

Preface



FIGURE 0.1 *Tisha be-Av*, Sefer Minhagim, Amsterdam: Herts Levi Rofe, 1723
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, PHOTO: STEVEN FINE

Each summer on the ninth day of the month of Av, Jews around the world fast in memory of buildings long lost, of structures preserved only in memory. Jews evoke the destruction, *hurban*, of the first Temple of Jerusalem built by Solomon, and destroyed by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE and they remember the “Second Temple” rebuilt seventy years later by returnees from the “Babylonian Exile,” transformed by Herod the Great into one of the wonders of the Roman world, and destroyed by Titus in 70 CE. This second *hurban* looms largest, but the day of fasting that is *Tisha be-Av* is more than isolated memory. It recalls the destruction of Jewish communities across the ages

and on almost every continent; of the synagogues burned and pillaged and abandoned, from ancient Alexandria to medieval Barcelona, from early modern Galicia to modern Berlin, Boston and Aleppo. It is no small thing that the greatest destruction of all Jewish time, the Holocaust, was instinctively called by the European survivors *hurban Europa*, and that Jewish liturgical poetry invokes the language of the Temple to envelop Jewish memory of places past and communities ruined. At the same time, the destruction of the temples is an opportunity to reaffirm hope – hope for messianic redemption, and hope that “the temple will be rebuilt speedily in our days, amen.” It is no wonder, then, that space and memory are so essential to Jewish self-understanding.

The Amsterdam *Book of Customs*, *Sefer Minhagim*, an image from which graces the cover of this volume, was published in 1723 by Herts Tsvi Rofe. This slim book illustrates the rituals of the Jewish year as practiced near the turn of modernity, and is a fine metaphor for this entire book project. The image created for Tisha be-Av by the anonymous artist is most invocative of Jewish understanding of this day. Here we see a community gathered at night in their synagogue, seated on the floor, each member reciting from a printed book containing the biblical book of Lamentations together with a litany of liturgical poetry that evokes the sorrow of the day. Behind them is the Torah shrine, a late antique invention that came to be called the *aron*, in memory of the biblical Ark of the Covenant. In Islamicate and Sephardic communities it is called the *hekhal*, after Temple shrine. Building on the darkness and sadness of the evening hours, lit only by candles, the artist of this woodcut took a creative leap of great import. He portrayed the very “shrine” of the synagogue, the “holy ark” before which mourners of Zion sat as if it were in flames. The participants in this liturgy take no note of the fire. In fact, they are its source, as they recite the words of catastrophe from the books before them. “Read” today, this image brings together the broad history of Jewish sacred space, from the tabernacle to the Temple, to each and every local synagogue and its community of worshippers. Jewish liturgy – and beyond the synagogue, Jewish civil religion – makes these sorts of connections in a myriad of ways – both happy and sad. On Hanukkah, the lamps of the synagogue bespeak victory and redemption, and on Shavuot, the ark is decorated with flowers to celebrate the “Giving of the Torah” and pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On *Hoshana Rabba*, at the culmination of the Sukkot celebrations, congregations circumambulate the synagogue reading table, singing songs of praise and *hoshanah* – each according to its own unique custom – beating willows against the table as if it is the very altar of the soon-to-be-rebuilt Temple. Jewish architecture, then, invokes and envelops the widest range of emotions and experiences, from destruction to construction, from birth to rebirth. One ancient rabbinic tradition (b. Meg. 29a)

has it that when the messiah comes, synagogues throughout the world will be conveyed to Jerusalem and implanted on the Temple Mount. A more recent (though still medieval) tradition has it that when Herod's Temple was destroyed, stones from Jerusalem were blasted across the globe. In each place where a stone landed, a synagogue would someday be built.



Jewish Religious Architecture is the first volume in a new series in *Jews, Judaism, and the Arts* inaugurated by Brill. Ilia Rodov of Bar Ilan University and I are the editors of the Jewish Art and Visual Culture section, bringing together the strengths of our two journals, *Ars Judaica* and *Images: A Journal of Jewish Art and Visual Culture*, in this joint publication project. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration, bringing scholars together in our joint project of exploring the visual in Jewish historical experience.

It is my happy duty to thank friends and colleagues for making this volume a reality. I thank Richard Etlin for inspiring this project and for his dedication to each article. I hope that you, Richard, are pleased with these fruits of our labors together. Many thanks to each of our authors for their splendid contributions, to my ever-creative Brill editor, Katie Chin, to my friend and former student David Moster for helping prepare the illustrations for Victor Avigdor Hurowitz's article. I thank my student David Selis and all the people at Brill, especially Christina Sargent, for helping to bring our work to press. I am grateful to the Leon Charney Legacy Fund of the Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies for its support. Most of all, I thank the authors for their splendid creations, their unrestrained willingness to join this project, and for their endless patience. We mourn the loss of Victor Avigdor Hurowitz ז"ל, a truly great scholar of biblical history, who left us for the divine study house far too soon.

In the final moments before publication of this volume, we learned of the death of our colleague, the doyenne of Jewish art scholarship in North America for half a century, Vivian B. Mann ז"ל. With grief, we dedicate *Jewish Religious Architecture* in Vivian's memory, secure in the knowledge that the heavenly Jewish museum is in good hands.

Steven Fine,
Erev Yom Ha'atzmaut, 5779/2019