THE *SARAJEVO HAGGADAH*: THE CONCEPT OF *CREATIO EX NIHILO* AND THE HERMENEUTICAL SCHOOL BEHIND IT

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The Bosnian National Museum in Sarajevo possesses a mid-fourteenth-century illuminated copy of the Passover Haggadah, commonly known as the *Sarajevo Haggadah*.[1] Like ten other examples of the Haggadah from late medieval Iberia, it opens with a chronological picture cycle of the history of the Israelites as reported in the Pentateuch. As in French and English psalters of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, the biblical cycles of the Sephardic Haggadot are disconnected from the text of the Passover liturgy and appear as a separate unit. However, unlike other Sephardic cycles of this type, that of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* begins with a series of detailed images of the Hexaemeron (Figs. 1, 2), which is the subject of this study.

Ever since it was first published by Julius von Schlosser and Heinrich Müller in 1898,[2] the *Sarajevo Haggadah* and its decorative program have attracted a great deal of interest, as numerous facsimile editions demonstrate; however, the illumination has never been studied extensively. Von Schlosser and Müller, together with David Kaufmann, attributed the manuscript to fourteenth-century Spain and distinguished the particular Jewish aspects of the iconography as manifested in numerous midrashic motifs, a feature shared with most other works of Jewish art from Late Antiquity onward.[3] In 1962 Cecil Roth wrote an introduction to a facsimile edition published in Belgrade.[4] In an article of 1984 Herbert Broderick discussed in detail the eight initial panels depicting the creation of the world,[5] linking some elements of the creation imagery to Byzantine pictorial sources and others to Western cycles and concluding that the artist used a variety of models.[6]

We demonstrate in this essay that the creation cycle of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* reveals links between its visual language and a particular school of Jewish scholarship and biblical exegesis in late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Spain. The topic of creation, although extremely popular in Christian narrative cycles, was excluded from Jewish art; it is found neither in the monumental programs of late antique synagogues nor in medieval Hebrew illuminated manuscripts.[7] The appearance of a full-fledged creation cycle as such is thus striking. It should also be emphasized

Figure 1. Creation. *Sarajevo Haggadah*; Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fol. 1v. (Photo: after Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* [Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1963]; with permission of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.)

Figure 2. Creation. *Sarajevo Haggadah*; Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fol. 2r. (Photo: after Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* [Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1963]; with permission of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.)

that, although this cycle uses certain motifs borrowed from Christian parallels, it does not fully follow any pictorial model. Moreover, an examination in relation to the exegetical school of the thirteenth-century Catalan scholar Nachmanides (R. Moses b. Nachman, commonly known as "Ramban") shows that numerous details of the images visualize his school's particular concept of creation. Nachmanides was born in 1194 in Gerona and died in 1270. Among his many followers was R. Bahye ben Asher (1260–1340) from Saragossa, who was a student of R. Solomon ibn Adret ("Rashba"), Nachmanides' most outstanding disciple. Bahye wrote a commentary on the Pentateuch that is indebted to Nachmanides' earlier commentary. Nachmanides' concept of creation confronted another cosmological view held by a group of Jewish scholars associated with rationalist philosophy. In what follows we will argue that visual narration could have been a powerful tool for the communication of rabbinic teaching and exegesis relevant to a particular background in an overall atmosphere of cultural transition and scholarly controversy.

Due to the lack of colophons we have no information whatsoever about the patron of the Sarajevo or any other Sephardic Haggadah. Passover is a holiday of historical recollection, and the ways in which history was remembered were particularly crucial in the cultural ambience of fourteenth-century Spanish Jewry. A picture cycle could reveal a very specific attitude to biblical history. In association with a particular approach to biblical exegesis, it could be a vessel of specific cultural values. As will be shown elsewhere, the patrons of the Haggadot may well be found among the same spiritual leadership that held to these values.[8] The world view of figures like Nachmanides or Bahye can today only be approached through the texts they left behind. It should be stressed, however, that what is communicated in the images and in surviving texts formed part of the topical issues of the time. The contents of these works were presented in the Sabbath sermon in the synagogue service and established the essence of the religious view that certain Spanish Jews were taught at school and grew up with. Bahye was a preacher in early fourteenth-century Saragossa, and his text records what he communicated to his community and his disciples.[9]

The first two pages of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* present the story of creation in eight individually outlined compartments. The first image shows the chaos; it is followed by the separation of light and darkness (Fig. 1). The five following panels picture the creation of the universe in a cumulative presentation: the firmament and water on the second day; dry land, oceans, and plants on the third; luminaries on the fourth day (Fig. 2); on the fifth, fish and fowl; on the sixth day the animals of earth, the reptiles, and man. The last panel shows the seventh day, the Sabbath rest: a man seated on a bench, his head bowed.

Similar sequences were common in Christian art ever since the Old Testament became a subject for cyclic painting, as in the *Morgan Bible* (Fig. 3). As mentioned above, the Hexaemeron is unique in medieval Jewish art, the *Sarajevo Haggadah* constituting the only known example. Elsewhere it has been shown that artists of Jewish picture cycles, when confronted with the challenge to translate Christian pictorial models into a specific Jewish visual idiom, dealt with christological doctrine via Jewish polemical texts that guided them in avoiding certain matters and altering particular iconographic motifs.[10] Whereas most Old Testament themes could easily be translated along the lines of Jewish scholarship and polemics, the creation was avoided. Christian creation imagery refers to two major Christian doctrines: the incarnation and the Trinity. In many cycles the anthropomorphic figure of the Logos is shown as creator. Not only does his anthropomorphic appearance imply that he became man, the crossed nimbus identifies him as Jesus and presents the Lord Creator and the Logos as one, based on John 1:1. Jewish scholars discussed the Christian claim that Jesus was the only person of the Trinity who became human, a principle that they rejected as illogical.[11] The cross-nimbed anthropomorphic figure of the Lord in depictions of the creation visualizes all these beliefs. It is the Logos who performs the creation, not God the Father; God and Jesus are shown as one, and the latter became human, as indicated by his anthropomorphic appearance in pre-incarnation scenes. Christian creation cycles are thus heavily loaded with allusions to Christian doctrines, and this undoubtedly is the reason Jews were wary of depicting the creation at all.

Although the Sarajevo sequence follows Christian pictorial sources to some extent, it excludes, of course, the anthropomorphic figure of the Logos. Instead, divine power is indicated as golden rays of light emerging from above and touching the specific created object of the day. Only in the creation of the luminaries do the rays move from below upwards. In general, anthropomorphism is shunned in Jewish art,[12] but it was specifically the aspect of incarnation in the trinitarian dogma that provoked vehement rejection.[13] The assumptions that God became human and that one aspect of the Trinity was causative of another made the idea unacceptable.[14]

Nevertheless the designer(s)[15] of the Sarajevo cycle decided to include a visual expression of the drama of creation. He must have had a good reason for doing so, and the following discussion will show that it was not necessarily Christian cosmology that the Sarajevo sequence confronted. Rather, its context is the cultural background of late medieval Spanish Jewish scholarship and specifically the intra-Jewish polemics of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Like most Western Christian depictions of the creation, the five panels of the second to the sixth days in the *Sarajevo Haggadah* show the earth as a small circle.[16]

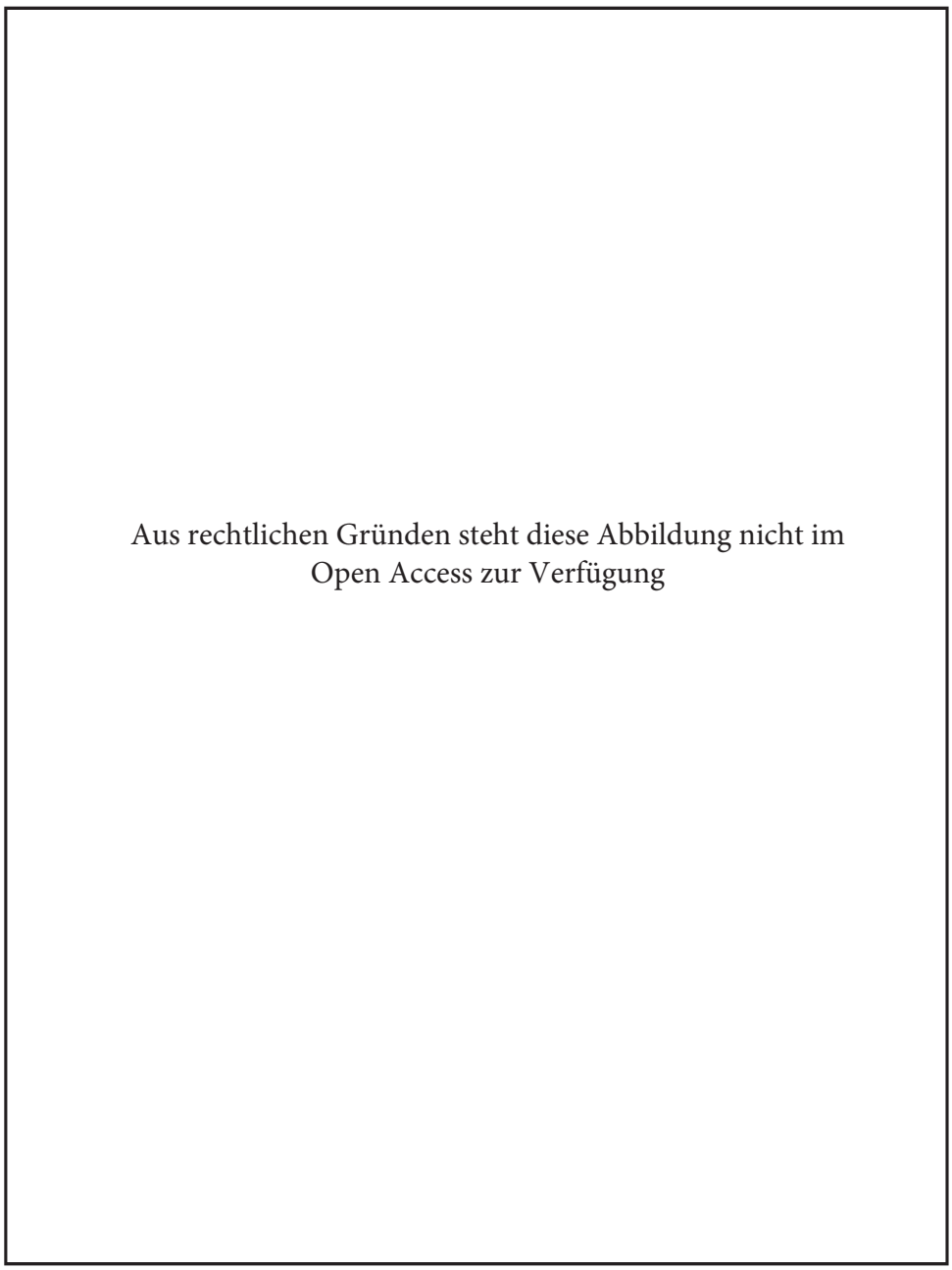

Figure 3. Creation. *Morgan Bible*; PML, M. 638, fol. 1r. (Photo: Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.)

In all the panels this circle is surrounded by another shape, a round-topped rectangle colored either blue or red, with a white line and a row of white dots emphasizing its outline. This shape is echoed in the panel depicting day one, where the separation of light and darkness is indicated by black and white fields, vertically separated and enclosed in a round-topped rectangle. The earth circle does not yet exist in this panel, nor is it shown in the first one.

The motif of the round-topped rectangle as a symbol has a long and complex history in Jewish and Christian art. It emerged as a visual convention for the Ark of the Covenant as early as the second century C.E., when it was adopted in the eschatologically charged images on coins struck during the Bar Kokhba revolt (132–135 C.E.).[17] The round-topped shape reappears in the middle of the third century on the murals of the synagogue at Dura Europos. Variations of this convention dominated the symbolic language of late antique Jewish funerary and synagogal art; numerous instances were discussed in 1984 by Elisabeth Revel-Neher.[18] It also found its way into Christian art, as a church mosaic on Mount Nebo in Jordan exemplifies.[19]

The round-topped rectangle was also adopted by the author of an illuminated Christian treatise entitled *Christian Topography.*[20] This treatise, originally written in the sixth century,[21] survived in a number of extensively illustrated copies dating from the ninth to the eleventh centuries.[22] The author, traditionally known as Cosmas Indicopleustes, was identified by Wanda Wolska-Conus as Constantine of Antioch.[23] His cosmological text comprising ten books was written to argue against the scientific theories of his period. In Book IV the author inserted a drawing of the universe as a square topped by a hemispheric roof depicting the "short side" of the cosmos (Fig. 4). This scheme represents the occidental and oriental sides of the "long side" of the universe, shown as a box divided into two parts topped by what looks like a semi-circular lid. Inside the cube-box appears an elevation plan of the earth, with oceans and mountains as well as the course of the sun (Fig. 5). The drawing of the flat frontal motif of the round-topped rectangle, the "short side," serves here as the formal representation of several related motifs: the image of the universe, the image of the tabernacle, and the image of the Ark of the Covenant. According to *Christian Topography*, Moses was instructed on Mount Sinai (Exod. 25:9, 40) to build the desert tabernacle according to the design of the created world;[24] thus the book's cosmographic theme declares that the tabernacle structure is in fact the true shape of the universe.

The round-topped rectangle made further appearances in Byzantine art, as both the symbol of the creation and that of the tabernacle-temple-ark theme (Fig. 6).[25] Broderick[26] first linked the creation imagery of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* with the "short side" of the universe as depicted in the *Christian Topography* and in the

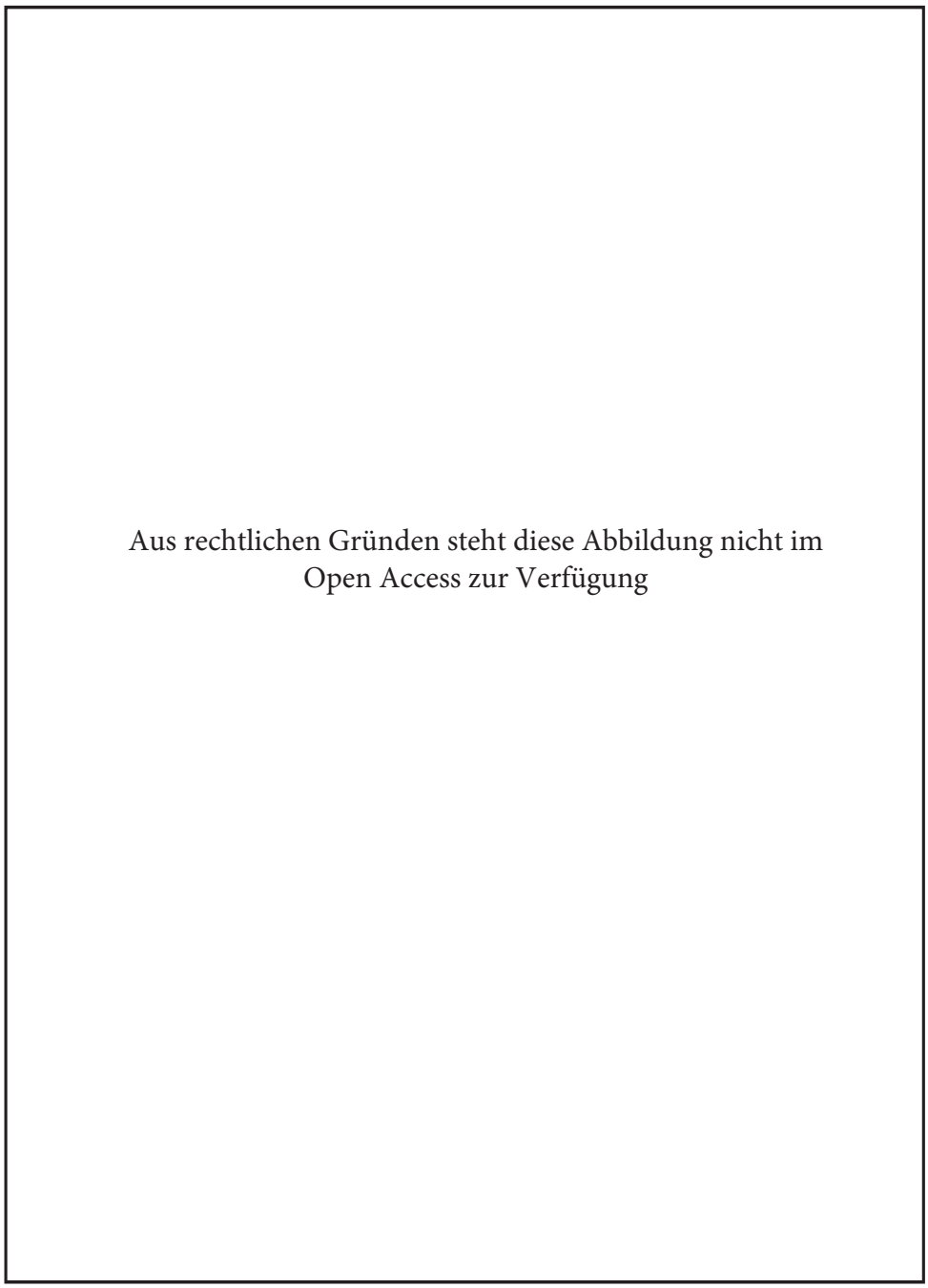

Figure 4. Short side of Universe. *Christian Topography*; Bibl. Vat., gr. 699, fol. 38v. (Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.)

Figure 5. The Universe. *Christian Topography*; Bibl. Vat., gr. 699, fol. 43r. (Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.)

creation images of the middle Byzantine Octateuchs.[27] He holds that the miniaturist of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* used Western and Byzantine sources, and must have been aware of the tabernacle-creation link in the Jewish tradition. Indeed, there can be no doubt about this: the *Sarajevo Haggadah* cycle concludes with two images containing the round-topped rectangular shape: one shows the messianic temple (Fig. 7), the other shows the community leaving the synagogue (Fig. 8). Both buildings are characterized by an arched entrance that alludes to the design of the Ark of the Covenant (in the messianic temple image) and the Torah shrine (in the synagogue image), respectively.

Figure 6. Ark of Covenant. *Christian Topography*; Bibl. Vat., gr. 699, fol. 48r. (Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.)

The temple image of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* is not the only instance of this theme in Sephardic book art. In fact, depictions of the temple are one of the cornerstones in the decoration programs of illuminated Bibles, especially during the fourteenth century in the Crown of Aragon. Surprisingly none of these includes any hint of the round-topped shape, and the Ark appears as a rectangular unit framing the tablets of the law (Fig. 9).[28] The designer of the Sarajevo cycle therefore deviated from the most common type of Sephardic temple imagery and chose a symbolically loaded formula; the version of the Bibles reflects the biblical text more literally (e.g., Exod. 25:10).

Whereas former studies have focused on the question as to whether the appearance of the round-topped symbol in the *Sarajevo Haggadah* provides proof of a late

Figure 7. Messianic Temple. *Sarajevo Haggadah*; Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fol. 32r. (Photo: after Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* [Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1963]; with permission of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.)

Figure 8. Synagogue. *Sarajevo Haggadah*; Sarajevo, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, fol. 34r. (Photo: after Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* [Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1963]; with permission of the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina.)

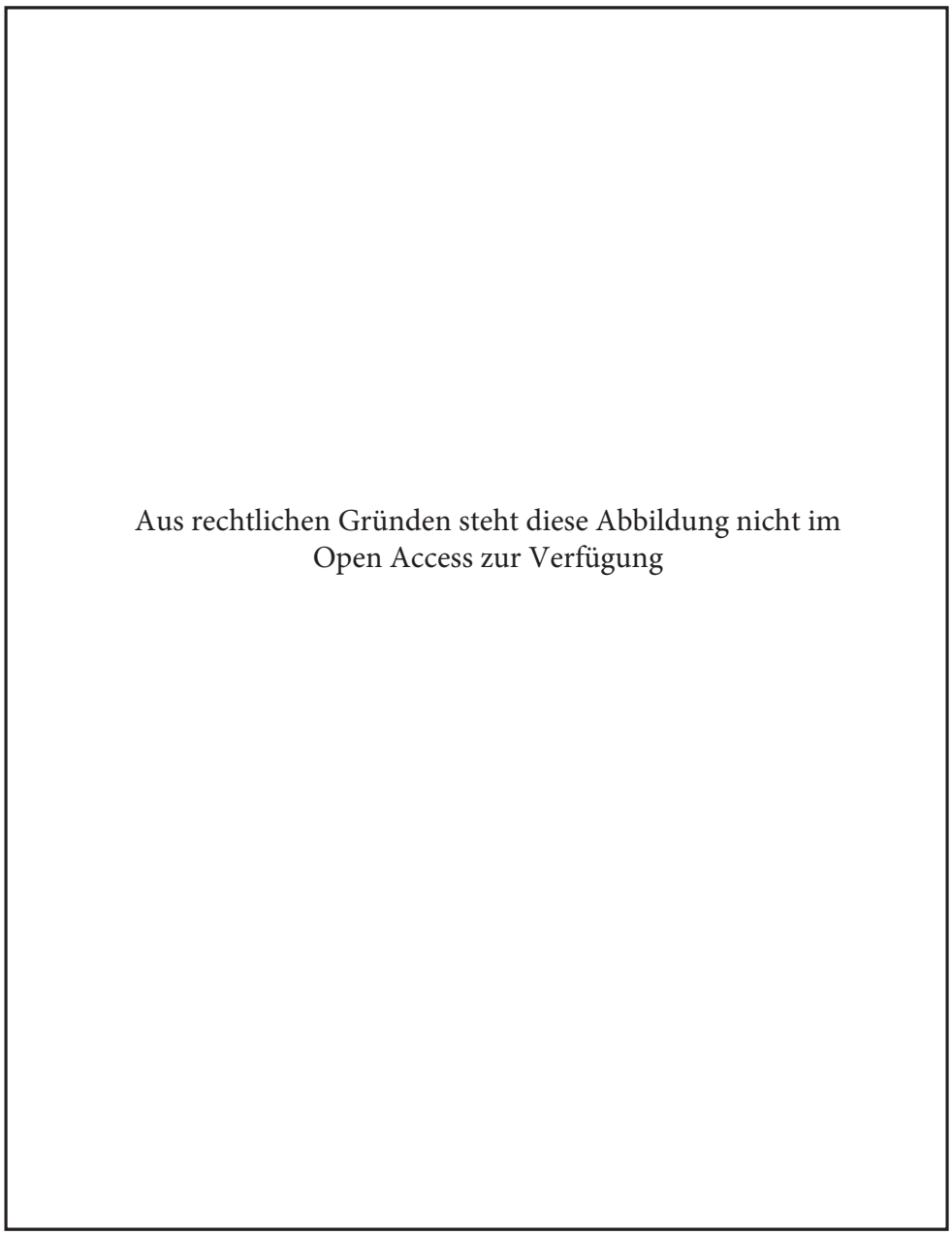

Figure 9. Temple implements. *Perpignan Bible*; BnF, héb. 7, fol. 12v. (Photo: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.)

antique prototype,[29] the present inquiry aims at an elucidation of the immediate sources of inspiration for the Sarajevo creation cycle, including the decision to use the round-topped shape in the imagery. Neither the symbol as such nor the idea of linking it to the creation were new at the time this cycle was painted.[30] The questions are not only the age of this symbol and how it was transmitted as a visual motif and as an idea expressed in Jewish and Christian texts. What is of interest in the context of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* is the meaning of the symbol in the particular ambience of fourteenth-century Sephardic culture.

It is rather unlikely that the designer of the Sarajevo cycle re-invented the round-topped shape. Not only does the prominence of the motif in late antique, especially Jewish, art make such an assumption unlikely, so does its rich evidence in Jewish thought from Late Antiquity to fourteenth-century Spain. Constantine of Antioch was neither the first nor the last scholar to link the tabernacle symbolically to the creation. He was, however, the first to express the notion visually as well. As early as the first century C.E., Jewish thought attributed symbolic meaning to the textual parallelism between the description of the creation in Genesis and the instructions for the building of the tabernacle in Exodus. This allegorical exegesis is found in post-biblical Apocrypha and associated texts,[31] in the writings of Philo,[32] and Josephus,[33] and in early Jewish mysticism.[34] All these texts were adopted by Christian theologians but abandoned by the Jewish tradition. By the sixth century they were no longer part of mainstream Judaism.

It is thus quite remarkable to find this same early exegesis both in the Byzantine-Christian cosmological *Christian Topography* and in midrashic works from the tenth to the twelfth centuries.[35] The eleventh-century southern French scholar R. Moses the Preacher (Moshe Hadarshan), active in Toulouse and Narbonne, may well provide the link explaining the connection between an idea developed in late antique Jewish Apocrypha and mysticism, and sixth-century Byzantine scholarship. Moses the Preacher composed his texts in the literary form of midrashim. His sources have been the subject of numerous modern studies.[36] Israel Ta-Shema reviews and summarizes the latest work on this subject and suggests a new theory as to how early apocryphal and Hellenistic sources reached Moses the Preacher, while other medieval Jewish scholars refrained from copying or citing these sources. Ta-Shema suggests that an interest in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period developed at this time. This trend apparently reached early Jewish Ashkenazic culture through Byzantine southern Italy. Moses the Preacher was the first to gather some of this obscure aggadic material and to use it in his own midrashic treatises. But soon after he composed his works, these apocryphal themes were identified as heretical. These ideas were thus not repeated by Jewish Ashkenazic scholars.[37]

They reappear, however, in the above-mentioned fourteenth-century commentary of Bahye, a text of particular relevance for the study of the Haggadah's imagery and its immediate cultural context. In explicating the verse "and Moses saw all the work" (Exod. 39:43),[38] at the completion of the making of the tabernacle, he comments:

> This is the work of the making of the tabernacle, and the meaning is: "and he saw in the mountain" as it is written: "exactly according to the design I show you" (Ex. 25:9), and it is written: "the design shown to you on the mountain" (Ex. 25:40). Thus they made it in the desert. And in the midrashic interpretation: "And Moses saw all the work," this is the work of creation; the verse does not explicitly state "all the work of the tabernacle,"—to teach you that the work of the tabernacle is equivalent to the work of creation. . . ."[39]

Similarly, the idea of the parallelism between the creation and the tabernacle appears also in Bahye's interpretation of the name of Bezalel, who was appointed by God to build the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. The name Bezalel, literally, "in the shadow of God," refers to the special knowledge Bezalel received from God about the creation. This knowledge enabled him to build the Ark with the cherubs shadowing it with their wings and creating an image of *bezel-el* (in God's shade).[40] This description echoes the round-topped symbol of the Ark.

Close cultural links had existed between the Crown of Aragon and Languedoc ever since the Carolingians conquered the northern part of Catalonia in the early ninth century,[41] links that facilitated cultural exchange in both Christian and Jewish scholarship.[42] It is most probably through this channel that Bahye became familiar with material otherwise unknown in fourteenth-century Sephardic scholarship. It should be noted that, although Bahye is highly indebted to Nachmanides—as will be shown later in this essay—the latter does not refer to the creation-tabernacle link.

The attempt to understand the Sarajevo creation images leads us back to the depictions of the temple (Fig. 7) and the synagogue (Fig. 8) at the end of the biblical cycle. Both show an interior opening behind a large arch. This arch and its posts serve as a frame for the utmost essence of each of the images: the Ark of the Covenant and the Torah shrine, respectively. As Broderick[43] and Revel-Neher[44] have shown, this arch on posts is nothing but a variation of the round-topped shape, the same shape that the designer of the cycle used to express the link between the tabernacle and the creation at the beginning of the manuscript.

The compositional scheme of the arch on posts revealing a view of the temple or the tabernacle interior appears to be typical of medieval Spanish Christian depictions of the temple. Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries it is found in the Castilian Bibles in Leon (Fig. 10)[45] and Madrid[46] for the tabernacle, and in the

Figure 10. Aaron in the Tabernacle. Leon, Colegiata San Isidoro, cod. 2, fol. 50r. (Photo: Institut Amatller de Art Hispanic, Barcelona.)

picture Bibles from Pamplona (ca. 1200)[47] for both tabernacle and temple (Fig. 11). In all these examples the arch-post motif, apparently a variation of the round-topped rectangle, figures prominently. It is crucial that it was not only the shape that was borrowed by the Sarajevo miniaturist, but the entire compositional scheme that dominates these images. The arch framing the space of the temple or synagogue is of special interest, suggesting that the designer of the Sarajevo cycle might have seen examples such as the Castilian or Navarrese Bibles.

In none of these Spanish Christian examples is there a link between the arch motif and the creation. However, the road from the Christian temple composition to the Jewish creation imagery is a short one, and it leads to Moses the Preacher and Bahye ben Asher. The earlier Jewish sources, from Philo via the *Christian Topography* to a group of early medieval midrashim expounding the link between the creation and the tabernacle, have been discussed above. As mentioned, the interpretation does not necessarily belong to mainstream rabbinic hermeneutics. It does not appear in any of the "classical" aggadic midrashim on the creation. However, the visualization of an exegetical theme of rather obscure hermeneutical background was not the main reason to include the creation in the Sarajevo cycle. Nor do we suggest that it was the purpose of the Sarajevo creation cycle to confront Christian doctrine. It is more likely that the message of this cycle was one directed to Jews and reflected, in particular, the view of anti-rationalist Jewish intellectual circles.

After the completion of the reconquest in the mid-thirteenth century, Spanish and Spanish Jewish culture entered a process of transition from Muslim to Christian domination. The Islamic-Jewish cultural symbiosis of the period of the Khalifs and the Taifa kingdoms had given rise to generations of Jewish scholars whose cultural background differed in many respects from that of the late antique Talmudic sages. It differed even more significantly from that of contemporary Ashkenazic scholars. A school of rationalist thought influenced by Muslim philosophy and earlier Greek sources evolved. Whereas the biblical exegesis of Late Antiquity was dominated by the midrashic method (interpretation through additional legendary material), that of the early medieval Sephardic school was guided primarily by linguistic and philological thinking. This method was represented, for example, by Abraham ibn Ezra, who was born in Tudela in 1093, lived in Spain until 1140—when he fled from persecution—and lived in many other countries till his death in 1167. Other scholars interpreted biblical narratives, as well as midrashic narratives of the Talmudic era, allegorically or metaphorically.[48] This approach was used by the rationalist philosophers to explain contradictory passages of the Bible or the midrash, in the case of illogical narratives, miracles, and the like. The contents of such narratives were not treated as historical facts, but rather as allegories.

Figure 11. Solomon and the people offer sacrifices before the ark. *Pamplona Bible*; Augsburg, Universitätsbibl., lat. I, 2, lat. 4^0, 15, fol. 121r. (Photo: after François Bucher, *The Pamplona Bible* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970], with permission of the Universitätsbibliothek, Augsburg.)

The most outstanding Jewish philosopher was Maimonides (R. Moses ben Maimon, commonly known as "Rambam"), who died in 1204. He stood for all the cultural values associated with the Jewish-Islamic symbiosis. However, shortly after his death his views became a matter of controversy.[49] Rationalism was considered by his opponents as a danger to traditional Jewish values and the allegorical interpretation of the midrashim of the Talmudic sages was considered a threat to their authority. A cultural struggle developed between rationalists and their opponents, reaching a climax in 1232, when Maimonidean writings were burnt. The burning of the books was preceded by mutual rabbinical excommunications between Maimonidean and anti-Maimonidean authorities. The controversy had been initiated by Solomon of Montpellier and his student Jonah of Gerona. Nachmanides, although ideologically on the anti-rationalist side, tried to negotiate a moderate policy of compromise. The controversy did not end with the excommunication and the burning of the books in 1232, and its continuation for several decades left a strong impression on Jewish culture in Spain and southern France, with far-reaching consequences. Rationalist scholarship was now challenged by anti-rationalist movements linked to and influenced by northern French Ashkenazic scholarship, whose representatives were known as the tosafists. They stood for traditional Talmudic study, an anti-rationalistic world view, and an uncritical acceptance of the authority of Talmudic midrash. Allegorical and metaphorical interpretation of the midrash and especially of the Bible was vehemently refuted; the philosophical approach was shunned.[50]

It was in particular the allegorical exegesis of rationalist philosophers that took the controversy into its second phase in the early years of the fourteenth century. It then became a conflict between the acceptance of non-Jewish, Greek philosophy linked with the tendency to preserve the Judeo-Islamic heritage, and the rejection of alien thought, together with an ever-growing detachment from Judeo-Islamic culture. By the time this latter direction had been taken in the early years of the fourteenth century, Maimonides himself was no longer an issue, and the authority of his writings had become unquestioned. What remained in dispute were some of the issues the original controversy had brought to scholarly consciousness. In 1303 the southern French scholar Abba Mari of Lunel felt that philosophical study was being carried to extremes among other thinkers, particularly in Provence.[51] He urged the halakhic authority of his generation, Solomon ibn Adret of Barcelona, to ban the study of Greek philosophy before a student reached the age of twenty-five.[52] The actual ban was proclaimed in 1306. Since the most urgent concern was the allegorical interpretation of the Bible as practiced by some of the southern French philosophers, a second ban was therefore proclaimed, at the same date, against scholars teaching extreme allegorical interpretation.

In the debate over rationalist philosophy, a controversy developed concerning the creation,[53] and the specific images of the Sarajevo creation cycle seem to carry a message in the context of this polemic. Under the influence of Greek thought, some Jewish philosophers discussed the possibility of the eternal existence of the world, a view refuted by anti-rationalist scholars, who insisted on the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*.[54] The rationalist Shem Tov ibn Falaquera (1225–91), roughly a contemporary of Nachmanides, explained the creation in a now lost Bible commentary, partly reconstructed through quotations in the work of Samuel ibn Zarza, a scholar active in Palencia during the second half of the fourteenth century.[55] Both ibn Falaquera's and ibn Zarza's views were criticized and refuted by anti-rationalist scholars. Whereas we have no record of a personal, direct reaction by Nachmanides to ibn Falaquera's work, it is known that during the fifteenth century Don Isaac Abrabanel sharply criticized ibn Falaquera, ibn Zarza, and others, and their view on the creation.[56] Ibn Falaquera represents a platonic world view. In his philosophic work *Moreh ha-Moreh* he writes:

> It seems to me that Plato's opinion tends toward the opinion of our Torah, . . . Proof of this for me is that he said that the world came into being when it changed to being orderly after there had been no order. One can understand the literal meaning of the verses [of Genesis] that at first everything was chaotic and without order, and afterwards things were distinguished from each other and became orderly. . . . It is known that this opinion of Plato was not [deduced] in respect of investigation, for why should it be eternal in the future and not in the past?[57]

The understanding that the creation was an act of putting order into the eternally existing chaos is discussed again in ibn Falaquera's lost biblical commentary, quoted by ibn Zarza:

> Rabbi Shem Tov ibn Falaquera wrote about the verse (Gen. 1:2) "the earth was unformed (*tohu*) and void (*bohu*)" that the Aramaic translation "the earth was desolate and empty"[58] means desolate and empty of created things. The ancient scientists said that prior to this world there was unordered perpetual motion, which God afterwards restored to order, and finally He brought the soul into existence, together with the heavens. Some scientists said that light and darkness were eternal. He also wrote that some of the ancient scientists said that everything subsisted together for an endless time, and afterwards began to move, and that the intelligence began to move them.[59]

In his commentary on Genesis 1:1 Nachmanides leaves no doubt that he strictly refutes this concept of the eternal existence of the universe.[60] He opens his commentary on the Bible with what he defines as an essential principle of the Jewish religion:

> One may object that it was indeed very necessary to begin the Torah with the chapter of "In the beginning G-d created. . . ." For this is the root of faith, and he who does not believe in this and thinks the world was eternal denies the essential principle of the religion and has no Torah at all. . . .[61] [T]he simple correct explanation of the verse is as follows: "in the beginning G-d created the heavens," means He brought forth their matter from nothing.[62]

He elaborates this statement in the comments that follow:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, created all things from absolute non-existence. Now we have no expression in the sacred language for bringing forth something from nothing other than the word *bara* (created). . . . Instead He brought forth from total and absolute nothing a very thin substance devoid of corporeality but having a power of potency, fit to assume form and to proceed from potentiality into reality. This was the primary matter created by G-d; it is called by the Greeks *hyly* (matter). After the *hyly*, He did not create anything, but He formed and made things with it, and from this *hyly* He brought everything into existence and clothed the forms and put them into a finished condition. Know that the heavens and all that is in them consist of one substance, and the earth and everything that is in it consist of one substance. The Holy One, blessed be He, created these two substances from nothing; they alone were created and everything else was constructed from them. As scripture says (Is 34:11): "and he stretched over it a line of *tohu* and stones of *bohu*." The *tohu* in Hebrew or *hyly* in Greek is the line by which the craftsman delineated the plan of his structure and that which he hopes to make. . . . Similarly it is written, "they are accounted by Him as nought and *tohu* (Is 40:17)," as *tohu* comes after nothingness and there is nothing yet in it.[63]

Nachmanides stresses several points in this text: first, God created the world out of nothing and whoever explains the creation differently is a heretic. The next sentences concentrate on the meaning of the words *bara* (created), *tohu* (chaos), and *bohu* (emptiness). *Bara*, he declares, is used only for the initial act of *creatio ex nihilo*. What follows was produced, formed, or shaped, but not created. He then tries to define *tohu* and *bohu*: *tohu* is the substance created in the initial act of creation, the very substance out of which everything else was shaped and made. The issue of "form" and "shape" is important here: after the *tohu* was created, nothing else was *created*, but only shaped. This means that the *tohu* had no shape. He continues to propound that heaven and earth are each of a different substance, the heavenly substance being *tohu*, the earthly substance *bohu*. On this basis he describes *tohu* as a shapeless form, whereas *bohu* is the plan of the structure to be made:[64] "Now after having said that with one command G-d created at first the heavens and the earth and all their hosts, Scripture returns and explains that the earth after this creation was *tohu*, that is matter without substance. It became *bohu* when He clothed it with form."[65]

Bahye ben Asher's discussion of the first verse in Genesis draws on Nachmanides. He simplifies the basic lines of the exposition and also vehemently stresses the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. The second paragraph of his commentary states:

> "The earth was *tohu* and *bohu*:" *tohu* is the formless empty mass that has no name. It is what the sages, in wondering about primeval things, searched when giving an object a name. The Torah calls this mass *tohu*, the philosophers call it *hyly*. *Bohu* is this substance after it takes shape. The name *bohu* is a composite word which means "a thing that has form. . . ." And the earth after this creation was *tohu*, meaning material without substance, and it became *bohu* after it received form. . . ."[66]

Bahye's somewhat more naïve and less sophisticated discussion seems to have been the basis for the imagery of the *Sarajevo Haggadah*. Indeed, unlike Christian creation cycles, the *Sarajevo Haggadah* begins with an illustration of *tohu* and not with the first day and the creation of darkness and light. Moreover, as described above, the first panel does not show the round-topped shape, but rather two substances. In the lower part a white substance is painted in wavy horizontal lines; some of the lines are light blue. Above it, and covering about two-thirds of the panel, appears a black substance painted in vertical brush strokes. Vertical wavy golden lines intertwine with the black. The two substances are simply cut off by the picture frame, being a feature that together with the undulating brush strokes indicates shapelessness. The accompanying caption reads: "and the earth was *tohu*." Neither this, nor any of the other captions mention *bara* (created), the word used, according to Nachmanides, only for the initial act of creating the first substance.[67] Neither is the expression *bereshit* (in the beginning) quoted. The act of *creatio ex nihilo* appears to be beyond visual expression; the cycle begins with the initial, shapeless substance already created. The caption indicates that this first image is intended to show only the *tohu*. The *bohu* is not mentioned. Consequently, the panel lacks the round-topped shape, and the shapelessness of the substance is emphasized. This kind of visualization of Genesis 1:1 can only be understood, it would seem, in the light of Nachmanides or Bahye, who separate the *tohu*, the shapeless, initially created substance, from the *bohu*, the form that the substance received.

Following this distinction of *tohu* and *bohu*, Bahye develops his cosmology further. He borrows the Greek notion of four elements: fire, air (which he calls *ruach*—usually understood as "spirit" or "wind," but not "air"), water, and dust (soil or earth). The ensuing acts of "making" were basically a proper arrangement of these four elements:

> Since He started from the earth, He arranged the elements in their proper order, namely the fire and the *ruach* and the water. He mentioned "and the darkness" (Gen. 1:2),

> which is the basic fire and is dark, before mentioning the *ruach*, since the fire surrounds the *ruach*. And He mentioned the *ruach* before the water since the *ruach* circles above the waters and the waters surround the earth. . . . And scripture teaches us here, saying "the earth was *tohu* and *bohu*" (Gen. 1:2), that the earth was shaped with form and darkness which is the fire above the water, was mixed together with the dust and the two together were named *tehom* (the deep), like the waters of the ocean where dust is mixed with water . . . and the *ruach* that was blowing entered the darkness and hovered above the water.[68]

What we see, then, in the upper part of the first panel of the Sarajevo creation cycle (Fig. 1) is the black fire (the darkness) and the *ruach* hovering over it. In the lower part of the picture are the dust and the water mixed together, to depict the *tehom*.

Both Nachmanides and Bahye provide the basis for understanding the composition of the first two panels of the creation cycle. They both discuss the word *choshekh* (darkness) that appears first in verse 2 as the darkness that "covered the deep" and again in verse 4 as the darkness representing night when "God separated the light from the darkness." Both refer to the darkness of the primeval *tohu* as a "supernal darkness" and as "the darkness of fire"[69] in contrast to the darkness of the first day which is a "lack of light." In the words of Nachmanides:

> This is not "the darkness" (1:2) mentioned in the first verse which, as explained above, refers to the element of fire; rather, the "darkness" (1:4) mentioned here means the absence of light, since G-d gave a length of time to the light and decreed that it be absent afterwards until it returns.[70]

The darkness and the swaying flames pictured in the first frame create the effect of fire. The darkness in the second panel, depicting day one, is set against the light as if projecting a concept of time that measures day and night. The bare white surface on the right of this picture represents light, and the black surface on the left represents darkness. Nachmanides' commentary expounds:

> . . . and then He divided between it and the darkness by assigning to each a certain period. Light now remained before Him for the length of night, and then in the morning, He caused the light to shine upon the elements. In this way night preceded day. It is further possible that we should say that when the heavens and the earth came forth from nought into existence, as mentioned in the first verse, time came into being. For although our time consisting of minutes and hours is measured in light and darkness yet from the moment some substance came into existence time was already part of it. If so, after the heavens and the earth were created they so remained for the length of a night without light. Then He said, "Let there be light" and there was light, and He decreed that it remain the same period as the first, and that after that, it be absent from the element. Thus, "there was evening and there was morning."[71]

The straight line between the clearly defined black and white areas of the second panel (Fig. 1, top left) provides a sense of measurement of day and night. It is clear that the darkness of night is thus different from the undefined darkness of the primeval *tohu*.[72]

Whether the wavy golden lines represent the *ruach*, or the fire as darkness, it is clear that the designer of the Sarajevo picture cycle did not visualize Genesis 1:1–2 literally. The concepts of *tohu* and *bohu* are extremely ambiguous, as are the first two verses of the book of Genesis, and any visualization of the two would have called for further interpretation. In addition, one should keep in mind that the initial image of the creation cycle was not modeled after a Christian pictorial source. It appears to be the invention of the designer of the Sarajevo cycle, who sees Genesis 1:1–2 through the eyes of Bahye ben Asher and Nachmanides, his teacher. In this context the image clearly opposes the rationalist view of the eternal existence of the world.

Further examination of the rest of the creation cycle and its specific details strengthens this line of thought. For example, the space above each of the vaulted tops delineating the cosmic shape of all six days of creation is filled with concentric semi-circles forming four blue and four white arcs. The designer seems to have used this recurrent motif of alternately colored, curved lines to represent the recurring biblical expression of "and there was evening and it was morning" of each day. Nachmanides' commentary on the initial occurrence of this verse cites "some scholars"[73] who interpret it in a way he accepts: "'And there was evening and it was morning, one day' is a reference to the rotation of the sphere upon the face of the whole earth in twenty-four hours. As every moment thereof is morning in some different place and night in the opposite place."[74] Each entire day consists of evening and morning that occur simultaneously in different places. Thus the blue and white arcs forming the vaulted shape above could be understood as a graphic motif representing the notion of the spherical movement of transition from "evening" to "morning" in the heavens above.[75]

Nachmanides' school of exegesis provides the explanation for an iconographic model used repeatedly in the Sarajevo cycle. This detail represents the water mentioned in the Bible on the second day and depicted from the third panel on as wavy blue lines filling the bottom half of a sphere suspended under the celestial vault. This model of a globe with water in its lower part appeared earlier in the *Pamplona Bibles* (Fig. 12). It was apparently adopted by the designer of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* to illustrate the different acts of creation starting from the second day and continuing through the sixth. The round shape horizontally divided into two sections presents the dry land above and the sea below, illustrating the cosmological ideas known at the time and voiced by Nachmanides' school:

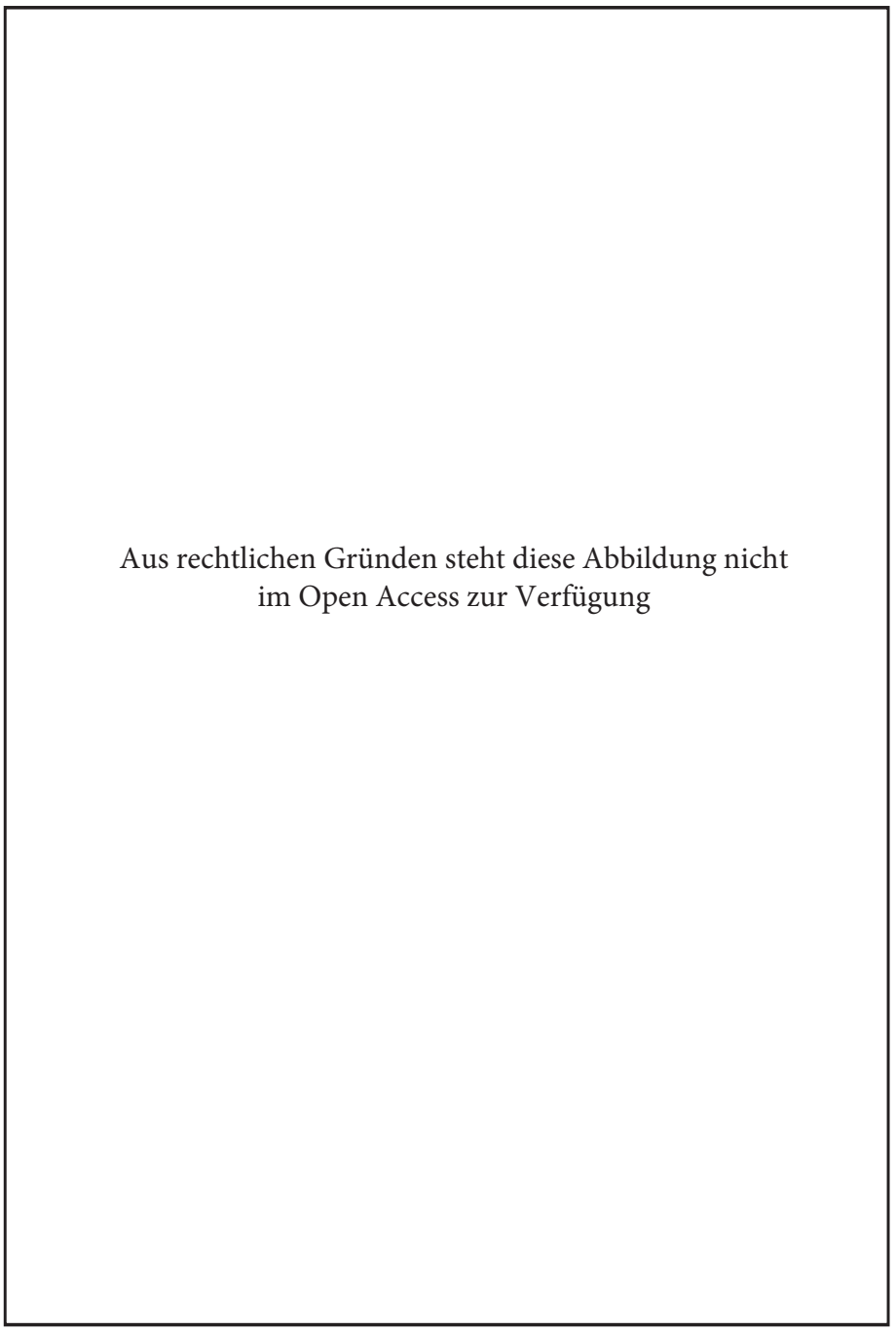

Figure 12. First day of Creation. *Pamplona Bible*; Augsburg, Universitätsbibl., lat. I, 2, lat. 4^{0}, 15, fol. 1r. (Photo: after François Bucher, *The Pamplona Bible* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970], with permission of the Universitätsbibliothek, Augsburg.)

> Or perhaps G-d's decree was that the earth be spherical, partly visible and mostly submerged in the waters, as the Greeks imagine in their proofs, apparent or real. Thus there were two decrees, that is, two matters done by the Will of G-d that are contrary to their natural inclination. For in view of the heaviness of earth [which would cause it to sink] and the lightness of the waters [which would cause them to rise], it would have been natural that the pillar of the earth be in the center and that the waters should cover it, thus surrounding it from all sides. Therefore, He said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together," that is to a lower place, and then He said, and let the dry land appear. He gave them names as they assumed these forms for at the beginning their collective name was the deep.[76]

The pictorial motif of a globe with water in its lower part used repeatedly in this Haggadah seems to capture this understanding.

Both of the panels depicting the creation of the third and fourth days display identical vegetation. The only difference is in the lighting. The fourth day (Fig. 2) is lit up by bright white patches between the same trees, bushes, and grasses that are in dark shade on the third day (Fig. 1). The idea seems to be that the creation of the third day was performed in the dark. This emphasis is in keeping with Nachmanides' interpretation[77] and repeated in Bahye's[78] comment on the verse "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens." Nachmanides says:

> Now the light was created on the first day, illuminating the elements, but when on the second day the firmament was made, it intercepted the light and prevented it from illuminating the lower elements. Thus, when the earth was created on the third day there was darkness on it and not light. And now on the fourth day the Holy One, blessed be He, desired that there be in the firmament luminaries, the light of which would reach the earth. This is the meaning of the words: "in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth," for there already was light above the firmament which did not illuminate the earth. The meaning of the words, "Let there be lights," is as follows. He decreed on the first day that from the substance of the heavens there should come forth a light for the period of the day. And now He decreed that it become corporeal and that a luminous body come forth from it which would give light during the day with a great illumination. And that another body of lesser light should come into existence to illumine at night, and He suspended both in the firmament of the heavens in order that they illumine below as well.

Additional evidence for the connection between the creation cycle and the ideas of Nachmanides' and Bahye's words may be seen in the captions appearing with each panel. These captions quote fragments of the biblical text, with one exception. The panel of the fourth day, depicting the creation of luminaries in the firmament is accompanied by the following words: "Fourth day—let there be lights—sun, moon, and stars." The text of Genesis 1:14–19 does not explicitly mention the sun and the moon, only the "lights on earth to govern day and night." It is clear that

these lights refer to sun and moon, and it is again Bahye who elaborates at some length on the sun and the moon in his commentary on the fourth day.[79]

Bahye's exegesis may be associated with yet another graphic detail. The golden rays portraying the word of God change direction in this panel. Whereas on the other days the rays shine from heaven to earth, on this day their beams are directed from the earth upward toward the sun and the moon in the heavens. Broderick relates this phenomenon to Genesis 2:5–6, which mentions mist rising from the earth and irrigating its surface.[80] These verses refer to the earth prior to the creation of the plants, as verse 5 explicitly states. The Sarajevo image, however, shows the fourth day and clearly exhibits the flora, created on the third. Bahye writes: "'To give light on earth' (Gen. 1:15), means that the lights placed above in the sky as part of the upper spheres were put there for the purpose of serving the world below."[81] The reverse order of the golden rays in the picture of the fourth day emphasizes two important issues of the creation concept as explained by Bahye. It refers to the reliance of earthly existence on the two luminaries above. Unlike before, the luminaries now enable the controlling of time on earth. As the biblical text articulates: "and let them serve as signs both for seasons, and for days and years" (Gen. 1:14). The creation of the lights in the firmament on the fourth day was to enable the marking of time (days and years),[82] the determination of the seasons,[83] and the holidays[84] on earth.

The hanging of the luminaries after the creation of vegetation reinforces the philosophical concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. It becomes obvious that the luminaries had no function in the creation of plants. Therefore, it is this sequence of events emphasized by the reversed rays that enables the creatures on earth to recognize the greatness of the creation and its Creator. This is summarized by Bahye,[85] who quotes the blessing to be said at the sight of the sun, the moon, and the stars in their proper orbits: "Blessed be the maker of the Creation."[86] This notion is further elaborated:

> . . . it was necessary to create the lights [the sun, moon, and stars] on the fourth day, after the creation of plant life on the third day to teach us the truth of the dogma of *ex nihilo*. Had it been in reverse order, where the divine utterance "let there be lights" was on the third day and the utterance "let the grass grow" on the fourth day, this would be proof of the dogma of the eternity of the universe because then the trees and the plant life would not have been the products of the divine utterance, but the result of the lights that had been created previously, because they (the lights) give energy to everything that grows. But now, since the divine utterance of "let the earth give forth vegetation" preceded the utterance of "let there be lights" this is absolute proof of the dogma of Creation. For in the time when there were no lights in the world to affect sprouting and blossoming of vegetation, God decreed "let the earth sprout forth" and vegetation appeared as a result of the divine utterance, before the power of light could bring them forth in God's order

> of things. . . . From this order of things and the order of the lights man sees and understands the majesty of God and then praises and exults Him, as it says (Isaiah 40:26), "Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these." This is the good thing, in that man acknowledges this fact they will thus know that they are created and they will not err.[87]

Another detail alluding to the influence of Nachmanides' hermeneutical approach occurs in the panel depicting the fifth day (Fig. 2). This picture represents the fowl, the fish, and the great fish. The fish are seen in the water, the fowl at the top of the trees, but in addition, on the ground appear four-legged animals, which were created on the sixth day, not on the fifth. In comparison, the *Morgan Bible* (Fig. 13) shows fish (including the great fish) in the water and birds flying above the earth, but no four-legged animals. These appear—in accordance with the biblical account—on the sixth day. The deviation from the text might be due to Nachmanides' explanation that the blessing uttered on the fifth day is not mentioned on the sixth day for cattle and beasts, since, he thought, they were included in the blessing of the fifth day:

> "And G-d blessed them saying," He decreed the blessing on them and said of them that they should be fruitful and multiply, meaning that they should bring forth abundantly, that one creature should bring forth many like itself. . . . Nor did He mention a blessing on the sixth day for cattle and beasts because in the decree of abundancy which He decreed for the moving souls in the waters there were *included* the moving souls on the earth, as all living souls that do not speak are in the same class of creation.[88]

The four-legged animals appear in the *Sarajevo Haggadah* again as expected, in the creation of the sixth day, together with Adam who is shown seated on the ground surrounded by the animals. The golden rays shine on him as he receives "into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7). Adam's posture and the rays shining on him strikingly recall parallels in the Byzantine Octateuchs (Fig. 14). Again it is interesting to note the ideas expressed by Nachmanides on this matter:

> "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea," . . . his intent is to say what I have mentioned, that the formation of man as regarding his spirit, namely, the soul which is in the blood, that was done from the earth, just as in the command of formation of the beasts and cattle. For the souls of all moving things were made at one time, and afterwards He created bodies for them. First He made the bodies of the cattle and the beasts, and then the body of man into whom He imparted this soul [which resides in the blood and is akin to that of the cattle and beasts], and afterwards He breathed into him a higher soul. For it is concerning this separate soul that a special command was devoted by G-d Who gave it, as it is written, "And He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen. 2:7).[89]

Figure 13. Creation. *Morgan Bible*; PML, M. 638, fol. 1v. (Photo: Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.)

The figure of Adam in the picture of the sixth day articulates visually the commentary, "first He made the bodies of the cattle and the beasts, and then the body of man into whom He imparted this soul . . . and afterwards He breathed into him a higher soul."

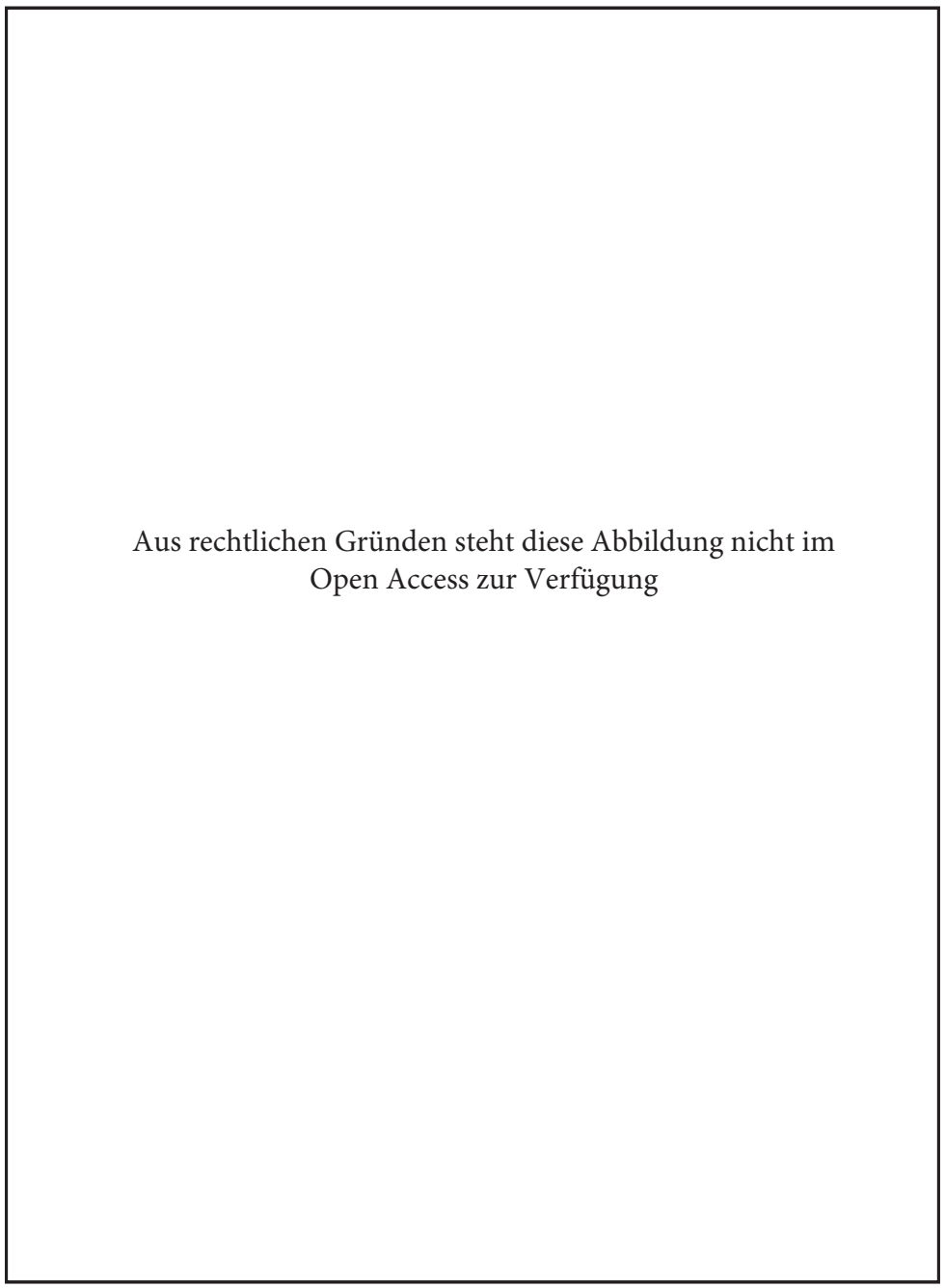

Figure 14. Creation of Adam. Octateuch, Bibl. Vat., cod. gr. 746, fol. 30r. (Photo: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.)

Man as the pinnacle of creation is represented in the panel of the seventh day (Fig. 2). Here man imitates the divine act of rest on the seventh day. The designer of the cycle transforms the portrayal of man on the Sabbath into the crowning glory of the entire creation. In this context it is striking that the panel illustrating the seventh day is narrower than the panels depicting the six days of creation. There can be no doubt that this figure is a man[90] and not God, as in Christian parallels. His appearance parallels that of the Israelites in the biblical cycle throughout, and of the contemporary Jews in the ritual scenes, as in the depiction of the community leaving the synagogue (Fig. 8). The viewer seeing the Jew resting on the Sabbath in the closing picture of the creation cycle is drawn back to the opening picture (Fig. 1), which has a frame of exactly the same size. Both the first and the last frame are narrower than the frames of the other panels, and both of them are presented without the round-topped rectangular shape. In the Sabbath image the round-topped shape was transformed into an architectural setting. As we argued above, the first panel, captioned "and the earth was void," alludes to the act of *creatio ex nihilo*. It depicts Nachmanides' interpretation of the biblical text: "*bereshit bara Elohim*—in the beginning God created . . . and the earth was unformed and void" (Gen. 1:1–2). This means that in the beginning God created the initial, shapeless substance that was the *tohu*. The last panel depicting the Sabbath rest illustrates the text describing the accomplishment of creation together with the new thrust that was to follow: ". . . *bara Elohim la'asot*—he rested from all His work which He had made" (literally created to make, Gen. 2:3).

Bahye in his commentary on this verse quotes Nachmanides to bring out both the use of the words *bara Elohim* and of the infinitive form of the word *la'asot* (to make) at the end of the verse:

> "Which God in creating had made": Nachmanides interpreted that He rested from all his work which He created out of nothing; to make from it all the works mentioned on the six days. Thus the verse states that God rested from creating and forming—from the creation He created on the first day, and from the formation He formed on the rest of the days. It is possible to explain that the conclusion of the account of the creation, "*bara Elohim*" (Gen. 2:3), being the same expression as "in the beginning *bara Elohim*" (Gen. 1:1) is designed to connect everything that had been created to the one Creator in order to teach us that He, may He be blessed, who started it all in the beginning, concluded it all. And in ending the verse with the word *la'asot* (to make) it tells us that since He, may He be blessed, created everything and brought forth everything that is, out of nothing, He thereby instructed those living *la'asot*—to make something from something existing—henceforth.[91]

The plan of the eight panels comprising the creation cycle in the *Sarajevo Haggadah* suggests that the designer decided to break the taboo on visualizing the

story of creation with the purpose of stressing the ideas presented by this commentary. The overall design of the frames seems to emphasize this. The first and last panels are identical in size, whereas the other six are wider and include the round-topped shape. The first narrow panel depicting the *tohu*, gives visual expression to the creation *ex nihilo*. The last panel, representing the completion of creation, expresses the words *bara Elohim la'asot*, which means that man is obligated to continue the act of creation by continuing to make something from something existing.

The vaulted rectangle of the six days of creation alludes to the connection between the created world and the building of the tabernacle-temple according to the divine design shown to Moses on Mount Sinai. The scheme of the tabernacle-temple symbolizes man's ability to create something from something existing and thus imitate God who, having created the world *ex nihilo* on the first day, gave it form during the other days.

The creation cycle of the *Sarajevo Haggadah* is unique in Jewish art and in its relation to Christian parallels. In view of the deliberate avoidance of the creation theme in the Jewish visual arts prior to the fourteenth century, the eight panels picturing the Hexaemeron stand out as a daring enterprise. As the foregoing analysis shows, the cycle appears as a visual statement of a particular doctrine of creation linked with the exegetical school of Nachmanides and his followers. The designer of the cycle did not begin it with the initial act of creation, but rather with a depiction of the *tohu*, the shapeless primal matter, the darkness of fire in contrast to the darkness that is represented opposite the light on the first day. He depicted the entire six days of creation under blue and white arcs expressing the structure of "and it was evening and it was morning." He painted the vegetation of the third day in dark colors as a contrast to the bright colors of the same vegetation on the fourth day. He presented the light rays in a reversed position to suggest the importance of the lights in controlling ordinary and sacred time on earth. He used various details in depicting the fifth, sixth, and seventh days to emphasize God's absolute authority over the entire created world and the partnership of man in the act of creation. And finally, he added the symbolic convention of the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle to enclose each of the six days of creation, thus visualizing the act of giving form and shape (*bohu*) to the primal matter (*tohu*).

NOTES

This essay is dedicated to Elisheva Revel-Neher with warm appreciation.

1. Sarajevo, Bosnian National Museum. For a recent facsimile edition, see Eugen Werber, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* (Belgrade and Sarajevo: Prosveta-Svjetlost, 1999).

2. David H. Müller and Julius von Schlosser, *Die Haggadah von Sarajevo. Eine spanisch-jüdische Bilderhandschrift des Mittelalters* (Vienna: Alfred Holder, 1898).

3. On this phenomenon in other Sephardic picture cycles, see Katrin Kogman-Appel, "The Sephardic Picture Cycles and the Rabbinic Tradition: Continuity and Innovation in Jewish Iconography," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 60 (1997): 451–81.

4. Cecil Roth, *The Sarajevo Haggadah* (Belgrade: Jugoslavija, 1963).

5. Herbert R. Broderick, "Observations on the Creation Cycle of the Sarajevo Haggadah," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 47 (1984): 320–32.

6. On possible Christian models, see also Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Der Exoduszyklus der Sarajevo-Haggada: Bemerkungen zur Arbeitsweise spätmittelalterlicher jüdischer Illuminatoren und ihrem Umgang mit Vorlagen," *Gesta* 35 (1996): 111–27.

7. We find depictions of the forming of Adam and Eve in two Sephardic Haggadot. For the first, BL, Or. 2884, fols. 1v, 2r, see Bezalel Narkiss, Aliza Cohen-Mushlin, and Anat Tcherikover, *Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles: A Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1: *The Spanish and Portuguese Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the British Academy, 1982), figs. 155–6. For the second, BL, Add. 27210 (*Golden Haggadah*), fol. 2v, see Bezalel Narkiss, *The Golden Haggadah* (London: British Library, 1997), fig. 17; Ursula Schubert, "Die Erschaffung Adams in einer spanischen Haggadah-Handschrift des 14. Jahrhundert (Br. Mus. Or. 2884) und ihre spätantike jüdische Bildvorlage," *Kairos* 18 (1976): 213–17; Kogman-Appel, "Sephardic Picture Cycles," 461–3; and Kogman-Appel, "Coping with Christian Pictorial Sources: What Did Jewish Miniaturists *Not* Paint?," *Speculum* 75 (2000): 827–8.

8. Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Bible and Aggadah Visualized: The Place of Pictorial Narrative in Late Medieval Sephardic Culture* (in preparation).

9. Recent scholarship on medieval art and iconography in particular has stressed the need for a whole range of analytical means beyond texts; see Brendan Cassidy, "Introduction: Iconography, Texts, and Audiences," in Brendan Cassidy, ed., *Iconography at the Crossroads. Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 23–24 March 1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Index of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1993), 3–16; and Colum Hourihane, "Introduction," in Colum Hourihane, ed., *Image and Belief: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Index of Christian Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, Index of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, 1999), 3–10. The present article does not treat texts as being translated into images, but rather as documents of a particular world view expressed in the imagery. It becomes evident that the images are deeply imbued with concepts articulated in textual sources of the period. For further recent approaches to text and image, see Henry Maguire, *Earth and Ocean. The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987) and John Lowden, *The Making of the Bibles Moralisées*, 2 vols. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

10. Kogman-Appel, "Coping with Christian Pictorial Sources."

11. For sources see Daniel Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1977), 121.

12. Ellen S. Saltman, "The 'Forbidden Image' in Jewish Art," *Journal of Jewish Art* 8 (1981): 42–53.

13. For a full discussion of Jewish approaches to these two dogmas, see Lasker, *Philosophical Polemics*, chs. 4, 5.

14. Lasker, *Philosophical Polemics*, 105, with sources.

15. By "designer" we mean the person who stood behind the imagery, the ideas, and the messages communicated. Since we do not know enough about the relationship between patrons, artists, and any scholar or spiritual leader who might have nourished the ideas visualized, we prefer to use this general and impersonal form.

16. Broderick, "Observations," 329, compared this image to that in the *Morgan Bible*, PML, M.638, fols. 1r, 1v; see Sydney C. Cockerell, *Old Testament Miniatures: A Medieval Picture Book with 283 Paintings from the Creation to the Story of David* (London: Phaidon Press, 1975), 25–8.

17. Elisabeth Revel-Neher, *L'arche d'alliance dans l'art juif et chrétien du second au dixième siècles: Le Signe de la Rencontre* (Paris: Association des amis des études archéologiques byzantino-slaves et du christianisme oriental, 1984), 72–80. Other interpretations of the object on the Bar Kokhba coins offered before and after the publication of Revel-Neher's book are summarized in Leo Mildenberg, *The Coinage of the Bar Kokhba War* (Aarau: Verlag Sauerlander, 1984), 31–42; and Yaakov Meshorer, *A Treasury of Jewish Coins* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 1997), 127–8. The evidence of later finds, however, seems to make it clear that the shape was indeed adopted as a convention for the Ark; see Herbert L. Kessler, "Gazing at the Future: The Parousia Miniature in Vatican gr. 699," in Doula Mouriki and Christopher Moss, eds., *Byzantine East, Latin West Art: Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann* (Princeton: Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University and Princeton University Press, 1995), 365–75.

18. Revel-Neher, *L'arche d'alliance*, 81–6.

19. The mosaic floor of the chapel of Theotokos is dated to the seventh century and dedicated to the memory of Moses. In front of the altar appears an image of a rectangular structure with a dome on top, symbolizing the Temple in Jerusalem. The structure is flanked by two rams and two bulls (erased by the iconoclasts).

20. Wanda Wolska-Conus, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes: Théologie et science au VI siècle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1962); Wolska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustes. Topographie chrétienne* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1968–1973); Kurt Weitzmann, "The Study of Byzantine Book Illumination, Past, Present, and Future," in *The Place of Book Illumination in Byzantine Art*, Kurt Weitzmann, et al., eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 58–9.

21. The original manuscript of the work is lost. In Book II, the author writes that he visited Adule at the time when the king went to war with the Homerites in Arabia. This battle took place in 522 during the reign of Justinian (518–27). The book was apparently written twenty-five years later, in 547.

22. E.g., Bibl. Vat., cod. gr. 699 (9th c.); Sinai, Saint Catherine, cod. gr. 1186; Florence, Biblioteca Laurentiana, Plut. IX 28 (11th c.).

23. Wanda Wolska-Conus, "Stéphanos d'Athènes et Stéphanos d'Alexandrie: essai d'identification et de biographie," *Revue des études byzantines* 47 (1989): 28–30.

24. J. W. McCrindle, trans., *The Christian Topography of Cosmas, an Egyptian Monk* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1897), 110: "He then afterwards directed him to construct the tabernacle according to the pattern which he had seen in the mountain—being a pattern, so to say, of the whole world. He therefore made the tabernacle, designing that as far as possible it should be a copy of the figure of the world."

25. They are extensively discussed by Elisabeth Revel-Neher, *Le Témoignage de l'Absence: Les objets du sanctuaire à Byzance et dans l'art juif du XI au XV siècles* (Paris: De Boccard, 1998), 20–5, 97–101, 117–20.

26. Broderick, "Observations," 323.

27. Jean Lassus, "La Création du monde dans les Octateuques Byzantins du 12e siècle," *Monuments et Memoires* 62 (1979): 85–148; Cynthia Hahn, "The Creation of the Cosmos: Genesis Illustration in the Octateuchs," *Cahiers archéologiques* 28 (1979): 29–40; and Leslie Brubaker, "The Tabernacle Miniatures of the Byzantine Octateuchs," *Actes du XV Congrès International d'Etudes Byzantines,* II: *Art et Archéologie* (Athens: Association Internationale des Études Byzantines, 1981), 73–92. On the Octateuchs in general, see Kurt Weitzmann and Massimo Bernabò, *The Byzantine Octateuchs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). On the relationship between the manuscripts of the *Christian Topography* and the Octateuchs and the question whether the images of the topography were based on the hypothetical late antique prototype of the Octateuchs proposed by Weitzmann, see Doula Mouriki-Charalambous, "The Octateuch Miniatures of the Byzantine Manuscripts of Cosmas Indicopleustes" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Univ., 1970); and Elisabeth Revel-Neher, "Some Remarks on the Iconographical Sources of the Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes," *Kairos* 32–33 (1990–91): 78–97. Other scholars reject Weitzmann's suggestion of an early Octateuch prototype, and assume rather that any iconographic relation between the two is the result of the middle Byzantine creators of the Octateuchs using the *Topography* among other sources; see especially John Lowden, *The Octateuchs. A Study in Byzantine Manuscript Illustration* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 86–93.

28. On the decoration of Sephardic Bibles, see Katrin Kogman-Appel, *Jewish Art Between Islam and Christianity: The Decoration of Hebrew Bibles in Spain* (in Hebrew; Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2001); on the iconography of the temple images, see in particular, 76–80.

29. Broderick, "Observations," 322–5; and Revel-Neher, *Témoignage*, 118.

30. Shulamit Laderman, "'*Ma-aseh Ha-Mishkan*' and '*Ma-aseh Bereshit*'—The Pentateuchal Tabernacle: A Symbolic Model of the Creation of the World, as Found in Jewish and Byzantine-Christian Iconography" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2000).

31. "Pseudo-Philo," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, James H. Charlesworth, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:297–377; "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:615–52; "Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs—Testament of Levy," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:788–95; and "(Ethiopic Apocalyse of) Enoch," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:5–89. See also Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 47–8.

32. Philo, *De vita Mosis* 2:31–135, Francis H. Colson, ed., Loeb Classical Library, vol. 6 (London: W. Heinemann, 1939), 464–514; *De specialibus legibus* 1:66–97, Francis H. Colson, ed., Loeb Classical Library, vol. 7 (London: W. Heinemann, 1937), 136–54; and *Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum* 2:51–124, Ralph Marcus, trans., Loeb Classical Library, suppl. 2 (London: W. Heinemann, 1953), 97–176.

33. Josephus, *Antiquitates* 3:102–87, Henry St. J. Thackeray, ed., Loeb Classical Library, vol. 4 (London: W. Heinemann, 1930), 364–406.

34. Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965); and Rachel Elior, "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines, Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4 (1997): 222.

35. *Shmot Rabbah*, on Exod. 33:1–40:4, 48:1–52:5, Simon M. Lehrman, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Exodus* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 414–66, 546–81; *Midrash Tadshe*, in Abraham Epstein, *From Jewish Antiquities* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1957), 2:130–71; *Bamidbar Rabbah*, on Num. 7:1, Judah J. Slotki, trans., *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* (London: Soncino Press, 1939), 1:483, 484; *Bereshit Rabbati*, Chanoch Albeck, ed. (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1940), 32.

36. Shulamit Laderman, "Textual Parallelism between a Byzantine Text and the Midrashim attributed to Moshe Hadarshan," *Tarbitz* (in Hebrew; forthcoming 2002).

37. Israel M. Ta-Shema, "Rabbi Moses Hadarshan and the Apocryphal Literature," in *Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (Jerusalem: Touro Graduate School of Jewish Studies, 2001), in Hebrew, with English summary in supplement (June 2001), v–vi.

38. Biblical quotations in English follow *The Oxford Study Bible: Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha*, M. Jack Suggs, Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, and James R. Mueller, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). Divergences result from our own translations. Biblical verses that appear as part of quotations from later sources follow the published translations of the latter.

39. Bahye ben Asher, *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, R. Hayyim Dov Chavel, ed. (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1967), on Exod. 39:43, 2:383–84. For an annotated English version, see Eliyahu Munk, trans., *Rabbi Bachya ben Asher Torah Commentary* (Jerusalem: Lampda Publishers, 1998). Since this is not a literal but an interpretative annotated translation, quotations from Bahye's text are based on the Hebrew original. We thank Rabbi Paul S. Laderman for his translation.

40. Ibid., on Exod. 31:2, 320–21.

41. In the eleventh century Ramon Berenguer I acquired special interests in Languedoc when he inherited the dominions of his nephew Roger III, Count of Carcassonne and Razès, Viscount of Béziers and Agde; see Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 195. Even when Languedoc was dominated by the counts of Toulouse (since 1213) the cultural and linguistic links between Catalonia and Languedoc remained.

42. For an exchange of ideas among Jewish scholars, see Benjamin Zeev Benedikt, *The Torah Center in Provence* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1985), 17–18.

43. Broderick, "Observations," 331–2.

44. Revel-Neher, *Témoignage*, 103–22.

45. Leon, Colegiata San Isidoro, cod. 2 and cod. 3; see John W. Williams, "The Bible in Spain," in John W. Williams, ed., *Imaging the Early Medieval Bible* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 179–21; on the tabernacle in particular, see 200–8.

46. Madrid, Academia della Historia, Museo Real, cod. 2–3; see Williams, "Bible in Spain," 214 and n. 92.

47. Augsburg, Univ. Lib., former Harburg collection, MS I, 2; Amiens, Bibl. Mun., lat. 108; see François Bucher, *The Pamplona Bibles. A Facsimile Compiled from Two Picture Bibles with Martyrologies Commissioned by King Sancho el Fuerte of Navarra (1194–1234), Amiens, Manuscrit latin 108 and Harburg, MS I, 2* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

48. For brief surveys of Sephardic Bible exegesis, see Uriel Simon, "The Spanish School of Biblical Interpretation," in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, Haim Beinart, ed. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1992), 1:115–36; and Avraham Grossman, "Biblical Exegesis in Spain during the 13th–15th Centuries," in *Moreshet Sepharad*, 1:137–46.

49. For the so-called Maimonidean controversy, see Daniel J. Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism and the Maimonidean Controversy 1180–1240* (Leiden: Brill, 1965); Joseph Shatzmiller, "For a Picture of the First Controversy Surrounding the Works of Maimonides," *Zion* 34 (1969): 126–44 (in Hebrew); Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition. The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Maurice Kriegel, *Les juifs à la fin du Moyen Age dans*

l'Europe méditerranéenne (Paris: Hachette, 1979), 145–79; Charles Touati, "Les deux conflits autour de Maimonide et des études philosophiques," *Juifs et judaïsme de Languedoc*, Cahièrs de Fanjeaux 12 (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1977), 173–84.

50. Elsewhere it has been proposed to link the aniconic decoration programs of the Sephardic Bibles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with the climate of waning Jewish-Islamic culture and its place in the ambience of cultural struggle and transition; see Katrin Kogman-Appel, "Hebrew Manuscript Painting: Signs of a Culture in Transition in Late Medieval Spain," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002): 246–72.

51. In the Jewish medieval tradition, as well as in modern Jewish scholarship, "Provence" often applies to the entire southern French region neighboring Catalonia; see Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority. The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 172. In historical terms, Provence is only the area east of the Rhone, whereas the region between the Rhone and Narbonne should be referred to as "Languedoc."

52. On this phase of the controversy, see Silver, *Maimonidean Criticism*, 41; Charles Touati, *Prophètes, talmudistes, philosophes* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1990), 201–17; Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry: Community and Society in the Crown of Aragon, 1213–1327* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 305–7; and Ram Ben-Shalom, "Communication and Propaganda between Provence and Spain: The Controversy over Extreme Allegorization," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora. The Pre-modern World*, Sophia Menache, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 171–225. For details and two different views on the political issues involved in the banning, see Marc Saperstein, "The Conflict over the Rashba's Herem on Philosophical Study: A Political Perspective," *Jewish History* 1/2 (1986): 27–38; and Ram Ben-Shalom, "The Ban Placed by the Community of Barcelona on the Study of Philosophy and Allegorical Preaching—A New Study," *Revue des études juives* 159 (2000): 387–404.

53. For more information on rabbinic concepts of the creation, see Norbert M. Samuelson, *The First Seven Days. A Philosophical Commentary on the Creation of Genesis* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1992).

54. For general background on the *creatio ex nihilo,* see the bibliography in Samuelson, *First Seven Days,* 169–72.

55. Raphael Jospe and Dov Schwartz, "Shem Tov Ibn Falaquera's Lost Bible Commentary," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 64 (1993): 167–201.

56. Ibid., 172.

57. Shem Tov ibn Falaquera, *Moreh ha-Moreh* 2, 13; our quotation follows the translation by Jospe and Schwartz, "Ibn Falaquera," 173.

58. *Targum Onqelos* 1, 2; see Moses Aberbach and Bernard Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Center for Judaic Studies; Denver: University of Denver, 1982), 20–1.

59. Quotation from Samuel ibn Zarza, *Mikhlol Yofi*, pt. 1, ch. 5, quoted in translation by Jospe and Schwartz, "Ibn Falaquera," 191.

60. Maimonides discussed the issue of *creatio ex nihilo* at length, and himself struggled with the concept; see *The Guide of the Perplexed of Maimonides*, Michael Friedlander, trans. (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 133–8; Maimonides, however, did not refute the belief in *creatio ex nihilo*. The view of ibn Falaquera and others is thus an extreme one. For a summary of medieval Sephardic views on the creation, see Norbert M. Samuelson, *Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 136–43.

61. Nachmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, vol. 1: *Genesis*, R. Charles B. Chavel, trans. (New York: Shilo Publishing House, 1971), 17.

62. Ibid., on Gen. 1:3, 25.

63. Ibid., on Gen. 1:1, 23–24.

64. Nachmanides relied in part on earlier sources; see Menahem M. Kasher, *Torah Shlemah: Talmudic–Midrashic Encyclopedia of the Pentateuch*, vol. 1: *Genesis* (in Hebrew; New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1949), 62, n. 328; for example, the distinction between the shapeless *tohu* and the *bohu* as substance that has received form is found in mystic literature, such as *Sefer Yetsira* and *Sefer Bahir*. It was known also to the southern French cabbalist R. Levi ben Solomon of Lunel, as can be concluded from a later quotation by R. Moses Burtil; see Kasher, *Torah Shlemah*, 1:62, n. 325. Finally, it is also found in the *Book of Zohar* written shortly after Nachmanides' death; *The Zohar* 16a, Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, trans., 2nd ed. (London: Soncino Press, 1984), 66–7. It is interesting to note, however, that the mystic texts cope with the question of the eternity of the world very differently from Nachmanides' view: "'Now the earth had been void and without form.' The word hoithah (was) being a pluperfect implies that the earth had been previously" (*Zohar*, 66). Nachmanides' opening sentences make it quite clear that he rejects this view as heretical.

65. Nachmanides, on Gen. 1:3, 25–6.

66. Bahye ben Asher, on Gen. 1:2, 15–16.

67. See Samuelson, *Judaism*, 137: *bara* means "bringing forth matter from absolutely nothing at all by an act of will without the imposition of any intermediary."

68. Bahye ben Asher, on Gen. 1:2, 16. The meaning of *ruach* as either spirit or explicitly the spirit of God remains ambiguous in Bahye's text. A note by Chavel (ibid., 16) explains that the spirit refers to "the spirit of God was hovering above the water (Gen. 1:2)."

69. A similar, but not identical description of the darkness as fire is found in *The Zohar*, 16a, 67.

70. Nachmanides, on Gen. 1:4, 31.

71. Ibid., on Gen. 1:5, 31–32.

72. This imagery recalls the pictorial version of the Octateuchs, for example, Bibl. Vat., cod. gr. 747, fol. 15r, and cod. gr. 746, fol. 20v, both using personifications of the day and the night; see Weitzmann and Bernabo, *Octateuchs*, 17, figs. 21, 24.

73. "Some scholars." In his annotations Chavel interprets this expression to mean Abraham ibn Ezra; see Nachmanides, 33, n. 56.

74. Nachmanides, on Gen. 1:5, 33.

75. Werber, *Sarajevo Haggadah*, 23, expresses the opinion that "the firmament is shown as seven blue and white arcs, in compliance with early Jewish beliefs." This view does not seem to fit the actual number of arcs. The total number of arcs (blue and white) is eight, and if one counts only the white or only the blue arcs, they add up to four. For another interpretation as spheres, see also Broderick, "Observations," 325, n. 21.

76. Nachmanides, on Gen. 1:9, 38–9.

77. Ibid., Gen. 1:14, 42.

78. Bahye ben Asher, on Gen. 1:14, 32–4.

79. Ibid., Gen. 1:18, 35–7.

80. Broderick, "Observations," 326.

81. Bayhe ben Asher, on Gen. 1:4, 28.

82. Nachmanides, on Gen. 1:14, 44: "'And for days'—This means the length of day and the length of night. 'And years'—The luminaries are to complete their orbit and then traverse again the same course they followed, thus making the solar year consist of 365 days and the lunar year consist of [lunar cycles, each approximately] 30 days."

83. Ibid.: "And for seasons—this means seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter."

84. Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac), *Commentary on the Pentateuch*, Gen. 1:14. This text was frequently quoted by Nachmanides.

85. Bahye ben Asher, on Gen. 1:14, 32.

86. Babylonian *Talmud, Berachot* 59b; for an English version see *The Talmud of Babylonia. An American Translation*, vol. 1: *Tractate Berakhot*, Jacob Neusner, trans. (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984), 399.

87. Bahye ben Asher, on Gen. 1:18, 37.

88. Nachmanides, on Gen. 1:22, 50 (our emphasis).

89. Ibid., Gen. 1:26, 54.

90. As to this assertion as opposed to earlier hypotheses that it was God who is represented, see the summary by Saltman, "Forbidden Image."

91. Bahye ben Asher, on Gen. 2:3, 53–54.

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