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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated.

Sub-series A: Events and Activities, 1946-1993, undated.

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Guest speakers, George M. Hanfmann, correspondence and list,
1976-1977.

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

December 14, 1976

Rabbi Daniel J. Silver
26000 Shaker Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Dear Rabbi Silver,

We are most grateful to you for your generous donation of \$30 to the Sardis Expedition Fund of the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University.

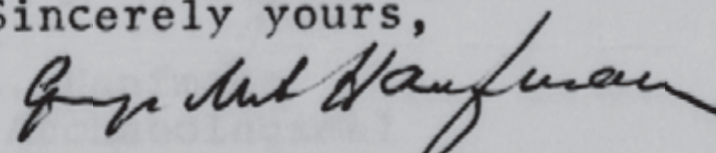
As you may have heard from Dr. Weisberg at the Museum, I shall be giving a lecture on "Recent Work at Sardis, Capital of Lydia," at the Cleveland Museum of Art on March 23, 1977. I should plan to arrive in the afternoon of the 22nd and stay at least part of Thursday, the 24th.

Because we are now vigorously engaged in the work on the publication of the great synagogue and shall need to find friends who might help us to bring worthily before the world the biggest ancient synagogue of the Diaspora to be uncovered, I am most anxious to have your advice and would also be interested in meeting any people you might suggest.

I remember my colleague, Professor David Mitten speaking with great enthusiasm of his conversations with you and I am greatly looking forward to having the privilege of meeting you.

With the kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,



George M. A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

GMAH/rh

P.S. As you may have heard, Displaycraft in New York City is building a model of the synagogue for the Beth Hatefutsoth Museum in Tel Aviv, and we are thinking of having a showing of it in New York City.

SARDIS EXPEDITION

FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

December 21, 1976

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Rabbi Silver:

I shall be happy to present a talk to an interested group, but I should much prefer the day after the museum talk, that is, March 24.

As you may surmise, we have to find at least \$25,000.00 funding for the final publication of that extraordinary Synagogue and any steps to spread interest is of great importance.

Reciprocating your good wishes for a happy, healthy, peaceful and prosperous 1977,

Sincerely yours,

George M.A. Hanfmann

George M.A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

GMAH/cam

January 10, 1976

January 31, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Mr. George M. A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological Exploration of Sardis
Sardis Expedition
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Dear Mr. Hanfmann:

I am just back from a brief mid-winter vacation and delighted at the possibility that I can present you to some interested people in Cleveland at mid-day on Thursday, March 24. I think what I will do is to hold the meeting here at my place. I will invite the local rabbinate and a few others who have some special interests in the history of the synagogue. I know they are eager to hear what you have to tell them of the Sardis synagogue and see your slides. We have all the facilities for such a presentation. If there is anyone whom you would especially want to invite I hope you will not hesitate to send me his name.

I look forward also to hearing you the night before at the Museum. With all good wishes I remain

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM • HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

January 31, 1977


Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Rabbi Silver:

I enclose a copy of a letter showing my tentative schedule. I assume that March 24 about 12:30 would still be convenient. I tried to reach you by phone, but did not reach you today.

With the kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,



George M.A. Hanfmann

George M.A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

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Enclosures - 2

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cc: Professor Andrew S. Seeger

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

February 1, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Rabbi Silver:

With regard to your kind suggestion that I may ask anyone especially interested or useful, I should like to have your kind permission to invite our Synagogue specialist, Professor Andrew R. Seager (College of Architecture and Planning, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana 47306, tel. (317) 285-7788 or 285-4481), who is on sabbatical and working mostly at home: 803 University Avenue, Muncie, Indiana 47303, tel. (317) 289-4147. He has devoted ten years to the study of the Sardis Synagogue and has compared other Synagogues in Israel.

If it were agreeable to you, I might like to speak on the general setting and significance of the Jewish community at Sardis and ask Professor Seager to talk briefly on the Synagogue itself.

Do let me know whether this appeals to you. In any case, Professor Seager will be the best person to answer detailed questions.

Sincerely yours,

George M.A. Hanfmann

George M.A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

GMAH/cam

cc: Professor Andrew R. Seager

The third in the 1973-74 Ball State University Faculty Lecture Series

Archaeology at the Ancient Synagogue of Sardis, Turkey: Judaism in a Major Roman City

ANDREW R. SEAGER

Associate Professor of Architecture

Muncie, Indiana

April, 1974

Archaeology at the Ancient Synagogue of Sardis, Turkey: Judaism in a Major Roman City

Andrew R. Seager

The ruins of ancient Sardis lie in western Turkey about 50 miles from the Aegean Sea (fig. 1). Systematic archaeological excavations have been conducted there each summer since 1958 by Harvard and Cornell Universities.¹ The expedition has been exploring all of the successive cultures which inhabited the area from an Early Bronze Age settlement to modern times.²

This paper is about one of the many significant discoveries made at Sardis—the ancient synagogue found in 1962, excavated over a period of many seasons, and now partly restored. There were many other Jewish communities in Asia Minor, but Sardis has the best preserved and most thoroughly explored synagogue remains. It is the largest ancient synagogue known, it was elaborately decorated, and it provides important evidence about

¹ The organizers and directors of the Sardis Expedition are G. M. A. Hanfmann, the late A. H. Detweiler, and S. W. Jacobs. I am most grateful to them for the opportunity to participate as a member of the expedition staff. Funds for the excavations have come from numerous sources. My own participation in the field work and as Research Fellow for Sardis in the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, was made possible by grants to the expedition from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, by contributions from the many individual members of the Supporters of Sardis and the Committee to Preserve the Ancient Synagogue of Sardis, and by a travel grant from the American Council of Learned Societies. I thank them for their support. Many people at Ball State University provided encouragement and assistance in the preparation of this report. For the illustrations, I owe special thanks to Elizabeth Gombosi, Sardis Expedition photographer, who took many of the photographs reproduced here.

² Far too much has been written about Sardis to list here; a recently compiled bibliography of publications dealing with the site runs 84 typed pages. But for a convenient, lively, and well-illustrated account of the current expedition and its major discoveries, see G. M. A. Hanfmann, *Letters from Sardis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

the lives of Sardis Jews, their worship, and the relation of the Jewish community to civil authority under Roman rule.³

The synagogue project has involved experts in several disciplines, including archaeologists, architects, engineers, epigraphists, numismatists, and conservation experts, plus a large skilled work force of local excavators, stone carvers, and construction crews. My role, as an architect, has been to survey, record, draw, study, interpret, and plan the restoration of the building, coordinating the contributions of the associated scholars. I am now working on the forthcoming excavation *Report* which will give in full detail the results of more than a decade of work.

Today, Sardis consists of several farming villages at the edge of a fertile river plain, with cultivated fields among the ancient ruins (fig. 2). It is a strategic site, on a main route leading from the interior to the sea. In the ancient world it was a major city, perhaps best known as the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. The proverbial wealth of Croesus, last king of Lydia (c.560-c.546 B.C.) and issuer of the world's first coins of pure gold, came from gold carried by the river which runs past the modern village houses.⁴ The city remained an important regional center through Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, and early Byzantine times. With a population estimated at 100,000 under Roman rule, it is perhaps the largest ancient city in which substantial synagogue remains are preserved. As one of the "Seven Churches of Asia" addressed by the author of the Book of Revelation, Sardis has long attracted Christian pilgrims and tourists. Though the city was destroyed periodically by both nature and man, it was many times rebuilt. However, it never fully recovered after its destruction by a Sassanid king, Chosroes II, in 616 A.D., declining slowly in importance through the Byzantine and Islamic periods.

³ Preliminary reports on the excavation and restoration of the Sardis synagogue have been published each year in the *American Schools of Oriental Research Bulletin*. There have been several other scholarly and general articles on the synagogue and its contents. For a fuller bibliography and for greater detail on the information and arguments given here, see: A. R. Seager, "The Building History of the Sardis Synagogue," *American Journal of Archaeology* 76 (1972), 425-465; A. R. Seager, "The Architecture of the Dura and Sardis Synagogues," *The Dura-Europos Synagogue—A Re-evaluation (1925-1972)*, ed. J. Gutmann (#1 in the series Religion and the Arts, published jointly by the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), 79-116, figs. 10-16.

⁴ A Lydian gold refinery area was identified during excavations in 1968.

The existence of a Jewish community at Sardis is recorded in ancient literature. The literary record is scant, but tantalizing. If Sardis, called *Sfard* in Lydian and Persian, is indeed the *Sepharad* of Obadiah 20 as some scholars believe, then its Jewish community already existed during the Persian empire (547-334 B.C.).⁵ The Jewish historian Josephus, in his book *Jewish Antiquities*, mentions Roman decrees of the first century B.C. which safeguarded certain rights of the Sardis Jews. One decree notes that they had a place of assembly "from the beginning" and "in accordance with their ancestral laws."

The place of assembly mentioned in Josephus' account has not been found. Our synagogue was in use later, during the early Christian period, which is also the time when rabbis in Palestine and Babylonia were compiling the Talmud, the authoritative codification of Jewish law and tradition.

The synagogue was discovered accidentally, where it was not expected. It lies within the boundaries of a monumental and formally planned Roman bath-and-gymnasium complex built with Imperial aid (figs. 3-6). One suite of rooms in the complex was identified as a synagogue by the nature of the objects and inscriptions found inside. These rooms occupy the southeast corner, adjacent to the large court (*palaestra*) of the gymnasium, at the intersection of two colonnaded streets. The street to the south ("Main Avenue"), marble paved, wide, and lined with shops, is a principal thoroughfare of the city and perhaps the successor to the Royal Road of the Persian kings. The prominent location within a structure built for pagan practices is extraordinary for a synagogue and implies an unusual degree of cooperation between the Jewish community and civic authority.

The entire bath-gymnasium-synagogue complex was built on an artificial terrace as an urban renewal project following a devastating earthquake which struck Sardis in 17 A.D. It was much remodeled in its long history. Excavation below the floor of the synagogue showed several construction stages within the same building boundaries and with the floors at nearly the same level. As originally planned, the synagogue site was to have been developed as a functional part of the pagan gymnasium.

⁵ Jews may have come to Sardis following their release from Babylonian exile by the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great.

The plan of a later stage suggests that the building was used for a while as a civil basilica. Eventually, that part of the complex was turned over to the Jewish community to use for a synagogue. It was rebuilt and redecorated under Jewish auspices, accommodating the new use to a structure built originally for a different purpose, on a scale comparable to the original construction.

We know from hundreds of bronze coins found beneath the floor of the synagogue that the last paving was installed in the second half of the fourth century A.D., and so the building must have reached substantially its final form by that time. It was probably used as a synagogue even earlier, but most of our detailed knowledge concerns the building after the fourth-century remodeling. Further modifications and alterations were made periodically, continuing until the building was abandoned when the city was attacked in the early seventh century.

No records are preserved to explain why a part of the gymnasium was turned over to the Sardis Jews, but there are grounds for speculation. We know that the complex took a long time to build, with work progressing from west to east. Although construction seems to have begun in the first century A.D., inscriptions record that one room was dedicated around 166 A.D. and another room was dedicated in 211-212 A.D. Some rooms seem never to have been entirely finished. Conceivably, the vast project became a severe drain on civic funds, and an unfinished portion of the complex was given or sold to the Jewish community to secure its completion.

In its final form, the synagogue consists of two principal rooms (figs. 7, 8): a colonnaded entrance court and a long assembly hall ("Main Hall"). The axis of these rooms, emphasized by the symmetrical arrangement of furnishings, is roughly but not exactly east-west. One or more of three smaller rooms (BE-A, BE-B, BE-C) west of the assembly hall may have been occupied by Jews for a while, but probably not until late in the history of the building (fig. 9).

The entrance court was found in a disrupted condition. Many original pieces of the colonnade are missing, probably robbed by ancient scavengers seeking marble to burn for lime after the collapse of the building. However, we found enough

original pieces, including a few column sections, several column bases, and three Ionic capitals, to allow reconstruction. The colonnade extended around all four sides of the court, which was roofed around the periphery but open to the sky in the middle (fig. 10). A fountain in the form of a large marble urn, or krater, stood in the center of the court and was served by an elaborate system of water pipes under the floor (fig. 11). A balustrade of openwork screens between the columns separated the fountain area from the surrounding mosaic-paved sections. One of the inscribed balustrade top-rails mentions a restoration or reconstruction, *ananeosis* in Greek. Although we have restored only one story, the court may have been two stories high originally.

The mosaic floor around the colonnade is made from small pieces of cut stone in varied colors. The paving is divided into carpet-like panels, each a complex geometric pattern. Four of the panels contain dedicatory inscriptions in Greek. One of them reads: "Aurelius Polyippos, pious, having made a vow, I fulfilled it." The other three are similar.

The floor mosaics were originally set in a mortar bedding which has deteriorated over the years and which no longer holds the cubes securely. If left uncovered and untreated, the mosaics will disintegrate. In order to keep them visible to scholars and tourists, all mosaics in the synagogue have been removed from the floor, reset in modern mortar, and then put back in place. This work was done under the direction of L. J. Majewski, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. The technique involves first glueing several layers of paper and cloth firmly over a carefully cleaned section of floor to keep the cubes in proper position during the restoration process. Then that section is loosened from its old mortar bedding and turned upside-down. All remaining bits of old mortar are removed from the underside. The cleaned mosaic is then cast in concrete panels which can be replaced on the floor after curing. Because of the large area of mosaic in the synagogue which had to be treated in this way, Majewski refined the lifting technique; he developed a way to roll up long strips of mosaic onto a wooden cylinder, like rolling a carpet onto a carpet tube! (figs. 12, 13).

The walls of the entrance court were covered with marble decoration (fig. 13). The marble pieces were installed a few

inches from the wall, attached by metal hooks, and then secured by pouring mortar in the narrow space behind. We have reconstructed one portion. The decorative scheme included an arched frieze in shallow relief depicting urns and doves within bands of architectural ornament. The recessed areas of relief were filled with red pigment to bring out the pattern. Traces of original pigment remained on the stone, but we have applied a new coat. This marble decoration was an addition, probably of the fifth century A.D., replacing an earlier wall covering of plaster.

The doves on the arched frieze are not the only animals depicted in the synagogue. Despite the Second Commandment injunction against graven images, human and animal forms appear frequently in ancient synagogue art. Perhaps the most famous examples are the wall paintings in the synagogue of Dura Europos, Syria, and the floor mosaics of the Beth Alpha synagogue in Israel. The Sardis synagogue appears somewhat conservative in this respect, as no human figures appear.⁶

The court of the synagogue probably served a variety of activities. In addition to functioning in a general way as an ante-room or gathering place for entry into the assembly hall, it probably served for the washing of hands before prayer. It might also have been used for public discussions and announcements, for study and instruction. Some writers suggest that courts in synagogues were used as lodging for strangers.

Courtyards were once thought typical of ancient synagogues generally. It now seems that they were common only in synagogues built after the third or fourth century A.D. The introduction of courtyards in synagogues built around that time may be part of a growing tendency to create differentiated, specialized settings for different synagogue activities.

The tendency toward specialization is seen again in a subsequent modification, the insertion of thin partition walls to form a narthex at the west end of the court (not restored). A

⁶ On ancient synagogues generally, there are several surveys in English: Rachel Wischnitzer, *The Architecture of the European Synagogue* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964); E. L. Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece* (London, 1934); M. Avi-Yonah, "Synagogue Architecture in the Classical Period," *Jewish Art, An Illustrated History*, ed. Cecil Roth (New York, 1961), cols. 185-190; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York, 1958-1968).

marble basin on a tall pedestal, not connected to water pipes, was found against the east side of the southern partition wall.

Three doors (the northern one blocked up in antiquity) lead from the court to the main hall of assembly. The hall is about 177 ft. long and 59 ft. wide. It contains two rows of large piers and an apse or hemicycle at its western end. The piers of the hall originally rose to a considerable height and supported a roof which probably was of wood trusses (figs. 14-18).

The floors in the assembly hall are paved with mosaics. Most of the mosaic panels have elaborate geometric patterns similar to those in the court (figs. 19-20). However, one panel, prominently placed in the semicircle of the apse, is a finely crafted figurative design showing twining vines growing from a golden urn filled with water, and a dedicatory inscription within a brilliantly colored wreath (fig. 21). The inscription records that the mosaic is a gift of two brothers, Synphoros and Stratoneikianos Flavioi. Two peacocks which originally flanked the urn were destroyed in antiquity, probably deliberately, but the outlines of their tails and the tips of their crests are still visible.

According to an inscription found in the hall,⁷ there were paintings on the walls (probably high up) or on the ceiling, and bits of brightly colored glass mosaic from the upper portions of the walls or piers were found among the collapsed masonry.

The lower portions of the walls of the main hall were covered with marble decoration. Here, small pieces of colored marble formed inlay panels of geometric, floral, and animal designs (including pomegranates, fish, and birds) which were set in an architectonic frame (figs. 22-23). Samples of geometric designs have been reconstructed. The relief-carving used at a later date to decorate the walls of the court probably was a shortcut mimicking the effect of the inlay method used earlier in the main hall.

In many other ancient synagogues, the side walls of the assembly hall are lined with benches for the worshippers. At Sardis, there are no benches along the side walls of the hall nor in the court. Worshippers must have stood, or sat on the floor, or used portable seats.

Neither was there special provision for women at worship

⁷ It says that the donor, whose name is lost, "with my wife Regina and our children (in fulfillment of a vow) executed from the gifts of almighty God all the inlay decoration of the (section of wall?) and the painting."

within the hall. According to the usual interpretations of ancient synagogue architecture, there should have been a gallery or balcony which would have been reserved for women. The piers could have supported a gallery, but there is no suitable staircase. Access to a second level would have had to be something like a ladder, which could hardly have been used regularly for public assembly. Apparently women either worshipped together with the men or were excluded from the assembly hall entirely. It is interesting in this connection to note that twelve of the dedicatory inscriptions mention a wife as co-donor.

The core of the synagogue ritual was, and is still, the reading of the Torah, the scrolls of the Old Testament constituting the Jewish Law. Synagogues built after the third or fourth century A.D. had a permanent repository for the Torah, an apse or niche, on the wall nearest Jerusalem so that prayers could be said facing the Scrolls and facing Jerusalem simultaneously.⁸ At Sardis, the orientation of the building with respect to Jerusalem at first appears to be backwards. That is, as you enter and face the apse you look *away* from Jerusalem. But the apse at Sardis does not seem to have housed the Torah. Rather it contains three tiers of concentric benches which probably served as seats for the elders. Experiments showed that more than 70 people could be seated. A balustrade across the opening of the apse separated the area of the benches from the rest of the hall (fig. 24).

Excavations in the area directly in front of the apse uncovered a huge marble table, standing 4 ft. high, on the central axis of the building. Its top was broken by the collapse of the roof and walls but the legs were still standing upright. The table was flanked by two pairs of marble lions, their faces now battered. For a person entering the hall, the grouping of apse, table, and lions provides an impressive focus at the end of the long architectural axis (fig. 25).⁹

⁸ The conventional explanation regarding synagogues before the third or fourth century A.D. is that they were built with their doors on the Jerusalem-oriented wall, and prayers were said facing the openings of the facade (the Torah was kept in a portable chest [Ark] brought out during worship and placed against the Jerusalem-oriented wall). However, there are several ancient synagogues which do not conform to that rule. The orientation of ancient synagogues is a more complicated question than the usual interpretation recognizes.

⁹ The supports for the table, taken from a Roman monument and reused in the synagogue, bear eagles carved in relief. The lions are reused archaic or classical sculptures. The quantity of material reclaimed from other buildings and shrines is one of the curious features of the synagogue.

The table is unique in synagogues as far as we know. It was approached from the side of the apse and benches (west), where there is a pavement of polished stone slabs. The most likely use of the table was for readings or pronouncements.

The Torah probably was kept in one of two pavilion-like shrines built against the entrance wall, flanking the central door, on the Jerusalem end of the hall (figs. 26-28). This peculiar arrangement occurs at least in part because the building was not intended originally as a synagogue but had to be adapted for that purpose. Both shrines have been restored, largely using pieces that had collapsed nearby. All of the Hebrew inscriptions found in the building lay next to the southern shrine, and it was here too that we found a neatly incised marble plaque (fig. 29) showing a seven-branched *menorah* (candelabrum), *lulab* (palm branch), *shofar* (ram's horn), and two spirals which Y. Shiloh¹⁰ has interpreted as Torah scrolls. It was the discovery of this plaque which first identified the building as a synagogue.

There was yet another fixed furnishing. Four stone slabs set into the mosaic in the very center of the hall, forming a square about 9 ft. on each side, supported a lightweight structure, probably a wood platform on marble colonettes. It may have served as a bema, or reader's rostrum. A mosaic inscription set among the stone slabs mentions a "priest and teacher of wisdom" (fig. 30).

Not all of the furnishings were installed at the same time. The shrines were in place when the fourth-century mosaics were installed but the table and the bema stones are intrusions in the mosaic, as is the inscription of the "priest and teacher of wisdom." Nevertheless, these furnishings seem to have coexisted for a while. The hall probably had multiple uses, and the several focuses could have been associated with the different activities. Worshippers at prayer may have faced the shrines at the east end, while Scripture was read from the central bema. The west end with its benches conceivably functioned as a tribunal. The main hall or the court probably served some of the activities usually ascribed to annex rooms, including community gatherings and teachings.

¹⁰ "Torah Scrolls and the Menorah Plaque from Sardis," *Israel Exploration Journal* 18:1 (1968), 54-57.

I have mentioned the plaque with incised menorah by which the building was first identified as a synagogue. There were a dozen other representations of menorahs found in and around the building, carved in stone (fig. 31), scratched in pottery, cut from sheet bronze, and appliquéd on glass. The menorah is a common Jewish symbol. Real seven-branched candelabra which might actually have held oil lamps are rare, however.¹¹ We have found one such menorah, elaborately and finely carved in marble. It was more than 3 ft. wide when intact, but unfortunately it was burnt in a fire and broken following the building's destruction (fig. 32). An inscription from the synagogue records the dedication of a menorah, possibly by a goldsmith.

The great majority of Sardis synagogue inscriptions are in Greek. There are only a few fragments in Hebrew, one saying *shalom* (peace). John Kroll, University of Texas, who is cataloguing and studying the Greek inscriptions, has counted more than 80 (some of them fragmentary) set in mosaic on the floor or carved on marble plaques which were mounted on the walls as part of the decorative scheme. These give information about the members of the synagogue and about some architectural features. Most of the inscriptions pertain to donations of interior decorations and furnishings made in fulfillment of vows. One of them (fig. 33) refers to the marble inlay decoration of the *nomophylakion*, "the place that protects the Law," which must be the Torah shrine. Of the few inscriptions which do not pertain to donations, the most intriguing is a rectangular marble plaque found outside one of the doors to the synagogue (where it may have been moved by plunderers), enjoining in Greek: "Find, break open, read, observe" (fig. 34).

Even if we did not have the inscriptions, the prominent location, great size, and ambitious decoration of the synagogue would attest a large, affluent, and influential Jewish population. The economic and social integration of the Sardis Jews within the larger community is shown also by the mix of owners of the shops which back up against the south wall of the synagogue, along the colonnaded avenue; the contents of the shops indicate that some of the owners were Christians while others were Jews.

¹¹ I know of only one from an ancient synagogue other than Sardis. L. Yarden, *The Tree of Light, A Study of the Menorah* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971), 21-22, notes a rabbinic prohibition against making seven-branched menorahs.

A graffito on a clay jar found in one shop reads, in Greek: "Belonging to Jacob, Elder" (of the Synagogue, presumably). At least two synagogue members were goldsmiths, and Jacob seems to have been a jeweler.

The inscriptions reveal more explicitly the relation of the Sardis Jews to government authority. Often the names of donors are followed by the title "citizen of Sardis." Nine of the donors are identified as city councilors. Other titles include a record-office functionary in the Roman provincial administration, a former procurator, and a count. These titles show that in the later centuries of a Jewish community which may have existed at Sardis for nearly a millennium, Jewish families had accumulated some power and status. They flourished and shared in the prosperity of the city under Roman rule and retained an important position in civic affairs through the first centuries of official Christianity—a time when, from other sources, relations between Jews and the Christian state were becoming increasingly hostile.¹²

Though the city was geographically remote from the centers of rabbinic scholarship in Palestine and Babylonia, the Jewish community at Sardis was pious; piety was honored in the synagogue inscriptions. But the inscriptions do not clearly define the religious beliefs of the Sardis Jews. This is the subject of some controversy.

Traditionally, Judaism has been viewed as a unified set of beliefs—a normative faith, orthodox and legalistic in adherence to scriptural and rabbinic law. Another view holds that in antiquity there was considerable diversity of Jewish religious expression. Proponents of the second view argue that while only two forms survived and flourished, rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, evidence of other forms has been transmitted outside the mainstream of Jewish tradition in writings such as the Dead Sea Scrolls.¹³

Evidence from the excavation of ancient synagogues is not particularly suitable for resolving the controversy, unfortunately.

¹² On relations between Christians and Jews at Sardis, see A. T. Kraabel, "Melito the Bishop and the Synagogue at Sardis: Text and Context," *Studies Presented to George M. A. Hanfmann*, eds. D. G. Mitten, J. G. Pedley, J. A. Scott, Fogg Art Museum Monographs in Art and Archaeology II (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 77-85.

¹³ Michael E. Stone, "Judaism at the Time of Christ," *Scientific American*, January 1973, 80-87. See also Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* (see n. 6 above).

It is hard to deduce the nature of worship from the architecture alone, and rarely has textual material cogent to the argument been found together with a synagogue building. Thus the architecture of ancient synagogues is subject to varying interpretations.

However, the evidence from Sardis is suggestive. The building does share several characteristics in common with other synagogues, but it lacks benches along the side walls and a women's gallery, which are often thought to be typical, and it is unique in its site and its program of wall decorations, inscriptions, and furnishings. Along with other synagogues recently discovered, it shows there was considerable diversity in ancient synagogue architecture. The building also changed through additions and modifications in the several centuries that it was used by Jews. It seems probable that underlying the architectural diversity is a variability of Jewish religious expression which has not yet been defined.

There is a ruined twelfth-century(?) church about a half mile from the Sardis synagogue. In 1972, a team of excavators exploring its foundations discovered an earlier church which was in use at the same time as the synagogue. Matching pieces from a set of architectural ornaments, appropriated from the same older monument, were found reused in both houses of worship. Standards of craftsmanship declined in later years in both buildings, but neither fared worse than other structures in the city during the sixth and seventh centuries. In the smaller city that reemerged after the 616 A.D. destruction, Christianity reappears, and remains through the Byzantine period until the Turkish conquest in the fourteenth century. There is no record of what became of Judaism at Sardis after 616 A.D.; Jews reappear in the history of Sardis only in modern times.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2

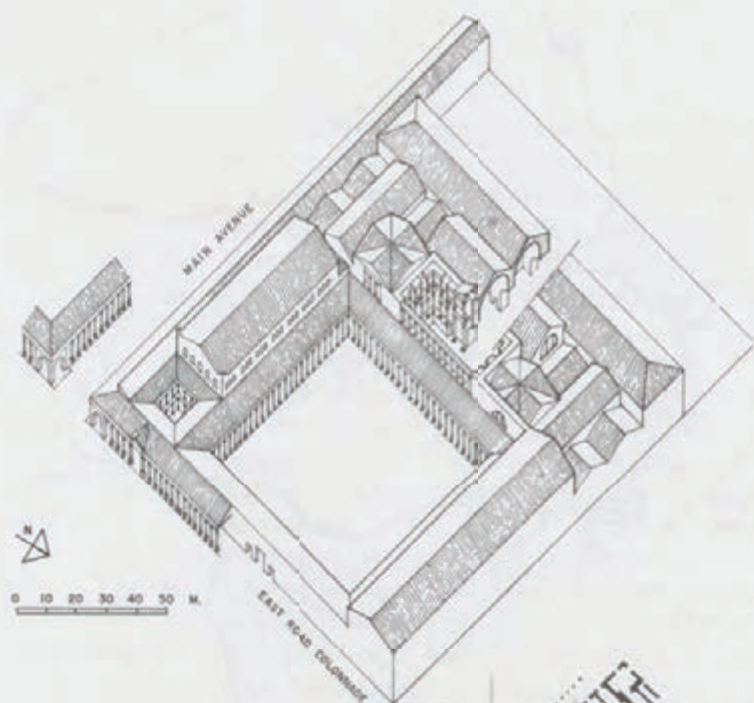


Fig. 3

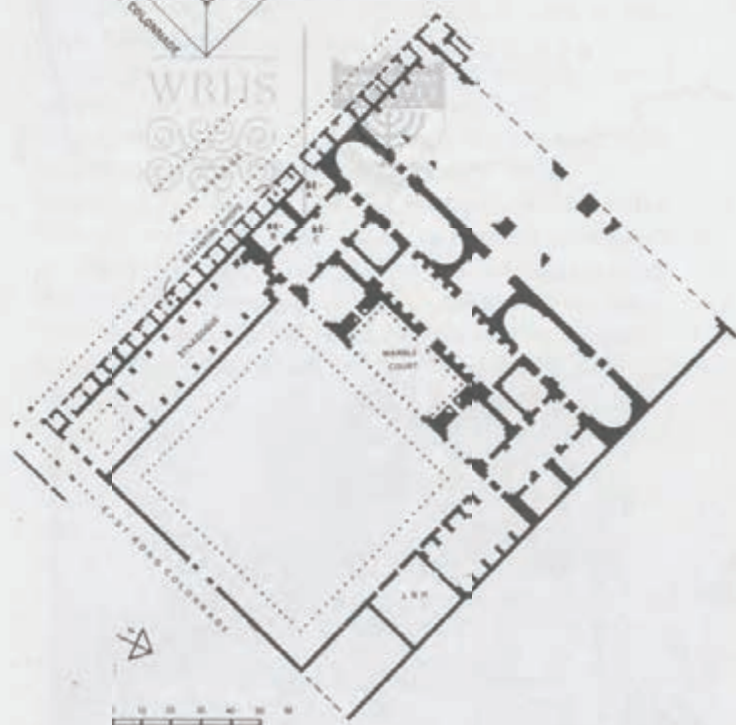


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

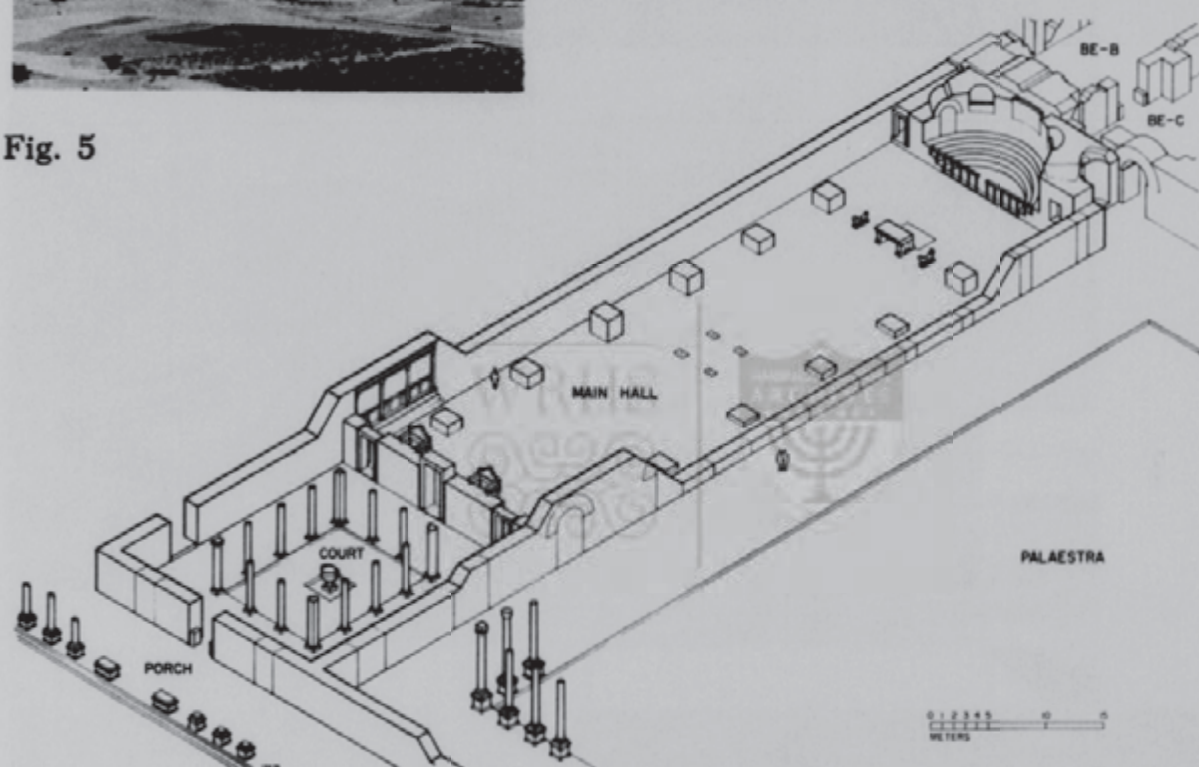


Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 10



Fig. 9



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 14



Fig. 13



Fig. 15



Fig. 16



Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21



Fig. 24



Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29

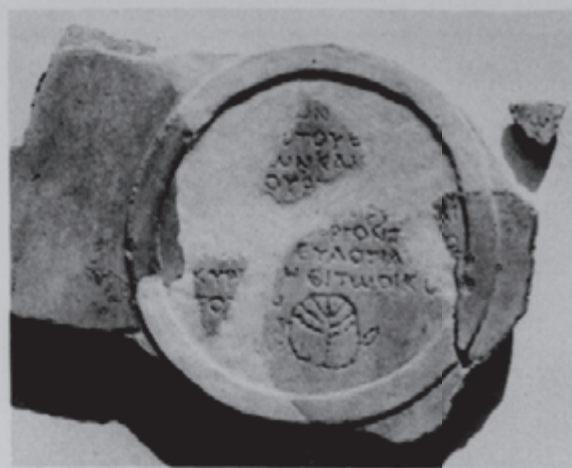


Fig. 31

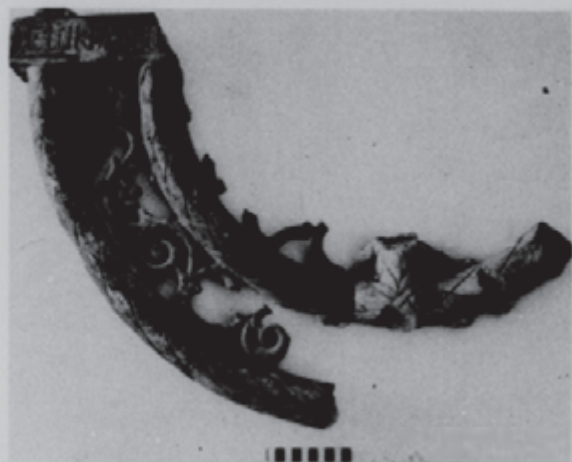
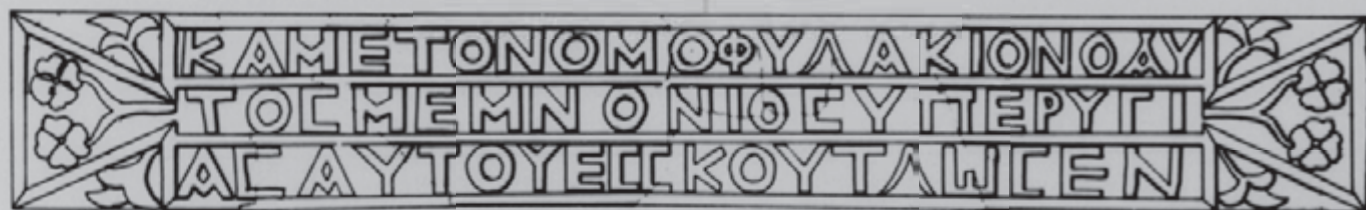


Fig. 32



Fig. 30



0 5 10 20
IN. 63.124

Fig. 33



Fig. 34

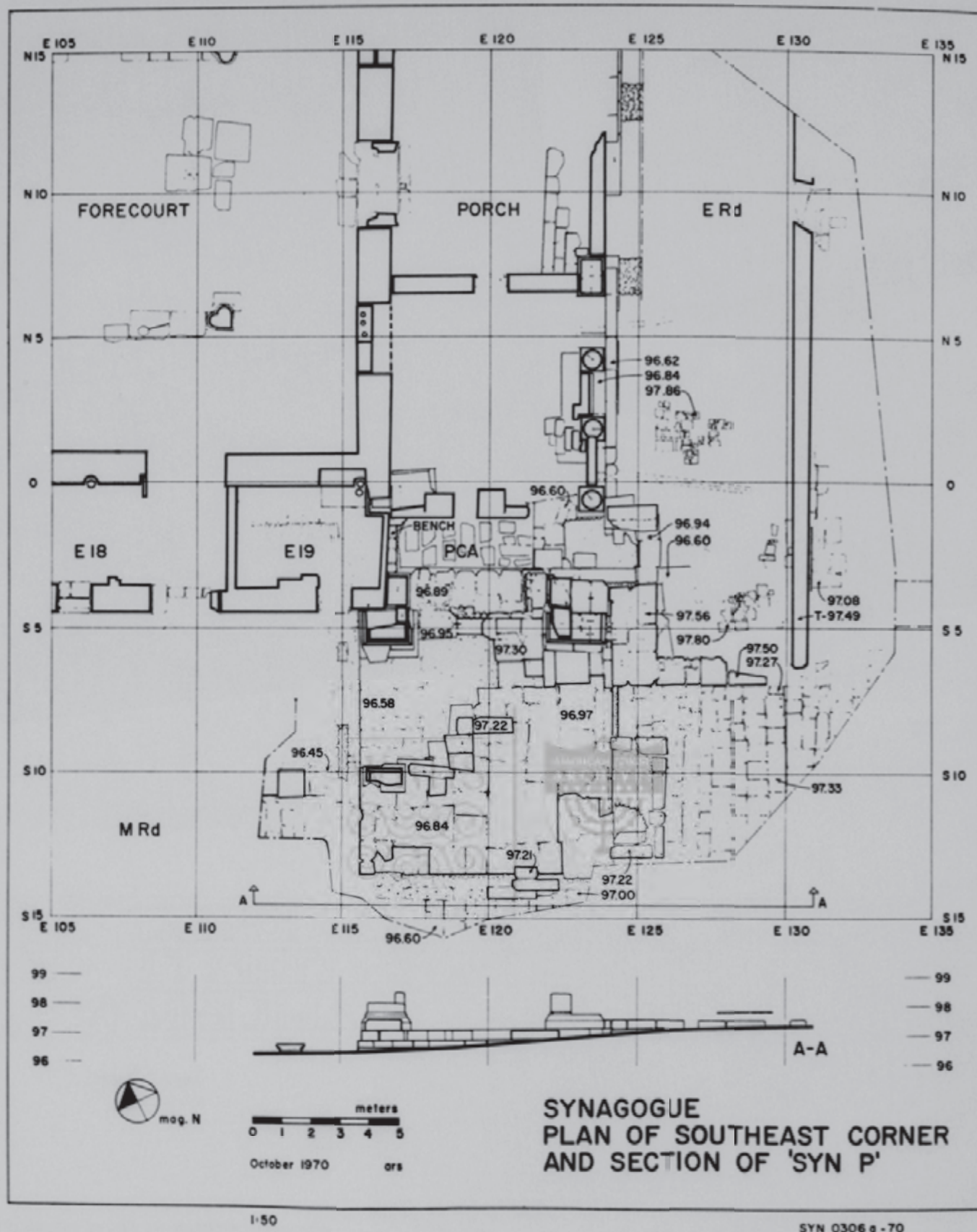


Fig. 35

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

February 1, 1977

Ms. Arielle P. Kozloff
Assistant Curator in Charge of
the Department of Ancient Art
The Cleveland Museum of Art
11150 East Boulevard at University Circle
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Ms. Kozloff:

As I mentioned on the phone, I have looked into the plane schedules. If it is convenient, I should like to arrive by United Airlines, flight #769, at 1:30 PM on Tuesday, March 22 and return on United, flight #226, on Thursday, March 24, leaving Cleveland airport at 6:10 PM.

I am looking forward to coming to the museum on Wednesday morning, March 23, and seeing my colleagues, including Jack Cooney, and the collections. I understand that my lecture on "Recent Work at Sardis, Capital of Lydia" will be at 8:30 PM on March 23.

Rabbi Silver has kindly written that he might like to have me at his home for lunch and a talk around 12:30 on Thursday, March 24.

Sincerely yours,

George M.A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

GMAH/cam

cc: Prof. & Mrs. Henry S. Robinson
Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver ✓
Gabriel P. Weisberg

February 16, 1977

Dr. George Hanfmann
Sardis Expedition
Fogg Art Museum
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Dear Dr. Hanfmann:

I have this day sent out the enclosed letter to some fifty members of our community who may be interested in the Sardis synagogue. I trust we will get a good response. The lecture will be held at The Temple Branch. If you want to bring Dr. Seager I would be delighted, I leave that up to you. In any case, now that I know that Dr. Seager is so close by I hope to have him at The Temple in the early fall for a public lecture on Sardis and the synagogue.

We look forward to your visit. With all good wishes I remain

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

Encl.

The Temple

UNIVERSITY CIRCLE AT SILVER PARK • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106 • 791-7755
BRANCH: 26000 SHAKER BLVD. • BEACHWOOD, OHIO 44122 • 831-3233

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER - RABBI

STUART GELLER
Associate Rabbi

STEPHEN A. KLEIN
Assistant Rabbi

LEO S. BAMBERGER
Executive Secretary

February 21, 1977

Dr. George Hanfmann of the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University and director of archeological exploration at Sardis in Turkey will be in Cleveland on Wednesday, March 23, to speak at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Among the important finds that have emerged from a decade of exploration at Sardis is the largest synagogue of antiquity, a building which has been excavated and restored. I have invited Dr. Hanfmann to lunch at The Temple Branch on Thursday, March 24, at which time he will show us slides of the building and tell us something of its history and of the community which built it and used it.

The meeting is not for fund raising, although I am sure that a word or two will be said about a fund which is now in being to permit the publication of scholarly work on this synagogue.

I can promise you an intellectual and aesthetic treat and a chance to acquaint yourself with one of the significant but little known facets of Jewish history. If you can be with us would you be kind enough to call my secretary, Marie Pluth, at 831-3233. Lunch is at noon, the lecture at 12:30.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp

SARDIS EXPEDITION

FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

February 22, 1977

Rabbi Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

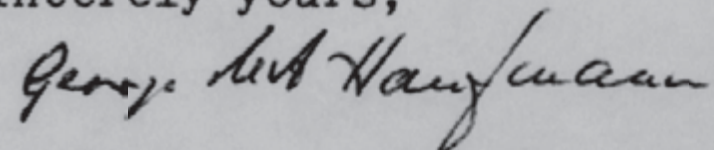
Dear Rabbi Silver:

Thank you ever so much for your letters of February 16. By your leave I should be grateful to have Mr. Seager invited for lunch and the talk, though I will only plan on his answering special questions. I regard him as my successor in all Synagogue matters, and it would be nice to have him meet you.

I note that the meeting will be at the Temple Branch, 26000 Shaker Blvd. in Beachwood, starting at noon on March 24. This will necessitate some sort of transportation arrangements; I shall presumably be staying at Prof. Robinson's.

With the kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,



George M. A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

GMAH/pedy

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

Feb. 23, 1977

Dear Rabbi Silver:

I shall appreciate a brief telephone conversation on such matters as length of talk and the manner of mentioning Sardis Synagogue Publication Fund.

Could you phone me Monday (3.1) or Tuesday (3.2), AM?

With the kindest regards,
sincerely yours,
Isidore Haysman



The Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland

1750 EUCLID AVENUE • CLEVELAND, OHIO 44115 • PHONE (216) 861-4360

February 25, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
26000 Shaker Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Dear Rabbi Dan:

Many thanks for your invitation to the get-together on Thursday, March 24, noon luncheon, at the Temple Branch to hear Dr. Hanfmann. Ordinarily, I'd be delighted to come but unfortunately it appears that a job assignment will keep me away that noon.

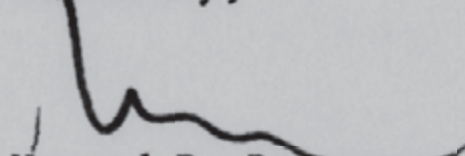
Incidentally, a couple of additional names came to my mind. If the invitation list is still open, you might want to give consideration. Libby Braverman supports a number of philanthropic causes and this just might be something she would view in a kindly fashion. It also might be something of interest to Dave Guralnik. Dave's philanthropic level is reasonably modest and I'm not thinking of him from that point of view. I've always considered him to be a real "class" guy. It strikes me that this is the kind of thing where he might have an interest.

sent
2/28/77

On another matter entirely, I've asked Alex Graubart to find a time that's mutually convenient when the three of us can sit down and talk about Oberlin. I assume he'll be in touch with your office to set a date.

Warmest regards.

Sincerely,


Howard R. Berger

gb

President Albert B. Ratner

Vice-Presidents Max R. Friedman

Milton A. Wolf

Bennett Yanowitz

Treasurer Henry J. Goodman

Associate Treasurer Charlotte Paris

Executive Director Stanley B. Horowitz

RABBI ARMOND E. COHEN
CLEVELAND, OHIO

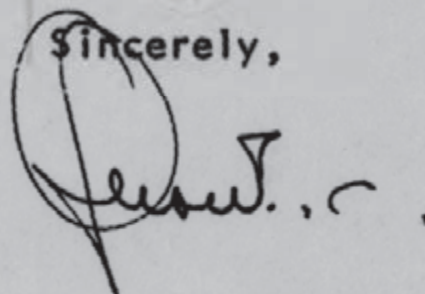
February 25, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Dan:

Thank you for your invitation to lunch to hear Dr. Hanfmann on the Sardis Synagogue. It would be a pleasure, but I hope to be in Israel from the 15th to the 28th of March. If there are any change in my plans, I will call your office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Armond E. Cohen", written over a faint, circular embossed seal or watermark.

AEC/ef

RONALD BROWN

13435 NORTH PARK BOULEVARD, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO 44118 U.S.A. TELEPHONE: (216) 321-0566

March 1, 1977

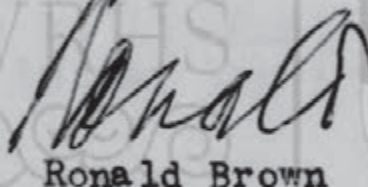
Dear Dan

I'm replying to your letter from Key Biscayne where Isabelle and I are resting. We will not return to Cleveland until early April.

I do appreciate your invitation to hear Dr Hanfmann and would most assuredly have accepted if I were to be in Cleveland. It is my misfortune to be unable to attend.

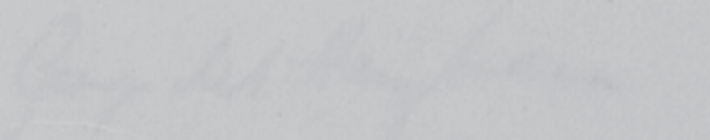
Thank you for including me among those invited.

Warm regards


Ronald Brown



Sincerely yours,


George M. A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Serbia

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

March 2, 1977

Rabbi Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Dear Rabbi Silver:

We have sent on the 28th of February to the University Circle address twenty-five of Prof. Seager's pamphlets and thirty of Prof. Mitten's earlier pamphlets on the Synagogue at Sardis. I hope they may be brought to the lunch and lecture at the Branch and given out to your guests.

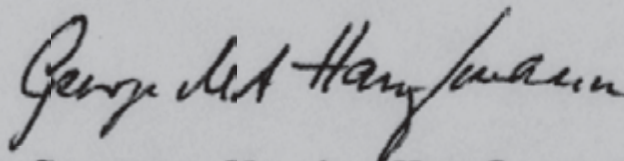
I also would appreciate a little guidance concerning the length of the talk and the mention of the Synagogue Fund.

I would like to discuss these and other matters by phone. Could you let me know when it would be convenient to call you?

Prof. Seager expects to arrive by plane from Muncie and hopes to make it to Beachwood by noon on the 24th.

With best wishes and kind regards,

Sincerely yours,



George M. A. Hanfmann
Director, Archaeological
Exploration of Sardis

GMAH/pedy

3255 East Monmouth Road
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

March 5, 1977

Daniel Jeremy Silver-Rabbi
THE TEMPLE
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

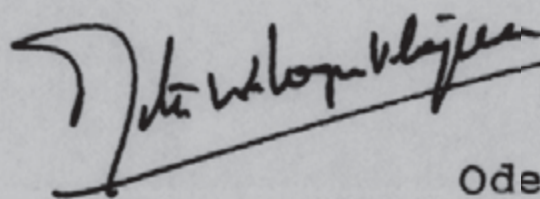
Dear Rabbi Silver:

I thank you very much for your letter of
February 21st and your kind invitation.

I would have been very pleased to accept it,
but it is conflicting with a meeting of ^{the} Board of
Overseer of Case Western Reserve University that
I accepted to attend previously.

Nevertheless I intend to attend the lecture
at the Cleveland Museum of Art on Wednesday March 23rd.

Very Sincerely,



Odette Wurzberger Valabrègue

WILLIAM C. TREUHAFT
10701 SHAKER BOULEVARD
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44104

March 15, 1977

Dear Dan,

I am sorry that I cannot accept your invitation to meet with Dr. George Hanfmann. I am committed to a board of overseers meeting of Case Western Reserve University.

I am sure that the discussion will be very interesting and appreciate your having invited me.

Sincerely

Bill

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

SARDIS EXPEDITION
FOGG ART MUSEUM · HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

March 24, 1977

Dear Rabbi Silver, dear Mrs. Silver,

I am writing to thank you for your most generous hospitality at the Temple Branch, and your great kindness to Professor Seager, and myself.

The luncheon was delicious and all arrangements worked like clockwork.

It was also truly a stimulating exchange that followed the lecture. Please, do convey our respectful salutations to the rabbis of the various synagogues of Cleveland who honored us with their presence.

My best regards also to Mr. Reich, whom it was a pleasure to meet.

Mr. Kozloff very kindly drove me to the Temple. Truly, it is a remarkable edifice of strikingly powerful exterior and a

very fine interior space. I was
fortunate to obtain the book on the
history of the Temple but I hope
that some day you might have a little
booklet or postcards of this remarkable
architectural sight.

Once more our warmest good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

George Hub Hanfmann

PS. Sorry this was not mailed right away;
will write again for any suggestions you
may have.

2

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

11150 EAST BOULEVARD AT UNIVERSITY CIRCLE
CLEVELAND, OHIO 44106 CABLE ADDRESS: MUSART CLEVELAND
SHERMAN E. LEE, DIRECTOR TELEPHONE: 421-7340

March 28, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
26000 Shaker Blvd.
Beachwood, Ohio 44122

Dear Rabbi Dan:

I very much enjoyed the luncheon to which you kindly invited me last week so that I could hear Professor Hanfmann's lecture afterwards. After the luncheon I drove Professor Hanfmann to the main Temple and everyone there was very kind to escort us around and turn lights on for us. Mr. Bamberger was there and very generously gave Professor Hanfmann a copy of an anniversary book with some pictures of the Temple inside it. Since Professor Hanfmann was especially interested in having pictures of the building I was wondering if you might have some slides or black and white prints other than those in the anniversary book which we could have copied for him. If nothing is available, I am sure that the photos in the book will suffice.

Thank you again very much both for the lunch and for your help in the matter of the photographs.

Sincerely,

Arielle

Arielle P. Kozloff
Associate Curator in Charge
Department of Ancient Art

APK/fs

Mar. 28/77

Dear Daniel -

Having the opportunity to hear Dr. Hanfmann on Thursday was a real treat especially since I had never before heard of the Synagogue at Sardis.

Luncheon was delicious, your building, which I had not seen before, functional, & pleasing to the eye, and I am always delighted to see you & Adelle - Thank you for including me
Best
Arielle

March 29, 1977

Dr. George M. A. Hanfmann
Fogg Art Museum
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Dear Dr. Hanfmann:

I want to express my profound thanks for your willingness to spend time last week bringing us up-to-date on the Sardis synagogue. It was a personally enriching experience and I am deeply grateful. I hope you will accept the enclosed check for the synagogue publication fund, I wish it could be more. I will try to raise some more money for you. Again, my thanks.

When we were walking through the museum you asked me a number of questions about pronunciations etc. I am taking the liberty of sending to you under separate cover a volume which I published recently which is an attempt to present the emergence of Jewish ideas. Please accept it with my personal thanks.

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:mp
Encl.

FOGG

ART MUSEUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

April 11, 1977

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

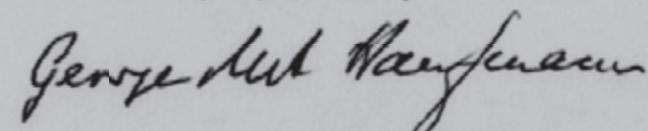
Dear Rabbi Silver,

I was deeply moved to receive today yours and
B. Martin's splendid volumes: A History of Judaism.
This is, in truth, as Thukydides has it a *κατὰ χρόνον εὐεχὴς*
ἔργον - an acquisition that lasts through all time.
Since I have no comparable history of Judaism, this
is a very great boon.

I shall cherish the book and its personal dedi-
cation.

With the kindest regards and expressions of my
profound admiration for your splendid scholarly work,

Sincerely yours,



George M. A. Hanfmann
John E. Hudson Professor
of Archaeology
Harvard University

GMAH/rh

✓ Dr. Sherman Lee *yes* (Sherman)
Cleveland Museum of Art
11150 East Blvd.
✓ Cleveland, O. 44106

✓ Dr. James Cooney *yes* (Joey)
CMA

✓ Ms. Arielle Kozloff *yes* *arielle*
CMA

✓ Dr. Eldon Epp *no* *Elder*
CWRU - Dept. of Religion

✓ Mr. Peter Machinist *1.11*
CWRU - Dept. of Religion

✓ Dr. Bernard Martin *yes* *Bernie*
CWRU - Dept. of Religion

✓ Dr. Sanford Shepard *Sanford*
Oberlin College
✓ Oberlin, Ohio 44074 *yes*

✓ Mr. Noah L. Butkin *Noe*
Investment Plaza
✓ 1801 E. 9th St. *maybe*
Cleveland, O. 44114

✓ Dr. Henry S. Robinson *no* *Henry*
CWRU - Dept. of Classics

✓ Mr. James Reich *yes* *James*
2619 Courtland Oval *& Bobbie*
✓ Cleveland, O. 44118

✓ Mr. Robert D. Gries *Bob*
2310 Terminal Tower
44113

✓ Max R. Friedman *3095!*
~~6777 Mayfield Rd.~~ *Here Ainsworth Dr*
44124

✓ Julie Kravitz *Julie*
20100 Fairmount Blvd.
44118

✓ Leighton A. Rosenthal *yes*
1768 East 25th St.
44114

✓ Sam Givelber *Sam*
19601 Van Aken
44122

✓ Julius Paris *26727 Fairmount*
800 One Public Sq. *Julie no Charlotte*
44113

✓ Howard Berger *no* *Howard*
Jewish Community Fed.
1750 Euclid Ave.
44115

✓ Ronald Brown *no* *Ronald*
13435 N. Park Blvd.
44118

✓ Max Ratner *max*
10800 Brookpark Rd.
44130

✓ William C. Treuhaft *no* *Will*
10701 Shaker Blvd.
44104



✓ Mr. Marion I. Levy *Marion*
16000 S. Woodland Rd. *yes*
44120

✓ Dr. Harry T. Frank *Harry*
Dept. of Religion *yes*
Oberlin College
Oberlin, O. 44074

~~Mr. Meyer Haas (Bud?)~~
~~3702 Shannon Rd.~~
~~44118~~

✓ Mr. Max J. Eisner *Bud* *+ Clorie*
2932 Broxton Rd.
44120

✓ Jared Faulb *no* *Jared*
19711 S. Woodland Blvd.
44122

✓ Arthur E. Friedman *Feldman* *Art*
~~2664 Brentwood~~
44122

marion ✓ H. R. Horvitz *Sam* *Harry*
16860 Shaker Blvd.
44120

David Simon *yes*
2711 Chesterton Rd.
✓ 44122

✓ Louis E. Emsheimer *(Mami)*
19601 Van Aken
44122

✓ H. Jack Lang *J-e*
1010 Euclid Ave. *W*
44115

✓ Mrs. Ben Zevin (Lillian)
Cleveland Plaza
44101

✓ Mrs. Paul Wurzberger (Odette)
3255 E. Monmouth *W*
44118

✓ Mr. Alvin N. Haas (Bud)
17200 S. Park
44120

All Board of Rabbis attached
(REMINDER)



~~Reid & Mrs.~~
~~Eisen & Mrs.~~

no
Rabbi Armand E. Cohen
Park Synagogue
3300 Mayfield Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

yes
Rabbi Frederick Eisenberg
Fairmount Temple
23737 Fairmount Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Rabbi Philip Fleischer
Temple B'nai Israel
P.O. Box 295
Lorain, Ohio 44003

Rabbi Alan Green
Temple Emanu El
2200 S. Green Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44121

yes
Rabbi Stephen Goldrich
Ner Tamid
24950 Lake Shore Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44132

yes
Rabbi Bernard Martin
Case Western Reserve Univ
Dept. of Religion
Yost Hall
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

no
Rabbi David Hachen
U.A.H.C.
1101 Euclid Ave.
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

yes
Rabbi Michael Hecht
Temple Beth Am
3557 Washington Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

yes
Rabbi Eric Hoffman
Temple Israel
14308 Triskett Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44111

yes
Rabbi Philip Horowitz
Brith Emeth
27575 Shaker Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Rabbi Nathan Kollin
1424 Richmond Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44124

yes
Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld
Fairmount Temple
23737 Fairmount Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Dr. Milton Matz
Severance Med. Arts Bldg
Cleveland Hts., Ohio
44118

Rabbi Rudolph Rosenthal
Temple on the Heights
3130 Mayfield Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

yes
Rabbi Aaron Rosenberg
Fairmount Temple
23737 Fairmount Blvd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44122

Rabbi Paul Goren
Temple Israel
333 - 25th St.
Canton, Ohio 44709

yes
Rabbi Max Roth
Park Synagogue
3300 Mayfield Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

Rabbi Wm. Seligman
3250 Yorkshire Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

Rabbi Daniel Roberts
Temple Emanu El
2200 S. Green Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44121

Rabbi Herbert Schwartz
Temple on the Heights
3130 Mayfield Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

yes
Rabbi Jacob Shtull
Mayfield Hillcrest Syn.
1732 Lander Rd.
Cleveland, Ohio 44124

Rabbi Gordon Geller
530 Gulf Rd.
Elyria, Ohio 44025

Rabbi Alexander Graubart
Hillel Foundation
11291 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

Rabbi Milton Rube
5 Severance Circle
Suite 818
Cleveland, Ohio 44118

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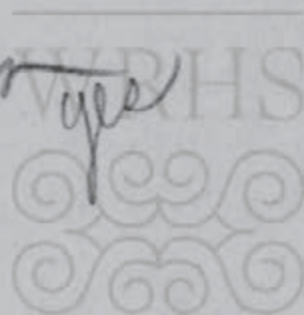
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↓ *Spencer*



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Rahlin Hecht
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Prof. Sesger
Dr. Kaufmann

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Mr & Mrs. Shepard
John Cooney
~~Rabbi Roman~~ - not Ben Hur
~~Cal~~

~~David Linn~~

Rabbi Oppenheimer
Horowitz

Lillian Zeven

Adole Silber

Sherman Lee's Secy

Korneitchouk, Ursula

Arville Kozloff

Ray Martin

~~Rabbi Klein~~

Jim Reich

Chandler

~~Dr Frank Chabin (no) 2-Cy~~ ~~69.9~~
Cune stone

Chas show

MANY TOWNS

THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE OF SARDIS

BY DAVID GORDON MITTEN



Fig. 1. View of the Roman Synagogue at Sardis, looking west: Forecourt in foreground.

Prefatory Note

The discovery at Sardis of the largest of all early synagogues preserved is a momentous event. The present situation of the work calls for enlisting additional interest and help. Professor David Gordon Mitten (Harvard University) has conducted since 1962 the excavation of the synagogue with great enthusiasm and skill. We hope that his brief report will convey something of the great potential of the new discovery and thus assist the effort of the special interdenominational Committee formed to insure the successful completion of the work and the preservation of the venerable find.

The author and the committee acknowledge gratefully the kindness of Professor Joseph Gutmann, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, who read and improved the manuscript.

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THE ANCIENT SYNAGOGUE OF SARDIS

BY DAVID GORDON MITTEN

FROM THE TIME of the Babylonian Captivity, on through the Roman Diaspora and after, numbers of Jewish families from Israel settled in the ports and capital cities of the Mediterranean world. There they flourished, their institutions and worship generally safeguarded by imperial decrees, and their initiative and industry contributing in no small measure to the prosperity of the urban centers in which they lived. Although retaining their loyalty to the temple at Jerusalem and in many cases sending annual payments for its upkeep until its destruction in 70 A.D. by the Romans, these independent Jewish communities increasingly turned to the synagogue, a relatively new institution that came into being in the

late Hellenistic period, as the focus of their cultural life as well as a house of worship and prayer. Josephus and other writers of this time tell us much about life in these communities and their involvement with Greco-Roman culture. Until recently, however, we had virtually no important example of a major synagogue of the early Roman empire outside of Palestine. Now we have two: the synagogue at Ostia, the port of Rome, and that of Sardis, a major inland trading center and administrative city of Roman Asia Minor.

The Jewish community at Sardis, located some sixty miles inland by highway from Izmir on the Old Royal Road, is thought by some scholars to have already been in existence during the time of the Persian Empire (*Sefarad* in Obadaiah 20). Under Julius Caesar and the emperor Augustus, Roman governors ordered the city officials of Sardis not to interfere with the Jewish right to worship according to the customs of their fathers. (Josephus, 14:235, 259-261). No one, however, could have foreseen the size and magnificence of the synagogue which this community possessed or the wealth of information which it would reveal about Jewish culture under the Roman empire.

The synagogue at Sardis, discovered by chance in 1962 during the annual summer excavations there by Harvard and Cornell Universities, has become the most informative source yet found

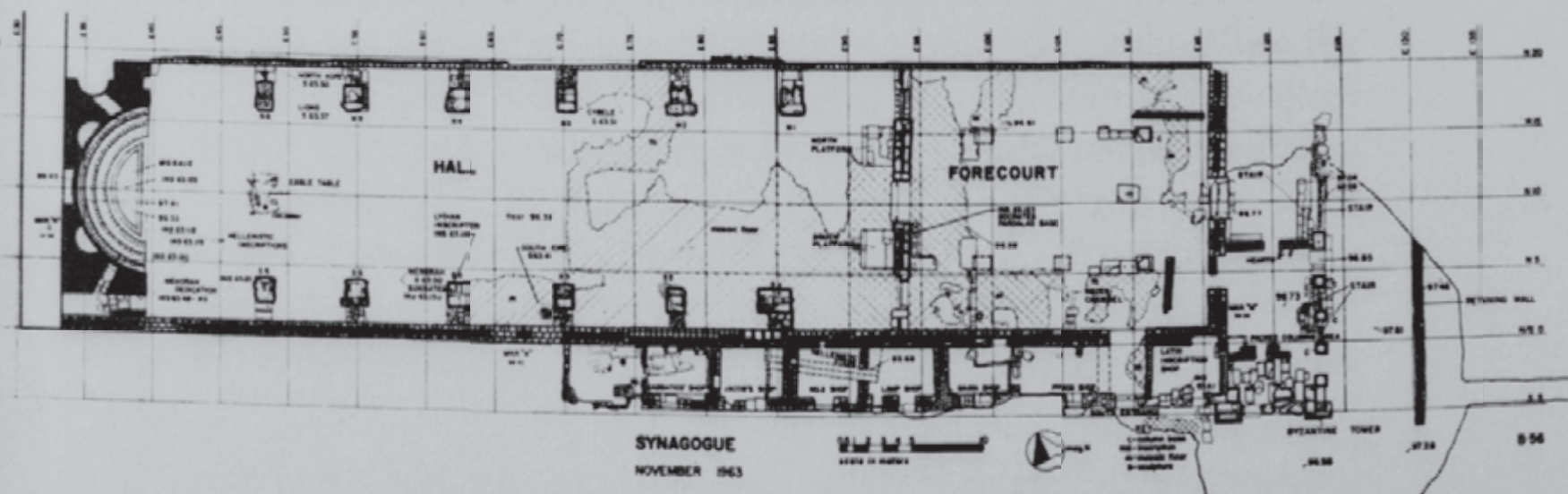


Fig. 2. Plan of the synagogue at the end of the 1964 season.

for the reconstruction of a Jewish community in a major Roman city. The building itself is immense; it was entered through an impressive pillared porch opening into a colonnaded forecourt, which preceded the vast main hall of assembly (Fig. 1). Measuring over three hundred feet in over-all length and sixty feet in width (Plan, Fig. 2), the synagogue was apparently planned as an integral part of the sprawling complex of the Roman city gymnasium, a hitherto unheard-of situation. The vast spaces of the main hall remind one of descriptions in rabbinic literature of the main synagogue at Alexandria, where flags had to be hoisted as signals for prayers. The roof, supported by six pairs of heavy masonry piers, was probably a truss roof similar to ones used in the earliest Christian basilicas. The floors are paved with ornate mosaics, spread like rainbow-hued carpets. The walls of these enormous rooms glowed with a covering of multi-colored sheet marble, into which were set panels of floral and animal designs, constructed like jigsaw puzzles from thousands of cut-out marble pieces. Fish, birds, animals and flowers are among the inlays preserved. According to an inscription, there were paintings on the walls or the ceiling, as in the famous painted synagogue of Dura-Europos. The forecourt, at least, was partially vaulted by glittering ceiling mosaics.

Heightening the resemblance to the classical basilican form, a

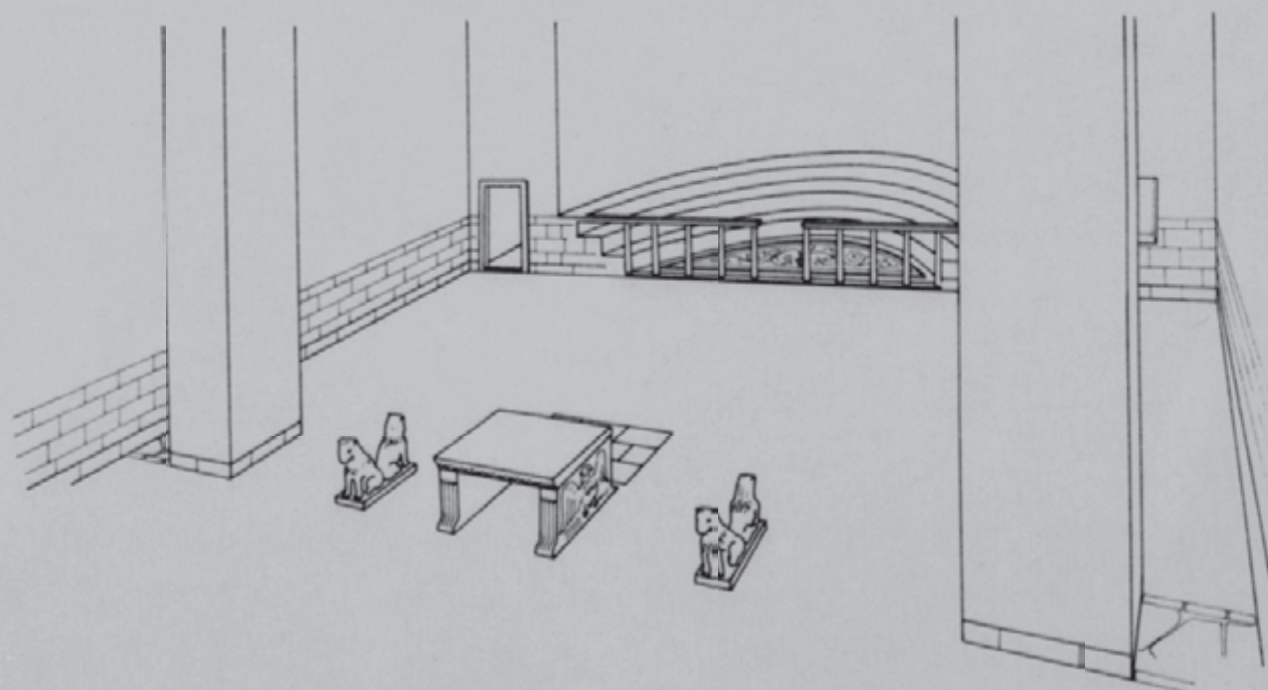


Fig. 3. *Tentative restoration of the western end of the synagogue.*



Fig. 4. Semicircular mosaic in western apse, with names of dedicants, seen from above.

Fig. 5. Relief of eagle clutching thunderbolt; end support of marble table in the western part of the synagogue.



spacious apse closes the west end of the main hall. It contains a curving row of three brick benches, which enclose a semicircular mosaic in a theater-like auditorium where the elders may have sat (Fig. 3). The mosaic was given by two brothers who record their benefaction in an inscription in the pavement. It depicted two vines growing out of a huge water-filled urn, in whose branches originally peacocks perched (Fig. 4). A marble basin, identical in shape to that shown in the mosaic, was found in the forecourt, where it probably served for the obligatory washing of hands (and perhaps also feet) prior to entering the synagogue for prayer.

A few yards to the east, in front of this central apse, stood a great marble table, its supports decorated with eagles clutching thunderbolts in their talons (Fig. 5). A marble pavement lay on the west side of this table facing the apse, where the weekly scripture lesson may have been read. Pairs of marble lions, seated back to back, which have been reconstructed from fragments found around the table, may have stood guard to either side (Fig. 6).

At the opposite, eastern, end of the main hall, between the triple gateways that open into the hall from the forecourt, are two stepped platforms (Fig. 7), which supported small temple-like structures, their pediments upheld by spirally-fluted columns. We believe that one may have contained the Ark, the other a large *menorah*. It was near the southern platform that the incised carving of a *menorah* flanked by *lulab* and *shofar* (Fig. 9), with fragments of inscriptions in Hebrew (Fig. 8), was found that first conclusively identified this building as a synagogue (Fig. 10). Part of an intricately carved marble *menorah* in the round, measuring over a yard in armspread, was also found (Fig. 11).

The synagogue has also been a treasure house of precious fragments of architecture, sculpture, and inscriptions re-used from temples and public buildings of Sardis going back as far as the time of Croesus in the sixth century B.C. The supports of the eagle table may have been appropriated from a Roman military sanctuary; the lions, carved in the fifth century B.C. or earlier, probably stood in a



Fig. 6. Pair of marble lions, re-used in the synagogue (partly restored).



Fig. 8. Fragment of marble slab with inscription in Hebrew—translated "Shalom".



Fig. 9. Marble slab with incised menorah flanked by lulab and shofar.

Fig. 7. Western Forecourt, with mosaic panels containing donors' inscriptions, triple gateways into main hall and platforms for shrines between the gates.



Fig. 10. Menorah slab, as found by the southern platform for a shrine.





Fig. 11. *Marble menorah with the name of Sokrates on the crossbar (scale is 10 centimeters).*

Fig. 12. *Corinthian pilaster capital with rampant lion, from the main hall of the synagogue.*



shrine of Cybele before they were enlisted for the guardian lions of Judah. These and other animal motifs (Fig. 12) in the decoration of the Sardis synagogue are witnesses to the liberal interpretation adopted by these Hellenized Jews of the Biblical prohibition of "graven images."

Blocks from the porch of the temple of the Mother of the Gods were built into the piers. They bore lengthy inscriptions from the time of Antiochus the Great (213 B.C.), carved there as public documents. Much older are fragments of some of the oldest Ionic capitals known from Asia Minor, a long inscription in an unknown alphabetic script resembling Lydian (Fig. 14), and a miniature marble temple, covered with reliefs, probably dedicated to Cybele during the reign of Croesus (Fig. 13), ca. 550 B.C.

While on the north side, the complex seems to have been bounded by a colonnaded exercise ground for the gymnasium (*palaestra*), the south side of the synagogue was lined with a long row of small shops, which lay outside the wall. Some of the merchants had incised their names on pottery jars: "Jacob, the presbyter" (elder of the synagogue), "John", "Sabbatios." Was the synagogue area the center of the Jewish community's commercial interests as well as the heart of its religious life? The evidence now available points strongly to this conclusion.

Thanks to an abundance of dedicatory inscriptions carved on marble slabs and set into the walls of the principal rooms, we can catch a glimpse of some of the prominent personalities in the congregation, whose pious gifts contributed to the dignity and splendor of their house of worship. These inscriptions, written in Greek, are datable by the forms of the letters and the recurrence of names to the late second and early third centuries A.D., thus making our synagogue one of the earliest preserved, as well as the richest. A man whose name is missing, together with his wife Regina and their children, gave panels of design in marble inlay and wall paintings. Another, Aurelius Hermogenes, gave a *menorah*. The name of the donor or sculptor, Sokrates, is inscribed on the crossbar linking the

arms of the large marble *menorah* (Fig. 11). Yet another member of the congregation gave some kind of interior dividing walls (balustrades?) for the synagogue. Still others gave individual panels of the mosaic floor, in which are inset their names, and a laconic statement that they "fulfilled their pledge" (Fig. 15). Their names—Pegasios (Fig. 16), Euphrosynos, Polyhippos—are unquestionably Greek, but may in some cases be translations of Hebrew equivalents. One inscription refers to *phyle Leontion*, "a tribe of the Leontii"; according to Professor Louis Robert, this was an organizational unit of the synagogue, whose name may allude to the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

Often the names are proudly followed with the word "Sardianos": "citizen of Sardis." Several of these men had attained the office of city councilman. Among the trades represented as donors are jewelers and goldsmiths. We have an impression of a large, wealthy, civic-minded Jewish community, honored and respected by their city, who were allowed to build their sumptuous house of worship next to the gymnasium and on the main avenue, surely one of the most prominent locations in Roman Sardis.

During the past three seasons, the two major rooms of the synagogue, the forecourt and the main hall, were cleared of the fallen marble blocks and debris that filled them, and half of the row of shops outside the south wall was excavated. The building as it now stands has walls varying in height from less than a foot in places at the eastern end of the forecourt, to nearly fifteen feet at the western end of the main hall above the apse. The mosaic floors, severely damaged in places by the collapse of the building's superstructure, have been covered with a layer of earth to protect them against weather and depredations. During the 1964 season, most of the heavily damaged and extensively remodelled porch at the easternmost end of the synagogue was cleared. Already, however, precautions have had to be taken to safeguard the building over the winters: the heavy rainfall required the excavation and reinforcement of a wide diversionary ditch to carry runoff around and away



Fig. 13. Relief of Cybele, on front of miniature marble temple, ca. 550 B.C.; the piece was re-used in one of the piers.

Fig. 14. Inscription in unknown alphabetic script related to Lydian, built into one of the piers of the main hall.



Fig. 15. *Inscription in mosaic floor; west side of the Forecourt, recording the gift of Aurelius Polyhippos.*

from the synagogue, and preliminary repairs and stabilization of the tops of the walls have been made in concrete.

If we already know this much, what remains to be done? The clearance of the principal rooms of the synagogue, with their precious contents, is only the first step in understanding the entire building complex and learning about the people who erected and used it. The entire neighborhood of the great halls, including rooms connecting them with the gymnasium, must be excavated to locate the many rooms used as hostels, schoolrooms, and kitchens which we may expect to find as integral parts of the synagogue district. Excavations must probe deep beneath the floors and foundations in search of an earlier synagogue on the same site: there are indications that such a synagogue may be found. Several hundred blocks,

as well as thousands of fragments of the ornate marble revetment, must be studied to recover as much as possible of the plan and decorative scheme of the interior. It should be possible to replace at least the lower part of the marble revetments and to recompose samples of the fascinating "pictures" of marble inlay. In this study, the participation of a specialist in Judaic history and ancient synagogues is essential. The walls of the building must be further stabilized, the mosaic pavements repaired, with missing portions supplied in concrete, and a representative portion of the piers re-erected, as far as possible, to preserve the synagogue for posterity and make it intelligible for tourists and scholars alike.

Our task then is hardly more than well begun. Recent termination of government and foundation grants, under which the initial excavation was made possible, now threatens the necessary continuation of excavation, study, and restoration. To realize these goals, which include a thorough final publication of the synagogue and its contents, a minimum of three more major summer seasons of excavation work are needed (1966-1968). The thoroughgoing examination and restoration of this unique monument, which so vividly proclaims the vitality and creativity of Jewish communities under the Roman empire, is a responsibility which the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis must fulfill.

Fig. 16. Dedicatory plaque of "Pegasios."

