

Jewish Interest in Astrology during the Hellenistic and Roman Period

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I. New Perspectives and Methodology

From the time of the Enlightenment and the earliest beginnings in the historical and critical study of the Bible it has been generally assumed that medieval Jews introduced into Judaism a fascination with the zodiac and astrology. The consensus among scholars seems to have been that prior to the middle ages Jews

Abbreviations:

ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt, eds. H. TEMPORINI-W. HAASE (Berlin-New York 1972 ff.)
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
SBSL	Sources for Biblical Study
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCS	Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha

were unaffected by such 'pagan' ideas.¹ The recovery of Jewish astrological writings from the hellenistic and Roman periods, and the discovery of early Palestinian synagogues that were decorated with zodiacal symbols have cumulatively collapsed the old consensus. The present chapter seeks to introduce and explain the new perspective that has begun to emerge regarding Jewish interest in astrology during the hellenistic and Roman period.² It looks at the debates over astrology preserved in the Talmud, scans the major relevant sections in the Pseudepigrapha — introducing a Jewish astrological document that should become a new addition to the Pseudepigrapha —, reviews the astrological documents found in Cave 4 near Khirbet Qumran, and points again to the abundant evidence of zodiacal wheels and other astrological symbols in early Palestinian synagogues. The necessary breadth of this chapter precludes exhaustive discussions in any area.

At the outset it is wise to clarify that we now possess undeniable evidence of Jewish interest in astrology by at least the first century B.C. There is, of course, abundant data to prove that many pagan ideas when borrowed by Jews were recast in light of Jewish traditions; in the past, this insight misled several scholars into thinking that Jewish 'orthodoxy' protected Jews from being corrupted by astrological beliefs. Some Jews, especially during the Roman period, borrowed astrological images without accepting the metaphysical system and the claim of cosmic influence on man, nature, and history that these images originally denoted (see fig. 1, plates I and III). Yet the following discussion reveals why it is impossible either to conclude that only astrological images or symbols were borrowed, or to dismiss astrological interests and beliefs within Judaism as merely an aberrant part of a sectarian fringe.

The complexity of the question regarding the origin of Jewish interest in astrology demands a refined methodology. Documents widely separated chronologically or geographically need to be examined separately and one should not proceed as if all Jews of the Greco-Roman period shared a unifying perspective and as if a monolithic system had been evolving majestically through the centuries.³ Hence, passages in the Talmud, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea

¹ M. R. LEHMAN has even suggested recently that astrology never obtained a foothold within Judaism, remaining only a sectarian phenomenon "at variance with normative Judaism." See his 'New Light on Astrology in Qumran and the Talmud' (Revue de Qumran 32 [1975] 599-602). I am grateful to ERIC MEYERS and KALMAN BLAND, good friends and revered colleagues, for numerous enriching discussions. The illustrations published herein are the renderings produced by the artist at the Morehead Planetarium of the University of North Carolina, JERRIE PITTARD CHARLESWORTH, my wife. I am most grateful to her for this assistance.

² Portions of this chapter appeared earlier as 'Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues' (HTR 70 [1977] 183-200). It is used herein thanks to the permission of the Editors of the 'HTR' ("Copyright 1977 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College"). That article is expanded herein; illustrations and plates are now included.

³ It is difficult sometimes to follow E. E. URBACH (The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs [2 vols.; Jerusalem, 1975]); he does not distinguish between early documents, like the Pseudepigrapha, and later writings, like the Talmud. It is misleading and confusing to



Scrolls should be studied separately. Second, literary data, which are couched in a language that tends to display an intended meaning, are characteristically different from archaeological symbols, which belong to a language that only points towards an intended but often inexpressible thought. Literary evidence, therefore, in which astrological images are often linked with astrological beliefs must initially be separated from archaeological data in which zodiacal motifs sometimes are apparently subordinated to traditional and cultic Jewish symbols. Likewise, with the recognition of the rich variety of perspectives held by Palestinian Jews during the hellenistic and Roman periods, it is infelicitous to use literary data, whose thought might be lucid but whose provenance is usually obscure, to interpret archaeological symbols, whose thought is opaque but provenance clear. Literature must not be seen too facily as a hermeneutical tool for clarifying ambiguous art symbols. Hence, the discussion of the literary evidence is separated from and precedes an examination of the archaeological evidence. Third, symbols can be separated from the matrix in which they are conceived; it is necessary, therefore, to distinguish an astrological image or symbol, such as the zodiac, from the astrological belief that celestial bodies control the daily actions and future destinies of terrestrial affairs. So significant is the final caveat that it is expedient to amplify it with an example.

Zodiacal symbols were sometimes demythologized from non-Jewish religions and remythologized in Jewish categories. A good example is the tradition of thirty-six hidden just men, upon whom hangs the daily fate of the world. Abaye, a Babylonian teacher of the fourth century, claimed that the thirty-six just men, called Lamedvovniks by Ashkenazic Hasidim (German and Polish Jews), daily receive the Divine Countenance. This Jewish idea, as GERSHOM SCHOLEM, following ZOFIA AMEISENOWA, suggests, might well have originated in the astrological belief that there are thirty-six stellar gods (*decani*), each of whom controls ten degrees of the zodiac or ten days of the year.⁴ If this derivation is accurate then the Jewish custodians of the world are no longer cosmological powers but thirty-six zaddikim or just men. An astrological belief was reminted into a Jewish idea.

Even though astrological beliefs can be traced back to at least 1000 B.C. (Enuma Anu Enlil)⁵ – and perhaps even back to the Old Babylonian King

assume that the first-century Jewish thought flows smoothly into the sixth century. A similar critique of URBACH has been published recently by J. NEUSNER, *Method and Substance in the History of Judaic Ideas: An Exercise*, in: *Jews, Greeks, and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity*. W. D. Davies Festschrift, eds. R. HAMERTON-KELLY and R. SCROGGS (SJLA 21; Leiden, 1976) pp. 89–111; cf. also IDEM, *The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from A.D. 70 to 100*, in: ANRW II 19.2, ed W. HAASE (Berlin–New York, 1979) pp. 3–42, especially pp. 4–16 (“Two Approaches to the Use of Sources of Rabbinism: Traditional and Critical”).

⁴ See G. SCHOLEM, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York, 1971) pp. 251–56.

⁵ See the translation and discussion in H. F. W. SAGGS, *The Greatness That was Babylon* (London, 1962) pp. 455f.; the translation is reprinted in B. O. LONG, *Astrology, The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*, 1976, pp. 76–78 (also see the bibliography cited on p. 78).

The third section, which extends from line 45 of 156a to line 37 of 156b, is the most intriguing. It is neither a compromise with astrology nor an astrological belief; it is a record of a debate between R. Hanina and R. Johanan Bar Nappaha (c. 180–279), a Palestinian Amora and founder of the academy at Tiberias. The former argued that the planets influence wisdom and wealth, and that “Israel stands under astrological influence” (איתמר רבי חנינא אומר מול מחכים מול מעשיר ויש) (מול לישראל). The latter replied, “Israel is immune from astrological influence” (רבי יוחנן אומר אין מול לישראל).¹²

R. Johanan’s teaching is supported in the Babylonian Talmud, and is affirmed by a reference to Jeremiah 10: 2 in which the Lord exhorts Israel neither to learn the way of the nations nor to be dismayed at the signs of heaven (ומאתות השמים) (אליהם). Rab (Abba b. Aivu, 3d cent.), a Babylonian Amora and founder of the academy at Sura, also claims “that Israel is immune from astrological influence.” Three stories attributed to Samuel (2d to 3d cent.) and R. Nahman b. Isaac (died c. 356), and to one of the most outstanding Tannaim, R. Akiba (c. 50–135) focus upon astrological predictions. The stories, however, do not prove the futility of astrology. As H. FREEDMAN comments in his notes to b. Shabbat 156b, “From these stories we see that belief in planetary influence was not entirely rejected, but that these rabbis held that it might be counteracted by good deeds.” The first two stories reveal the attempt to diminish the force of astrology, since any counteraction of astrological predictions vitiates the claim and impact of astrology. The third story, however, relates how a prediction by the astrologers comes true as R. Nahman b. Isaac’s head covering falls off and he steals (lit. bites off a cluster) from another’s palm tree. The astrologers had told his mother, “Your son will be a thief” (דאימיה דר”נ בר יצחק אמרי לה כלדאי בריך גנבא הוה).

These observations cumulatively should prohibit us from concluding that astrology never influenced Judaism. URBACH correctly states that “the actual value of astrology and its reality” were beliefs “shared by Tannaim and Amoraim alike.”¹³ J. NEUSNER argues in a similar vein, but changes the emphasis, when he claims that “rabbis accepted the validity of astrology in general, doubting . . . only whether or not it applies to Jewry in particular.”¹⁴

story is preserved in Tanhuma (ed. BUBER), intro. 136: Solomon learned from the stars that his extremely attractive daughter would marry a poor young man. The prediction comes true in a remarkable fashion. See GINZBERG, *Legends*, vol. 4, p. 175; vol. 6, p. 303.

¹² NEUSNER argues that “the rabbis generally accepted the accuracy of astrological predictions for Israel as a whole and for individual Jews,” and interprets R. Johanan Bar Nappaha’s reply to mean “that ‘Israel has no star’ in precisely the way the nations do, because Israel’s fate is shaped not only by the stars but also by ethical merits, divine intervention — which takes the form of altering the astrological patterns — and similar supernatural means.” NEUSNER, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: V. Later Sasanian Times* (Studia Post-Biblica 15; Leiden, 1970) p. 192. NEUSNER here seems guilty of forcing rabbinic statements into a system.

¹³ URBACH, *The Sages*, vol. 1, p. 277.

¹⁴ NEUSNER, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: II. The Early Sasanian Period* (Studia Post-Biblica 11; Leiden, 1966) p. 85. NEUSNER demonstrates that the rabbinic prohibitions against consulting astrologers indicate “not only that some Jews did (consult them), but that they thought it was not improper” (p. 85).

III. Astrology and the Pseudepigrapha

The books collected together in the Pseudepigrapha,¹⁵ dating from circa 200 B.C. to A.D. 200, contain contradictory perspectives on astrology. According to the author of 1 Enoch 8: 3, which probably dates from the early second century B.C., astrology is an evil and demonic idea since it was taught to men by one of the fallen angels, Baraqiyah. The third book of the Sibylline Oracles, which dates from the second century B.C., in lines 220–36 praises righteous men who neither search the mystical meaning of the movements of the heavenly bodies nor are deceived by the predictions of Chaldean astrology. The major passage in the Pseudepigrapha that condemns astrology is found in Jubilees:¹⁶

“And in the sixth week, in its fifth year, Abram sat up during the night on the first of the seventh month (= Tishri, which commences the Jewish liturgical year),¹⁷ so that he might observe the stars from evening until daybreak so that he might see what the nature of the year would be with respect to rain. And he was sitting alone and making observations; and a word came into his heart, saying:

‘All of the signs of the stars and the signs of the sun and moon are in the hand of the LORD. Why am I seeking? If he desires, he will make rain morning and evening, And if he desires he will not send (it) down; and everything is in his hand’” (Jub 12: 16–18).

¹⁵ For a definition of Pseudepigrapha, a brief introduction to each document and a list of recent publications see J. H. CHARLESWORTH, *The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research* with a Supplement (SCS 75; Chico, Calif., 1981), and in ‘Introduction for the General Reader,’ in: *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. CHARLESWORTH (Garden City, New York, 1983) vol. 1, pp. xxi–xxxiv; cf. also IDEM, *A History of Pseudepigrapha Research: The Re-emerging Importance of the Pseudepigrapha*, in ANRW II 19.1, ed. W. HAASE (Berlin–New York, 1979) pp. 54–88. Unfortunately, many of the documents discussed below are not considered in W. GUNDEL and H. G. GUNDEL, *Astrologumena: Die astrologische Literatur in der Antike und ihre Geschichte* (Sudhoffs Archiv 6; Wiesbaden, 1966).

¹⁶ The translation is by O. S. WINTERMUTE and will be available in the new edition of the Pseudepigrapha being published by Doubleday & Co., Inc. This collection is edited by me; the Editorial Board of Advisors consists of W. HARRELSON, B. M. METZGER, R. E. BROWN, J. STRUGNELL, W. D. DAVIES, and R. E. MURPHY.

¹⁷ There are four New Year days for the Jews: the first of Nisan, the first of Elul, the first of Tishri, and the first of Shebat (cf. Rosh ha-Shanah 1.1). H. DANBY correctly notes that Tishri “is alone spoken of throughout the rest of the tractate as ‘The New Year.’” (The Mishnah [Oxford, 1933] p. 188). See the excellent discussion of the celebration of the new year in Tishri by S. SAFRAI, ‘Religion in Everyday Life,’ in: *The Jewish People in the First Century. Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, eds. S. SAFRAI and M. STERN (Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum sect. 1; Amsterdam, 1976) vol. 2, pp. 811f. Abraham’s attempt to see future events is an astrological concern; it should not be confused with the Jewish prayer for dew (טל) at Pentecost. The Jews prayed for rain (גשם) at Sukkoth.

portrays the 36 *decani*, who appear when Solomon commands "another demon" to appear. The *decani* state to Solomon: "We are the thirty-six elements, the world rulers of the darkness of this age" (ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν τὰ τριάκοντα ἔξ στοιχεῖα, οἱ κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου).²⁸ The *decani* state that they appear in the forms of animals and humans; their description is that of the twelve signs of the zodiac: ἀπὸ κριοῦ, καὶ ταύρου, διδύμου τε καὶ καρκίνου, λέοντος, καὶ παρθένου, ζυγοῦ τε καὶ σκ Κορπίου (sic) τοξότου, αἰγώκερωτος, ὕδροχόου, καὶ ἰχθύος (the reading in MS P). The thirty-six *decani* are addressed by Solomon; the first replies to him: "I am the first *decanus* of the zodiacal circle, who is called (the) ram, . . . (ἐγὼ δεκανὸς α' τοῦ ζωδιακοῦ κύκλου, ὃς καλοῦμαι κριός . . . [including the reading of P]). The remainder of section XVIII in the Testament of Solomon describes reports by each of the 36 *decani* regarding the pains and misfortunes each causes on the earth and how each can be conquered. Solomon eventually controls them and other demons, ordering some to build the Temple, others to be imprisoned, and the remainder to make gold and silver. What seems most significant in this Jewish document is that the astral deities are portrayed as demons²⁹ who are subservient to God's servant, Solomon.

The second late Jewish document, which is influenced by astrological ideas is the *Sefer Ha-Razim*. This document also dates from around the third-century and probably contains earlier Jewish traditions.³⁰ This text, which is frequently close to earlier Jewish apocalyptic ideas (especially in chapter 5), claims to be one of the books given to Noah (זֶה סֵפֶר מִסְפְּרֵי הַרְזִים שֶׁנָּתַן לְנוֹחַ בֶּן לֶמֶךְ). In the opening chapter Noah is said to have observed "the astrological signs" (וַהֲמַלְכֵם בְּכָל הַמְּזֻלֹּת).³¹ Although the identification is not made explicitly, it appears that the 36 angels named in the first heaven (or firmament; 1: 85–90) are to be identified with the *decani*. These angels reveal what will happen on the earth in each year; the terms and ideas are similar to those in the *Treatise of Shem* (discussed below in this same volume [ANRW II 20.2] pp. 951–987). The formula for an incantation in 1: 165ff. is clearly influenced by astrological terms and ideas. A subsequent incantation addresses the "Spirit of the Ram Bearer" (רוּחַ קְרִיפּוֹרִיָּא, I: 178),³² but it is unclear whether the reference is to a god or to the zodiacal figure.

Upon the second step of the second heaven are twelve angels, who seem to represent the twelve signs of the zodiac; since they "hasten to bring the astrological

Oriental Translation Fund Publications N.S. 36; London, 1949]). Their documents are not included for discussion herein; the writings seem to date from the seventh century (or later), and the Mandeans may be an offshoot of Christianity.

²⁸ The Greek is taken from McCown's edition, noted above.

²⁹ McCown (Testament of Solomon, p. 46): In this document "the astrological entity does not belong to the demon, or the demon to it, but is the demon. . . . In other words, the astral deities of paganism have become demons."

³⁰ See the forthcoming publications by M. MORGAN on *Sefer Ha-Razim*; the translation will appear in the 'SBL Texts and Translations Series'. I am indebted to Professor MORGAN for many insights into this document. The Hebrew herein is from M. MARGALIOTH (ed.), *Sefer Ha-Razim* (Jerusalem, 1966).

³¹ Or "to observe all the stars (constellations, planets)." See note 18.

³² קְרִיפּוֹרִיָּא = κριοφόρος.

signs of the sons of man into conjunction for love"³³ (2: 29; cf. 2: 34). In the fifth heaven are twelve princes of glory who "ordain the twelve months of the year . . ." One is to ask them "what will occur in each and every month, or in which month there will be rain, whether the crops will be plentiful, or whether the olive tree will drop its fruit, or in which month kings will muster for war, . . ." (5: 14–20). In the *Treatise of Shem* very similar ideas are attributed to characteristics of a year, according to the zodiacal sign in which it begins. It is wise, before turning to that document, to observe that all angels, *decani*, and princes of glory are subordinated to one God, who is "the Ruler of the stars, sun and moon, who bow down before him as slaves before their master . . ." (הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּמִזְלֹת וְהַשֶּׁמֶשׁ) [4: 52f.]).

The only preserved Jewish pseudepigraphical document that consistently advocates astrology is the virtually unknown "Treatise of Shem". This pseudepigraphon probably was composed in Aramaic in Alexandria sometime in the last third of the first century B.C.³⁴ Divided into twelve chapters, one for each of the signs in the zodiac, are predictions concerning the character of a year according to the sign of the zodiac in which it begins. For example, the second chapter is as follows:³⁵

"And if the year begins in Taurus: everyone whose name contains a Bēth, or Yūdh, or Kāph will become ill, or be wounded by an iron (weapon). And there will be fighting. And a wind will go out from Egypt and will fill the entire earth. And in that (year) there will be wheat and abundant rains, but the nobles of the land and of the surrounding region will destroy them (i. e. the crops). And the rain of (this) year will be withheld for three months, and afterwards produce will be exceedingly expensive for thirty-six days. And many people will die from diseases of the throat, then leanness will cease. And the first grain will perish in like manner, but the last grain will be harvested. And barley and dried peas³⁶ will (also) be harvested. And devils will attack men but will not harm them in any way. And two kings will oppose one another. And the large river Nile will rise above its measure.

³³ MORGAN's translation is quoted here and in the next citation.

³⁴ See CHARLESWORTH, Rylands Syriac MS. 44 and a New Addition to the Pseudepigrapha: The *Treatise of Shem*, Discussed and Translated, Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester 60 (1978) 376–403 and IDEM, Die Schrift des Sem: Einführung, Text und Übersetzung, below in this same volume (ANRW II 20.2) pp. 951–987. Also see the introduction to this document in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1, pp. 473–80.

³⁵ Bold-faced type denotes rubrics, parentheses words necessary in English, and brackets textual restorations. The translation attempts to remain close to the Syriac. The full translation can be found in a literal form in the 'Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester' article just mentioned and in an idiomatic form in The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1, pp. 481–86. Cf. German translation in CHARLESWORTH, Die Schrift des Sem etc., below pp. 967–987.

³⁶ *Legumen aridum*, cf. R. PAYNE SMITH's 'Thesaurus Syriacus' ([2 vols.; Oxford, 1879–1901] vol. 1, cols. 937f.). Also see R. KÖBERT's 'Vocabularium Syriacum' ([Rome, 1956] p. 45). MINGANA, incorrectly: "the watered cereals."

Those who are on a ship in the midst of the sea or people who are on the sea will be in se . . . misery. But at the close of the year there will be great blessing."

As can be judged from the preceding, the Treatise of Shem is a calendologion; it describes the features of a year according to the sign of the zodiac in which it begins. Note that the year determined by Taurus is described in terms of the amount of rain that will fall. This notation is typical of the other eleven years and provides a significant link with the idea in Jubilees that Abraham was seeking through an observation of the zodiac to ascertain if the year would be rich in rain.

In the eighth chapter of the Treatise of Shem there is recorded an additional zodiacal concept: "And everyone born in Scorpio (will) survive (his birth), but at the end of the year he will be killed" (8: 12). The author of the Treatise of Shem believed that the zodiac determined not only the features of each year but also the fate of each person. Both the year and the person are determined at the moment of origination; there is no claim that the stars daily impinge upon terrestrial affairs.

IV. Astrology and the Dead Sea Scrolls

The belief that Taurus can affect the affairs of men and the claim that the zodiac determines the character of a person when he is born is close to the thoughts contained in an astrological document preserved in Cave 4 (4QCryptic, olim 4Q186).³⁷ The legible portions of this fragmentary document contain the belief that man's physical characteristics are determined according to the zodiacal sign in which he is born. A man who is born (המולד אשר הוא ילוד) under the influence of Taurus (ברגל השור), will have his spirit divided so that six parts are from "the House of Light" and three from "the Pit of Darkness." "He will be poor" (עני יהיה), and will have long and thin thighs and toes.³⁸ None of these expressions or terms are paralleled either in the astrological predicitons under Taurus found in the Treatise of Shem, or in the generic descriptions under Taurus preserved in Hippolytus' Refutatio 4.16.

It is unwise to conclude that this zodiacal document represents only an extreme fringe of the Qumran Community because of the manner in which it is

³⁷ Following the system proposed by J. A. FITZMYER, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Major Publications and Tools for Study* (SBL 8; Missoula, Montana, 1975). The text, translation, and facsimiles are found in J. M. ALLEGRO, *Qumrân Cave 4* (DJD 5; Oxford, 1968) pp. 88–91, plate XXXI. See the following note.

³⁸ No change is suggested to this section of 4QCryptic by J. STRUGNELL in his valuable 'Notes en marge du volume V des Discoveries in the Judaean Desert of Jordan' (*Revue de Qumran* 26 [1970] 163–276, see esp. pp. 274–76). Also see J. A. FITZMYER, *A Bibliographical Aid to the Study of Qumrân Cave IV Texts* 158–86, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 31 (1969) 59–71; and M. DELCOR, *Recherches sur un horoscope en langue hébraïque provenant de Qumran*, in: IDEM, *Religion d'Israël et proche orient ancien* (Leiden, 1976) pp. 298–319.

written:³⁹ in reverse order, and representing the Hebrew scri . . . the Herodian script, by Greek (or Latin) letters, by the proto-Hebraic scrip . . . and by a cryptic alphabet. 4QCryptic is not the only zodiacal document found in Cave 4,⁴⁰ as some have supposed, and it contains some significant parallels to the Rule of the Community, the Scroll that defines the *termini technici* of the Community. In 1QS 3. 19 we learn that the "Spirit of Light" and "Spirit of Perversity" originate respectively in a "habitation of light" (במעון אור) and a "spring of darkness" (וממקור חושך) and in 4QCryptic we learn that portions of a man's spirit come from a "house of light" (בבית האור) and a "pit of darkness" (בבור החושך).⁴¹ The manner in which 4QCryptic is written may not denote that it was an unaccepted idea at Qumran but that the esoteric, mystical, zodiacal nature of the thought was best written in an exotic manner. This style is also found in a fourth-century A.D. silver amulet which contains in the Aramaic square script not only Aramaic words, but also transliterations of Greek and Latin words (see plates IV and V). The amulet, like 4QCryptic, belongs to a mystical, cryptic, and esoteric genre; it is a magical charm to protect the wearer from dangers when traveling on land or sea: "and (when) your raft is about to be dashed to pieces, then, God (דין = deus), אΩ (א), the Light (אנהר) . . . (if) you humble yourself and (before) our Lord (ורבון) . . . God (דין = deus), אΩ (א), will curb the sea (תלטא = θάλαττα)." ⁴² As in 4QCryptic the letters represent more than one language: Latin,

³⁹ LEHMANN argues that this method "only makes sense, if astrology was not generally accepted, even in the Qumran community, and therefore had to be practiced in hiding" (*Revue de Qumran* 32 [1975] 599).

⁴⁰ Unfortunately the two fragmentary columns of this Scroll are unpublished, although J. T. MILIK mentioned them twenty years ago. The fragments preserve a brontologion, predicting events according to thunder: "On the 13th and 14th (of the month of Tebet) . . . Cancer . . . If it thunders in the sign of the Twins, terror and distress caused by foreigners and by . . ." (Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judaea [trans. J. STRUGNELL; SBT 26; London, 1959] p. 42). MILIK has also drawn attention to other unpublished zodiacal documents from Cave 4, for example 4Q (Signs of) Zodiac, and argues that 1QS 10. 2–5 refers to the zodiac: "When the lights shine forth from the Holy Dwelling-Place and when also they retire (lit. are gathered) to the Place of Glory, when the constellations (of the Zodiac) make (their) entrance on the days of the new moon . . ." (The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4 [Oxford, 1976] p. 187). M. HENGEL argues that the "significance of the zodiac in the Essene Community is confirmed by" this unpublished fragment (Italics mine) (*Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* [2 vols., trans. J. BOWDEN; Philadelphia, 1974] vol. 1, p. 238; German original: *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh. v. Chr.* [Tübingen, 1969]).

⁴¹ A discussion of these two scrolls can be found in J. H. CHARLESWORTH, *John and Qumran* (London, 1972) pp. 80–89. J. T. MILIK has argued in his most recent book that zodiacal interest at Qumran is more extensive than previously thought. He contends that *MW'DYM* is sometimes parallel to *M'WRWT* and describes the stars; it should be translated in 1QS 10. 3 as "constellations of the zodiac." The term also appears in 4QEnastr^b (= 1 En 82: 9) (The Books of Enoch, pp. 187, 295).

⁴² A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *La doctrine gnostique de la lettre 'Wâw' d'après une lamelle araméenne inédite*, *Bibliothèque archéologique et historique* 41 (1946) 1–4. H. E. DEL MEDICO, *La*

Greek and Aramaic; sometimes words are transliterated. Writing in reverse order is a rare phenomenon; but in Jewish literature of a mystical and exotic nature there is the cryptographic method of writing called *atbash*, in which a consonant near the beginning of the alphabet is replaced by one which is equidistant from the end, and vice versa; e.g. 'Āleph becomes Tāw, Bēth becomes Shīn.⁴³

V. Astrology and Early Palestinian Synagogues

To frame the preceding discussion of the early date and extent of Jewish interest in astrology attention should be drawn to the abundant evidence of zodiacal interest in early Palestinian synagogues.⁴⁴ No less than four out of the nine known synagogue mosaics place the zodiac in a prominent position.⁴⁵ The sixth-century synagogue at Beth Alpha, which is situated between Ta'annak and Baisan and much closer to the latter, has a floor mosaic that features in the most conspicuous and central place the wheel of the zodiac (see plate II).⁴⁶ It is the largest and central panel, preceded by a pictorial representation of the sacrifice of Isaac, and followed by ritual or ceremonial symbols (see fig. 2).

The fifth-century or sixth-century synagogue at Na'aran, which is located slightly to the west and north of Jericho, also preserves in the center of a tripartite

Lamelle Virolleaud, in: ΠΑΓΚΑΠΠΕΙΑ: Mélanges Henri Grégoire (Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves 9; Brussels, 1949) pp. 179–92.

⁴³ See the article on 'Gematria' in the Encyclopaedia Judaica 7, 1971 cols. 369–74, of which a significant section is by SCHOLEM; SCHOLEM, Major Trends, p. 357; also cf. T. SCHRIRE, Hebrew Amulets: Their Decipherment and Interpretation (London, 1966) esp. pp. 91–93. SCHRIRE notes that sometimes an "inscription is written out normally and then *backwards*" (p. 43; italics mine).

⁴⁴ The literature on the subject is extensive. Good discussions are contained in the following publications: E. L. SUKENIK, The Ancient Synagogue of Beth Alpha (Jerusalem, London, 1932); IDEM, Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece (Schweich Lectures 1930; London, 1934); I. SONNE, The Zodiac Theme in Ancient Synagogues and in Hebrew Printed Books, Studies in Bibliography and Booklore 1 (1953) 3–13; C. ROTH (ed.), Jewish Art: An Illustrated History (New York, 1961); B. GOLDMAN, The Sacred Portal: A Primary Symbol in Ancient Judaic Art (Detroit, Michigan, 1966); B. MAZAR, et al., Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land (2 vols.; Jerusalem, 1970 [in Hebrew]); E. R. GOODENOUGH, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period (13 vols.; New York, 1953–1968) see esp. vol. 1, pp. 248–67; vol. 8, pp. 167–218. An updated bibliography and a judicious examination of the archaeological evidence is available in R. HACHLIL, The Zodiac in Ancient Jewish Art: Representation and Significance, Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research 228 (1977) 61–77.

⁴⁵ The nine are as follows: Hammath by Gadara, Jerash, Jericho, Salbit, Caesarea, 'Esfia, Na'aran, Beth Alpha, and Hammat-Tiberias.

⁴⁶ For photographs see SUKENIK, Beth Alpha, plate X (in color and the best available); IDEM, Ancient Synagogues, p. 33, fig. 8; GOLDMAN, Sacred Portal, photo. no. 5; ROTH, Jewish Art, cols. 211f., fig. 78; MAZAR, Encyclopaedia, vol. 1, p. 38; SONNE, Studies in Bibliography and Booklore 1 (1953) 6, fig. 3; GOODENOUGH, Jewish Symbols, vol. 3, fig. 640.

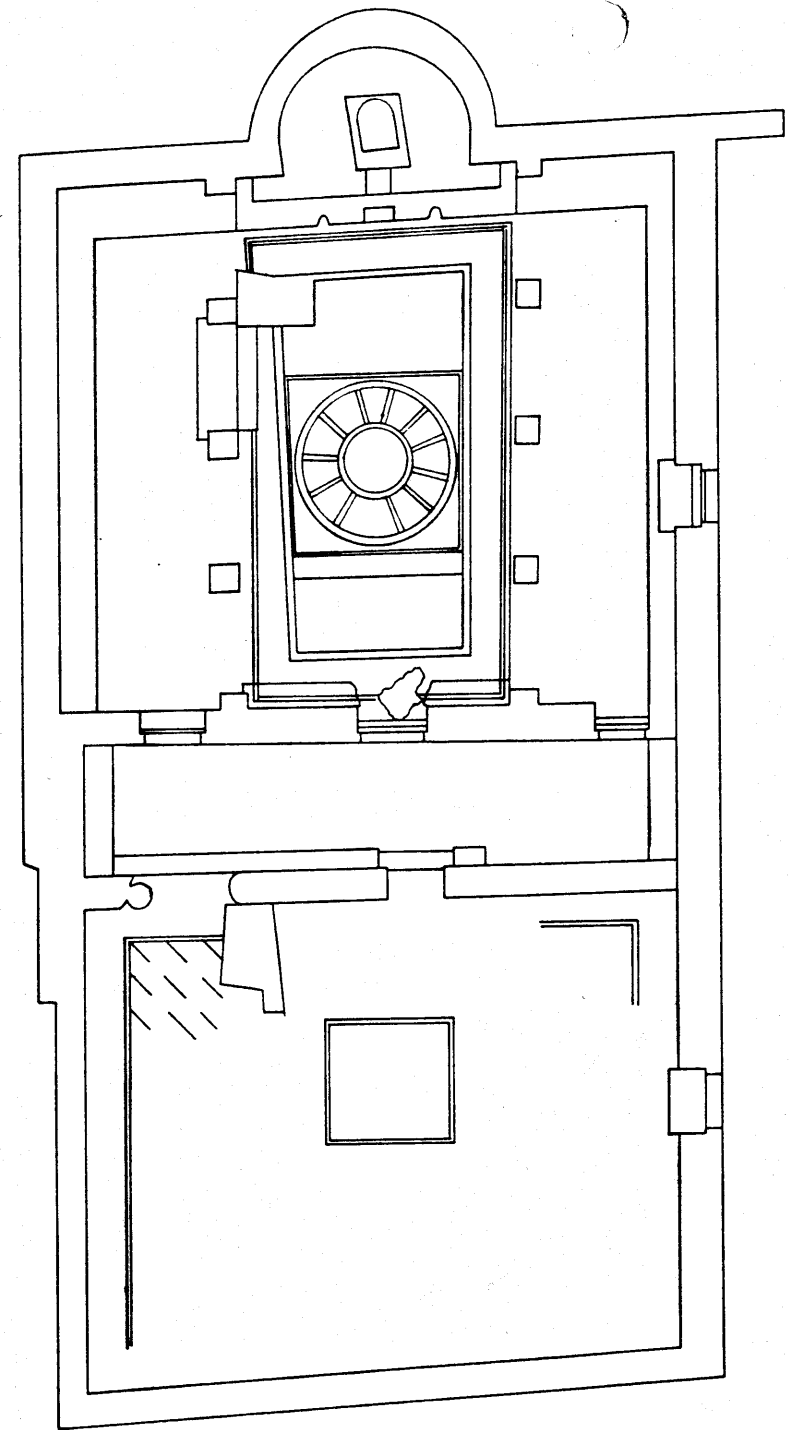


Fig. 2. An artist's rendering of the Beth-Alpha synagogue

panel the wheel of the zodiac.⁴⁷ Likewise, the fifth-century or sixth-century synagogue mosaic at 'Esfia ('Isfiyyeh) on Mt. Carmel,⁴⁸ and the recently unearthed, fourth-century synagogue mosaic at Hammat-Tiberias⁴⁹ feature the zodiac (see plate VI a. b.). In addition to these four zodiacal synagogue mosaics the mosaics of an animal circle in the synagogues at Yafa, which is in Lower Galilee just southwest of Nazareth, and at Beth She'arim, which is in Lower Galilee between 'Esfia and Nazareth, may be zodiacal, as GOODENOUGH claimed.⁵⁰

In addition to these mosaics four other examples of clearly or possibly zodiacal interest are preserved in Palestinian art that is synagogal. From Upper Galilee and the synagogue at Kafr-Birim come, as SUKENIK stated, "stones with signs of the zodiac upon them in relief;"⁵¹ they appear to be fragments from a carved screen which featured zodiacal art. GOODENOUGH identified the centaur shooting as Sagittarius, and the other extant figures as Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn.⁵² R. AMIRAN⁵³ and R. HACHLILI,⁵⁴ however, deny that these are

⁴⁷ See SUKENIK, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 30, fig. 5; ROTH, *Jewish Art*, cols. 215f., fig. 80; MAZAR, *Encyclopaedia*, vol. 2, p. 415; GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 3, figs. 641, 644, 647.

⁴⁸ See M. AVI-YONAH, *A Sixth-Century Synagogue at 'Isfiya*, Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine 3 (1933) 118-31; SUKENIK, *Ancient Synagogues*, pp. 85f.; GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 1, pp. 257-59; and vol. 3, fig. 658.

⁴⁹ The photograph has been reproduced in numerous places; see e.g. MAZAR, *Encyclopaedia*, vol. 1, p. 197; GOLDMAN, *Sacred Portal*, photo. no. 19; M. AVI-YONAH, *Hammath, EncyJud* 7, 1971, col. 1243. Significant discussions are found in the following: M. DOTHAN, *Hammath-Tiberias*, *Israel Exploration Journal* 12 (1962) 153f.; IDEM, *The Synagogues at Hammath-Tiberias*, *Qadmoniot* 1 (1968) 116-23 (in Hebrew); IDEM, *The Figure of Sol Invictus in the Mosaic of Hammath-Tiberias*, in: *All the Land of Naphtali*, ed. H. Z. HIRSCHBERG (Jerusalem, 1967 [in Hebrew]) pp. 130-34 N.V.; A. G. STERNBERG, *The Zodiac of Tiberias (Tiberias, 1972 [in Hebrew])*. Although they both are called Hammath-Tiberias the synagogue excavated by DOTHAN should not be confused with one earlier excavated by N. SLOUSCHZ. The discussion on p. 46 in vol. 12 of GOODENOUGH's 'Jewish Symbols' refers to the former, but the notes to the latter (discussed on pp. 214-16 in vol. 1).

⁵⁰ GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, pp. 168-70; see the plates in vol. 3, plates 984-94. ROTH, FOERSTER, and HACHLILI disagree: "In Naaran, Beth Alpha and Isfiya, it is the zodiacal wheel which is thus represented, in Yafa the emblems of the twelve tribes" (ROTH, *Jewish Art*, p. 214). Also see G. FOERSTER (On the Mosaic of the Japhia Synagogue, *Yediot* 31 [1967] 218-24) and HACHLILI (*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 228 [1977] 61). Galilee divisions have been discussed recently by E. M. MEYERS, *Galilean Regionalism as a Factor in Historical Reconstruction*, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 221 (1976) 93-101 (cf. also IDEM, *The Cultural Setting of Galilee: The Case of Regionalism and Early Judaism*, in *ANRW II* 19.1, ed. W. HAASE [Berlin-New York, 1979] pp. 686-702). It is noteworthy that within Palestine the synagogues with zodiacal symbols are located, with the exception of Na'aran, in or near Galilee.

⁵¹ SUKENIK, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 26; see also his 'Beth Alpha' (p. 57 and fig. 50 on that page). See the picture and drawing in GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 3, figs. 513 and 515.

⁵² GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 169.

⁵³ R. AMIRAN, *A Fragment of an Ornamental Relief from Kfar Bar'am*, *Eretz Israel* 3 (1954) 178-81, esp. p. 181 (in Hebrew).

⁵⁴ HACHLILI, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 228 (1977) 61.

signs of the zodiac. From the synagogue at er-Rafid, in the north host part of Galilee just north of the Sea of Galilee and Ed-Dikkeh, comes a carved stone with Pisces in relief.⁵⁵ From some place in Galilee, probably a synagogue because of its elaborate and symbolical character, has been recovered a bronze bracket for hanging lamps. The bracket has a central hook and twelve holes on the circumference. It is probably intended to hold a central light, which could symbolize the sun according to Ptolemaic astronomy, and twelve concentric lesser lights, which could portray the twelve signs or lights of the zodiac.⁵⁶

A lintel from Naveh (Nawa), which is east of the Jordan in Batanaea (or biblical Bashan) contains a menorah that is transformed into a solar symbol by extending upward the central light and topping it with a circular design, inside of which is a round relief.⁵⁷ The ornamental network (fret) on each side has been chipped away systematically from seven squares or rectangles. GOODENOUGH hesitatingly offered the opinion that these openings may well have depicted signs of the zodiac.⁵⁸ The horizontal rectangles number twelve,⁵⁹ six on each side of the menorah. Each of the bottom squares are scraped clean. What was removed must have been objectionable to the iconoclasts. That these were animal or human forms seems obvious by comparison with the previously mentioned fret from Kafr-Birim, which contains in similar squares apparently zodiacal symbols that are only partly chipped away, and with the deliberately mutilated zodiacal mosaics at Na'aran and 'Esfia.

Outside Palestine the archaeological evidence of Jewish interest in the zodiac is also extensive and impressive.⁶⁰ The preceding comments are sufficient to show that there is abundant archaeological evidence of Jewish interest in zodiacal images and signs by at least the fourth century. It is extremely difficult to apprehend what these images denoted to the Jews who designed and used them; as mentioned at the outset, zodiacal images must not be equated with astrological beliefs. From earliest times the Jews have demonstrated a brilliance for borrowing

⁵⁵ See the drawing in GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 3, fig. 541. GOODENOUGH is more convinced than other scholars about the identification. See his 'Jewish Symbols' (vol. 8, p. 169; see also vol. 1, p. 211).

⁵⁶ GOODENOUGH concludes: "I have no doubt that it represented the zodiac" (*Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 169).

⁵⁷ For a picture see GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, fig. 621.

⁵⁸ GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 170. Earlier (vol. 1, pp. 236-38) he spoke without hesitation about zodiacal influence at Nawa. His first statements better represent the data.

⁵⁹ According to GOODENOUGH, MORTON SMITH pointed out that "less than twelve openings are left" (*Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 170, n. 17). The number of openings left is five, if you ignore the double-sized rectangles contiguous to the menorah, seven, if you count these, or nine, if you count each of them as having ample space for two similarly sized symbols.

⁶⁰ Zodiacal symbols are preserved in the Dura Synagogue (see GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 9, pp. 43, 53-59), on one side of a second or third century A.D. amulet (see GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 170), in tomb paintings in Rome and at Palmyra, and Jewish burials at Vigna Randanini (see ROTH, *Jewish Art*, cols. 219-24; GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 173).

symbols and remind them in line with older intrinsic traditions. Twelve signs of the zodiac could have been envisioned as symbolic of the twelve sons Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel, or the twelve months of the year. Synagogal zodiacal symbols obviously must be interpreted carefully. The debate over their interpretation has polarized with GOODENOUGH and URBACH defending opposing hypotheses.

GOODENOUGH claimed that subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 artistic representations began to appear in synagogues because "rabbinic control had collapsed." The representations are not merely decorative because the mosaics are centered prominently in the center of the floor and often associated with symbols — like the menorah and the pictorial representation of the Akedah (the binding of Isaac for sacrifice by Abraham) — that were deeply imbedded in Jewish culture and consciousness. In contrast to the Sages, the 'common people' employed the zodiacal symbols to articulate their own religious beliefs, using images of idol worshipping neighbors to convey their own non-idolatrous faith.⁶¹

URBACH rejects GOODENOUGH's hypothesis.⁶² He raises serious doubts about the claim that the 'common people' and Sages held different attitudes about pagan symbols. In the tombs of the Sages at Beth She'arim in Lower Galilee archaeologists found sarcophagi that were decorated with representations of animals and human forms, including a Zeus-like head. These sarcophagi may have been made in Jewish shops and sold to Jews when the intended gentile customer was not available. The pagan symbols had no religious significance and were mere decorations; a pagan symbol obtained offense or power only when it had been invested with such (cf. Mishnah, Abodah Zarah 4.4). URBACH claims that the zodiacal symbols in the synagogues may also have been only for aesthetic reasons. A passage in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is of singular importance for his position: "You shall not set up a figured stone in your land, to bow down to it, but a mosaic pavement of designs and forms you may set in the floor of your places of worship, so long as you do not do obeisance to it."⁶³ Thus, URBACH apparently both affirms that the Tannaim and Amoraim acknowledged "the actual value of astrology and its reality,"⁶⁴ and denies that the zodiacal mosaics in Galilean synagogues are evidence of any astrological belief.

Zodiacal symbols do not necessarily represent astrological beliefs, that caveat seems clear; but it is not obvious that the zodiacal synagogue mosaics are merely decorative.⁶⁵ They do seem to be symbolical because of their central position

and association, for example, with the menorah and Akedah. A symbolism need not be idolatrous because from the second to the fourth century *halakoth* concerning idolatry were composed that are sometimes extremely lenient, sometimes equally stringent. It is difficult for a scholar influenced by post-Enlightenment European culture to comprehend how Jews could affirm the second commandment, which apodictically prohibits fashioning "any likeness" of man or animal (cf. Ex 20: 4–6), and simultaneously compose extremely lenient *halakoth* concerning idolatry. It cannot be denied that they did so.⁶⁶ It seems equally impossible to deny that the zodiacal mosaics symbolically represent ideas heavily influenced by astrology,⁶⁷ though not necessarily astrological beliefs.⁶⁸

Neither GOODENOUGH nor URBACH apparently knew about the two Jewish astrological documents preserved in Cave 4. These Jewish astrological documents antedate the earliest synagogal mosaics by at least four centuries, demonstrating that Jews prior to those who fashioned the mosaics had assimilated astrological beliefs. That does not mean, however, that they became astrologers or exchanged Jewish traditions for astrological 'science.' These early Jewish astrological docu-

vol. 2 pp. 1065–99, esp. p. 1099). FLUSSER has failed to show or even indicate as probable either that "the Jewish people in Palestine and elsewhere had become completely [sic] immune to the attractions of the paganism against which the prophets" had spoken (p. 1090), or that neither "Judaism, nor Christianity in its initial stages, felt the impact of paganism as a living religion" (p. 1099). Paganism, at least via astrology, had become attractive to, and made an impression upon, numerous Jews during the hellenistic and Roman periods.

⁶⁶ See the richly documented discussion by URBACH in *Israel Exploration Journal* 9 (1959) 229–38.

⁶⁷ NEUSNER rejects URBACH's criticism of GOODENOUGH and presents the hypothesis that 'normative' Talmudic Judaism never existed, and that many groups of Jews diverged from Talmudic norms rejecting the policies of some of the rabbis. NEUSNER argued persuasively that pagan symbols were "appropriated by Jews for Jewish religious purposes." See his 'Jewish Use of Pagan Symbols after 70 C.E.' (*Journal of Religion* 43 [1963] 285–94). The complex subtleties of the data and the larger issues of the intent of symbols, many of which were ignored by both GOODENOUGH and URBACH, are discussed in a brilliant article by M. SMITH (Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols in Retrospect*, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 86 [1967] 53–68). SMITH concludes that GOODENOUGH's "pandemic sacramental paganism was a fantasy; so was the interpretation of pagan symbols based on it, and so was the empire-wide, antirabbinic, mystical Judaism, based on the interpretation of these symbols." Yet GOODENOUGH "revealed a new world"; he opened our eyes to the Jewish iconic material.

⁶⁸ M. AVI-YONAH has argued that Jewish zodiacal signs in the synagogal mosaics art to be understood in terms of the twelve months of the year, and that the full design represents a calendar. The zodiacal symbols, therefore, do not break the prohibitions of the rabbinic *halakoth*, and are not merely decorative. See M. AVI-YONAH, *The Caesarea Inscription of the Twenty-four Priestly Courses*, in: *The Teacher's Yoke: Studies in Memory of Henry Trantham*, eds. E. J. VARDAMAN, et al. (Waco, Texas, 1964) pp. 46–57, esp. pp. 56f. This hypothesis is now affirmed and expanded by HACHLILI, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 228 (1977) 72–76, esp. p. 76: "it may be concluded that the Jewish zodiacal panel is a liturgical calendar."

⁶¹ GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 4, pp. 3–62.

⁶² URBACH, *The Rabbinical Laws of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archaeological and Historical Facts*, *Israel Exploration Journal* 9 (1959) 149–65, 229–45.

⁶³ Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Lev. 26: 1 (ed. GINSBURGER, p. 220), as quoted by URBACH in *Israel Exploration Journal* 9 (1959) 237 n. 89; quoted earlier by GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 4, p. 21.

⁶⁴ URBACH, *The Sages*, vol. 1, p. 277. See note 13 above.

⁶⁵ D. FLUSSER has amassed significant evidence that "the most remarkable feature of Palestinian paganism is that paganism and Judaism co-existed in the Land of Israel in the Hellenistic and Roman periods" (*Paganism in Palestine*, in: *The Jewish People in the First Century*,

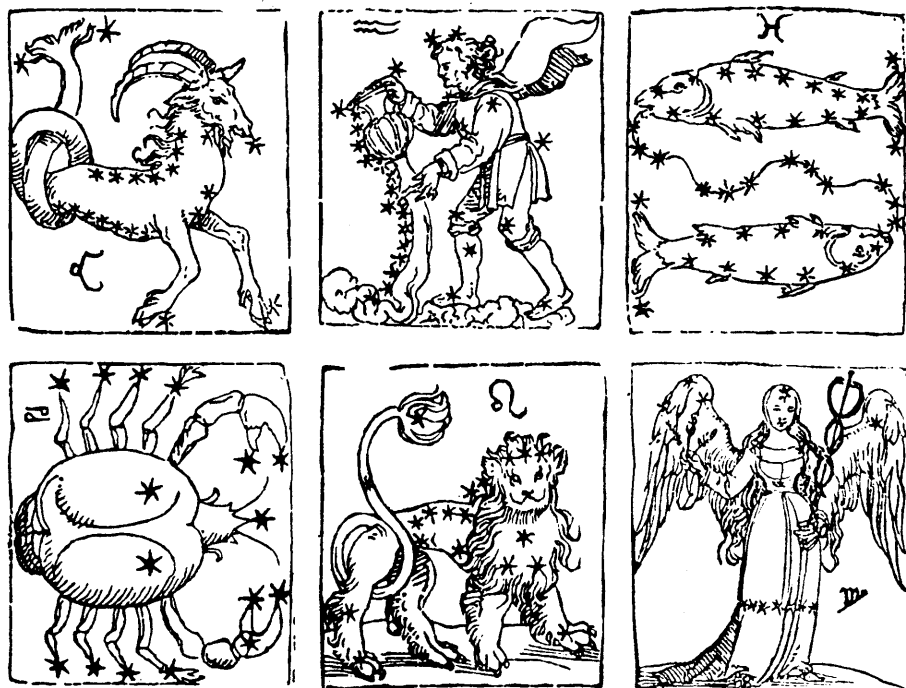


Fig. 3. Zodiacal figures, according to an artist's clarification

ments do not prove, of course, that the mosaics represent astrological beliefs, but they do tend to swing the debate in GOODENOUGH's direction.

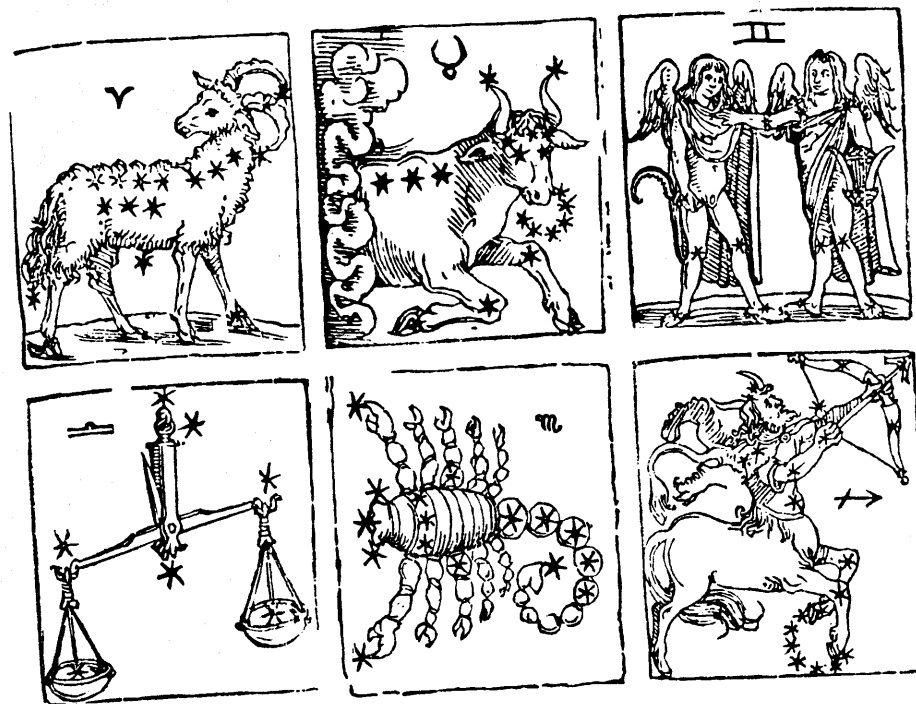
Numerous scholars have ventured to speculate that the archaeological data show that the Jews believed "the planets" influenced earthly affairs. Over forty years ago, thinking about the synagogal zodiacal mosaics at Beth Alpha and Na'aran, SUKENIK argued that astrology was "prevalent in the life of the people; and not the common folk only but even the sages of Israel were addicted to it."⁶⁹ SUKENIK's judgment has been reaffirmed by other scholars, notably SONNE,⁷⁰ GOLDMAN,⁷¹ and GOODENOUGH.⁷²

⁶⁹ SUKENIK, *Beth Alpha*, p. 56; cf. also IDEM, *Ancient Synagogues*, p. 66.

⁷⁰ SONNE, *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore* 1 (1953) 3.

⁷¹ GOLDMAN, *The Sacred Portal*, p. 60: "The frequency with which the zodiac appears in synagogue floors indicates not simply the popularity of the theme, but also its importance in Jewish metaphysics . . ."

⁷² GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols*, vol. 8, p. 171; vol. 12, p. 152. GOODENOUGH's position is less than systematic. At times he argues that the zodiacal mosaics do "not testify to the congregation's interest in, or use of, astrology" (vol. 8, p. 168). At other times — I am convinced this is his real position on the issue — he claims it is "impossible" to conclude that the zodiacal symbols were merely ornamentations (vol. 1, p. 266); indeed during the Roman period many Jews were "as thoroughly saturated with hellenistic ideas as they were



Focusing solely upon the archaeological evidence it is wise to be cautious and affirm that at least by the fourth century A.D. many Jews were influenced by astrological symbols and that some apparently held astrological beliefs. Several of the latter probably subsumed such foreign ideas under dominating Jewish traditions; a few would have allowed their astrological beliefs to reshape inherited traditions; but most probably would have thought there was no inconsistency or problem with being at the same time both a devout Jew and a confirmed believer in astrology.

VI. Conclusion

The Pseudepigrapha and the Dead Sea Scrolls again prove to be invaluable for discovering the origins of an idea in Jewish history. The OT, which is a library of books dating from the tenth to the second centuries B.C., contains no astrological beliefs; but it does preserve polemics against astrology (Isa 47: 13–14; Jer 10: 1–3;

loyal to the Torah" (vol. 1, p. 256). The zodiacal symbols were appropriated from the Romans and others and were reminted with Jewish traditions (vol. 8, pp. 214–16, 177, 153; vol. 1, pp. 250–67).

cf. Deut 4: 19; Dan 2: 27; 4: 7; 5: 7, 11). During the second century B.C., close to the time when the latest book of the OT was composed, astrological ideas were apparently first assimilated into Jewish thought, as evidenced by liberals without and within Palestine, namely the Egyptian Artapanus and the Samaritan Anonymus. During the last two centuries B.C. astrological ideas, symbols, and beliefs permeated much deeper into many sectors of Jewish culture; again the infiltration was without and within Palestinian Judaism, as evidenced by the Treatise of Shem and the Dead Sea Scrolls. While many passages in the Pseudepigrapha, like Jubilees 12: 16–18, continue the OT's disputation against astrology, other passages, notably 1 Enoch 72: 1–37 and 2 Enoch 21: 6, reveal that astrological ideas, not necessarily beliefs, have influenced Jewish thought. By the fourth century A.D. abundant archaeological evidence in Galilee proves that Jews were attracted by astrological images, signs, and symbols; the prominent symbolic and central use of the zodiacal mosaics indicates that many Jews assimilated astrological beliefs. By at least the sixth century A.D., as documented by passages in the Babylonian Talmud, Jewish interest in astrology had not evolved into a synthesis; it had polarized into two irreconcilable positions, best represented in the debate attributed to the third-century Rabbis Hanina Bar Hama and Johanan Bar Nappaha. The former claimed that "Israel stands under astrological influence"; the latter argued "Israel is immune from astrological influence."

It is, therefore, a misrepresentation to discard Jewish interest and belief in astrology as un-Jewish or heretical.⁷³ Astrological ideas and beliefs obtained a

⁷³ Sometimes Philo explicitly (De Migr Ab 32) and Josephus implicitly (Wars 5.212–14; 6.288–92; also see note 21 above) refute astrological ideas. But elsewhere their thought is influenced by zodiacal symbols. Philo uses zodiacal symbols in his exegesis of the Old Testament (cf. Quaes. Gen. 4.164; Quaes. Exod. 2.75–78, 109, 112–14). For example, in Exod 28: 21 the twelve stones in Aaron's breastpiece are symbolic of the twelve tribes, but in Philo's 'Quaes. Exod.' they are identified as "representations of the twelve animals which are in the zodiac" (cf. also Som. 1.214; Quis Her. 176; Praem. 65). Josephus identifies the loaves on the table in the Temple with "the circle of the zodiac and the year" (οἱ δ' ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης ἄρτοι δώδεκα τὸν τε ζωδιακὸν κύκλον καὶ τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν [Wars 5.5 § 217]). Astrology is today divorced from astronomy. Earlier it was the sophisticated synchronization of heavenly and terrestrial phenomena that was guided by careful and complicated astronomical observations. During the Roman period 'astronomy' and 'astrology' were usually synonyms and when they were distinguished it was to articulate a singular aspect of the whole that they represent; e.g. John Chrysostom in the fourth century A.D. sometimes seems to use the word ἀστρονομία to denote the task of observing and predicting and employs ἀστρολογία to represent the whole discipline (cf. Homily 6 on Mt). To speak of 'astrology' during the Roman period as a 'pseudo-Science,' as many competent scholars do (viz. FRASER), is misleading and anachronistic. H. and H. A. FRANKFORT recognize that astrology "may succeed no less than modern thought in establishing a co-ordinated spatial system . . ." (Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man [Baltimore, Maryland, 1949, repr. 1961 etc.] p. 30). G. DE SANTILLANA and H. VON DECHEND speak even more approvingly of the "hologram of archaic cosmology," astrology, which "has provided man with his continuing *lingua franca* through the centuries" (Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and The Frame of Time [Boston, Massachusetts, 1969] p. 345). In 1950 H. G. MULLER-FREYWARDT, M.D., introduced the concept of "cosmobiological

foothold in many segments of Judaism; they were not limited to so-called sectarian groups.⁷⁴ It is fascinating to observe the diverse ways in which Jews during the hellenistic and Roman periods interacted with and assimilated foreign symbols, ideas, and beliefs.

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A very early Syriac silver amulet now lost; it was acquired in 1925 at Beirut but lost in the mail when it was sent by Chrales Virolleaud in Paris to Arthur Cowley in Oxford, England. These photographs are published here due to the graciousness of A. DUPONT-SOMMER, le Secrétaire perpétuel of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Institut de France, Paris, who has given them to the author.
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correspondences of the human body" which in effect initiated a new phase in modern medicine, medical astrology, which is labeled by reputable medical authorities as "a serious discipline." See M. JONES, *Astrology and Medicine*, in: *Wholistic Dimensions in Healing: A Resource Guide*, ed. L. J. KASLOF (Garden City, New York, 1978) pp. 162–64.

⁷⁴ The preceding article is only a glimpse of a fascinating area now open to those who have concentrated upon Jewish thought in the Roman period. Many issues need to be researched again; for example, it is clear that Mt 2: 2 (εἶδομεν γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἄστέρα ἐν τῇ ἀνατολῇ), which may have been written under the influence of astrology – either by Matthew or by the author of his special source – needs to be re-examined since we now possess evidence of interest in the zodiac by Jews prior to the first century A.D. Within a century after the composition of Mt many documents were influenced by his nativity account, some of these conspicuously omit the star (e.g. AsIs 11: 2–4; Justin, Dial. 78.5), others mention it and sometimes exaggerate its brightness (Justin, Dial. 78.1a, Protev. 21–22). For a discussion of these possibilities see CHARLESWORTH, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 60 (1978) 376–403. Now see also A. STROBEL, *Weltenjahr, Große Konjunktion und Messiasstern*, below in this same volume (ANRW II 20.2) pp. 1083–1099. But, in pursuing the possible influence from astrology upon traditions now preserved in the New Testament it is imperative to examine the available data with a balanced and critical approach. Such influence is apparently present; but it has sometimes been exaggerated. B. M. METZGER, for example, has demonstrated the weaknesses in the claim by S. WEINSTOCK and others that the list of nations in Acts 2 is influenced by the astrological speculations eventually preserved in Paulus of Alexandria's 'Rudiments of Astrology.' See METZGER, *Ancient Astrological Geography and Acts 2: 9–11*, in: *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F. F. Bruce on His 60th Birthday*, ed. W. W. COOPER and R. P. MARTIN (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970) pp. 123–33.