to Jewish belief, by Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel, each prefiguring the coming Messiah, in some way have reached fulfillment in the Messianic activity of Jesus Christ.” Riesenfeld, *Resurrection*, 38.

98. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:184–85; 11, figure 305.

99. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:184.

100. Block, *Ezekiel*, 391.

101. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:194.

102. Welch relates the number ten to various aspects of perfection. He observes, “Many dimensions in the Temple were ten cubits in length or height (Exodus 26:1; 1 Kings 6:23–25; 7:23–24), including the Holy of Holies, which was ten cubits by ten cubits by ten cubits (1 Kings 6:20), thus, as Philo said, embracing ‘the whole of Wisdom.’” Welch, *Sermon on the Mount*, 46; see also John W. Welch, “Counting to Ten,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 42–57.

103. Schubert, “Jewish Pictorial Traditions,” 188.

104. Schubert, "Jewish Pictorial Traditions," 188.

105. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:195; see Philo, "On the Virtues," in *Philo*, 8:283; Jeremiah 31:33; compare Andrew F. Ehat, "It Seems Like Heaven Began on Earth': Joseph Smith and the Constitution of the Kingdom of God," *BYU Studies* 20, no. 3 (1980): 5–6.

106. Some scholars have dismissed the depictions of this distinctive clothing as merely the product of slavish copying by the mural makers from standard design books. Others assert that different marks may serve merely to distinguish between male and female garments. Avi-Yonah, "Goodenough's Evaluation of the Dura Paintings," 120–21. However, Goodenough notes that distinctive marks are found not only in the Dura murals, but also in a cache of white textile fragments also discovered at Dura that "may well have been the contents of a box where sacred vestments were kept, or they may have been fetishistic marks, originally on sacred robes, that were preserved after the garments had been outworn." Erwin R. Goodenough, "The Greek Garments on Jewish Heroes in the Dura Synagogue," in *Biblical Motifs: Origins and Translations*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 225; see also Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:127–29. Such marks on Christian robes, as well as on clothing in Hellenistic Egypt, Palmyra, and on Roman figures of Victory are thought to be "a symbol of immortality." Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:163. For further discussion of Goodenough's conclusions and a report of similar patterns found at Masada and elsewhere, see John W. Welch and Claire Foley, "Gammadia on Early Jewish and Christian Garments," *BYU Studies* 36, no. 3 (1996–97): 253–58.

107. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:205; see also 9:88–89, 126–29, 162–64; Goodenough, "Greek Garments on Jewish Heroes." In describing the purple "outer garment of the high priest as depicted in the murals of the Dura Europos synagogue" (see, for example, the figure of Aaron in Goodenough, *Symbols*, 11, plate 10), Nibley notes that "the white undergarment is the proper preexistent glory of the wearer, while the other is the priesthood later added to it." Nibley, *Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 489–90. The dark-blue or purple color of the robe of the high priest simultaneously served as a symbol of incarnation of the divine Logos. Wesley Williams, "The Shadow of God: Speculations on the Body Divine in Jewish Esoteric Tradition," 34, <http://www.theblackgod.com/Shadow%20of%20God%20Short%5B1%5D.pdf>.

108. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:185; see Ezekiel 17:22–24; 28:14; 34:27; 36:30; 47:7, 12.

109. Diane E. Wirth, *Parallels: Mesoamerican and Ancient Middle Eastern Traditions* (St. George, Utah: Stonecliff Publishing, 2003), 151–54.

110. Riesenfeld, *Resurrection*, 11; see, for example, Isaiah 26:19: "The earth shall cast out the dead." For an overview of scholarship relating to the question of the symbolism representing an individual bodily resurrection rather than merely the collective redemption of Israel, see Bradshaw, *Image and Likeness*, 780–81, and Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 111. Relating to Nibley's references to new year rites mentioned above is Riesenfeld's suggestion that Jewish beliefs in the resurrection were connected with just such rites. He argues that the rites of enthronement enacted during the Feast of the Tabernacles "culminated in the solemn exaltation or 'resurrection' which followed upon the king's struggle against the powers of Chaos and Death and the dramatic representation of his humiliation

and descent to Hades. . . . [T]he king's resurrection and enthronization signified new life and new birth for the people within the frame of the covenant. . . . That which was enacted annually in the ritual drama was to take place in the future in a more marked or final way." Riesenfeld, *Resurrection*, 5–6. David J. Larsen also notes: "This notion of coming forth from the womb is probably what is suggested by the strange language in Psalm 110:3, where the Davidic king has come forth from the 'womb of dawn.' It was likely related to the ritualized death and rebirth of the king before his enthronement." David J. Larsen, email to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, January 2, 2010.

111. Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 150; see Ezekiel 34:13, 36:1–15.

112. Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 147, sees them both as olive trees, though the trees are not identical. Could there be any relevance in the Book of Mormon imagery that distinguishes between "tame" and "wild" olive trees in representations of the scattered House of Israel (Jacob 5)?

113. Scholem, *Jewish Mysticism*, 232, see also 236 and 404–5 n. 105; Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Dorset Press, 1987), 112, 124–28, 166–68; Daniel C. Matt, ed. and trans., *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1 (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 85, 222.

114. Kraeling, *Synagogue*, 191. The imagery is even more striking in light of the Old Testament connection between Torah and the tree of life (Prov. 3:18).

115. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:187.

116. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:185, 187. Goldstein concurs with Goodenough's identification and elaborates on the symbolism of the panel. Goldstein, "Judaism of the Synagogues," 151–53.

117. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:187.

118. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:188; compare David Satran and Benjamin Wright, "Martyrological Traditions," in *The Apocryphal Ezekiel*, ed. Michael E. Stone, Benjamin G. Wright, and David Satran, *Early Judaism and Its Literature* vol. 18, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 95, 100; J. Edward Wright, "The Synagogue Paintings from Dura-Europos," in Stone, Wright, and Satran, *Apocryphal Ezekiel*, 104–5; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, *Word Biblical Commentary* vol. 47B, ed. David A. Hubbard, Glenn W. Barker, and Ralph P. Martin (Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 390–91; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 1993), 630–31; Avi-Yonah, "Goodenough's Evaluation of the Dura Paintings," 119.

119. Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 150.

120. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 10:193–94.

121. Jacob Neusner, "Studying Ancient Judaism through the Art of the Synagogue," in *Art as Religious Studies*, ed. Doug Adams and Diana Apostolos-Cappadona (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 31–32; Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?*, *The Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 8.

122. James R. Russell, "Ezekiel and Iran," in *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, *Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies*, ed. James R. Russell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press and the Armenian Heritage Press, 2004), 905. While

differing with Goodenough on many other points, Moon admits the possibility that “the Ezekiel cycle could be interpreted as resurrection and judgment.” Moon, “Nudity,” 607 n. 14.

123. See, for example, Avi-Yonah, “Goodenough’s Evaluation of the Dura Paintings”; Arthur Darby Nock, “Religious Symbols and Symbolism,” in Zeph Stewart, ed., *Arthur Darby Nock: Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 2:877–918.

124. See, for example, Morton Smith, in Neusner, *Synagogue*, 56; compare Elias J. Bickerman, “Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue: A Review Article,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 48 no. 1 (January 1965): 129–30; John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE–117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 165 n. 90; Joseph Gutmann, “Introduction,” in Gutmann, *Dura-Europos Synagogue*, xxiii–xxiv.

125. Ithamar Gruenwald, cited in Magness, “Heaven,” 5 n. 10.

126. See, for example, Magness, “Heaven.”

127. Bickerman, “Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue,” 129.

128. Magness, “Heaven,” 5; see Rachel Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*, trans. David Louvish (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004).

129. Levine, *Judaism*, 8 n. 6.

130. Luke T. Johnson, *Religious Experience in Earliest Christianity: A Missing Dimension in New Testament Studies* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 90–91.

131. Christopher C. Rowland and Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* 12, ed. Pieter Willem van der Horst and Peter J. Tomson (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 28–30.

132. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:122.

133. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 210–60.

134. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*.

135. Morray-Jones, “Divine Names.”

136. Gutmann, “Introduction,” xxii–xxiii.

137. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:122, 10:198, 12:190–97.

138. Magness, “Heaven,” 5 n. 10. See also Elior, *The Three Temples*, 204–7, 231.

139. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:56–57.

140. Goodenough, *Symbols*, 9:111.

141. Matthew J. Grey, email to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, January 5, 2010.

142. Robert Goldenberg, *The Origins of Judaism: From Canaan to the Rise of Islam* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 187.

143. Goodenough, “Greek Garments on Jewish Heroes,” 222–23.

144. Goodenough, *By Light, Light*; Goodenough, *Introduction to Philo*.

145. Eccles, *Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, 41, compare 37, 39.

146. For example, see Barker, *Great Angel*, 114–33; Margaret Barker, “Beyond the Veil of the Temple: The High Priestly Origins of the Apocalypses,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51, no. 1 (1998): 1–21, available online at <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/veil.html>.

147. For example, Seach, *Ancient Texts and Mormonism*, 1st ed., 56–68; Seach, *Ancient Texts and Mormonism*, 2d ed., 848–53.

148. Barker, *Great Angel*, 116; compare Margaret Barker, “Temple Imagery in Philo: An Indication of the Origin of the Logos?” In *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 48, ed. William Horbury (Sheffield, U.K.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991), 70–102. Elsewhere, Barker writes: “Philo . . . was aware of the older priestly traditions of Israel, and much in his writings that is identified as Platonism, e.g., the heavenly archetypes, the second mediator God, is more likely to have originated in the priestly traditions of the first temple.” Margaret Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 399. “Goodenough should have recognized that the ‘Moses’ mysteries were derived from the earlier Melchizedek mysteries, the original temple mysteries.” Margaret Barker, email to Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, June 11, 2007.