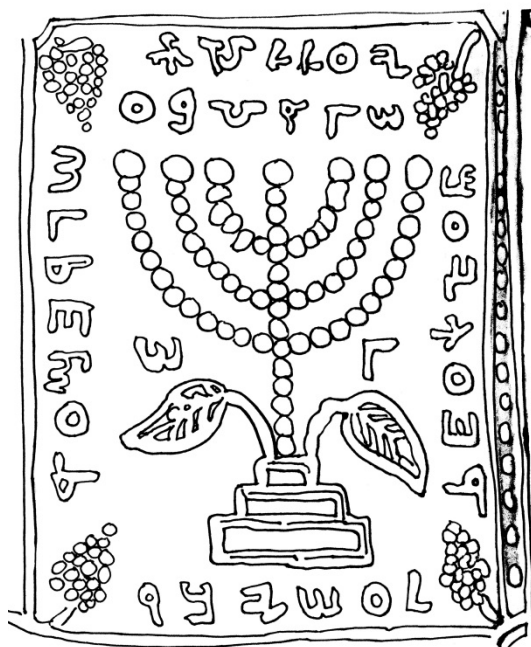


WISDOM. THE LADY OF THE TEMPLE IN A LEAD BOOK FROM JORDAN.

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About ten years ago there were rumours that some small lead books had been found in a cave in Jordan. One man had a large number of them and he was keeping them in his house. Some people went to take photos of them, and then on March 3rd 2011, one of the photographers published an article about them in the Jewish Chronicle. Six weeks later, another photographer took the story to the BBC. Then there were many on-line speculations by bloggers, most saying that all the little metal books were fakes and forgeries. By this time, many copies of the lead books had been made to sell to tourists, and there is no doubt that some of the items we have seen and tested were made recently. *Others, however, were not made recently.*

Several tests have been done in metal laboratories which show that some of the lead books are very old. Enlarged photos of the surface of the books show that the state of the metal and the corrosion could not have been faked, and would have taken many centuries to reach its present condition. You can read these reports on our website.

Most of the books were made of lead. Many appeared on-line offered for sale, and among these we saw a very small book made of gold. This was exactly the same as some lead books we had seen, but the writing and patterns on it were much clearer. This is the gold that book I shall talk about today. I have worked with one of the lead versions of this gold book, which was loaned to me by the man who bought it from an authorized dealer in Jordan. He thought it was just a nice holiday souvenir. Tests have shown that the lead book is very old.

Other items have been found with the lead books, but we are not sure what some of them are. To be honest, we are not sure what the lead books are, as nothing like them has ever been found.

They are all small: some are the size of a bank card, and the largest are about the size of a post card. The letters and patterns on them stand above the surface, so they must have been cast in a mould. This was a form of printing, and explains why we have several copies of the same pages. This also tells us that the writing cannot have been altered, since it was made by casting in a mould, and a new mould would have been necessary to change the writing.

I have sometimes been challenged with 'Are you not just finding what you want to see?', and I reply: 'No'. I read what was cast in the text in front of me, unlike some biblical scholars who feel free to change the text that was written by the scribes, because it makes more sense to them if they assume that the ancient scribe made an error or even a deliberate alteration.

The metal text cannot have been changed.

The letters on this page are a mixture of Greek and archaic Hebrew script, usually called Palaeo-Hebrew. Some other lead books have the more familiar Hebrew script that was introduced in the fifth century BCE. On this page, Hebrew and Greek letters sometimes appear in the same word. Some of the letters are unusual, formed by fusing two similar letters into one symbol. There are seven of these 'double letter symbols' in the book I shall talk about today, and there are two Greek letters, a *rho* and an *omega*.

The writing is not in lines. Until we realized this, we made no progress at all. My colleague Dr Samuel Zinner made this breakthrough. He noticed that some of the letters in the lead books he was studying made sense as a series of inter-linked triangles, and sometimes other shapes. Using this method, he was able to decipher a considerable amount of material that seems to be about the Jewish war against Rome in 132-135 CE. We do not know how this relates to the material I have found in other lead books.

Further, there are pictures and symbols mixed with the writing. This is unknown for a Hebrew text, except on coins, where there is usually a symbol and Hebrew letters. This led the sceptics to say that the lead books were forgeries and the symbols were copied from coins. Many of the lead books' symbols are also found on coins, but some are not. The symbol on the page I shall talk about today is unique. Nothing like it has ever been found, and yet it is clear what it means. It is possible that the coins used well known symbols that also appear in the lead books.

Well known symbols in the lead books include the pomegranate and the palm tree. There are many images of the menorah, the seven branched lamp that stood in the temple, but there are several ways of depicting the menorah not known elsewhere. One of these is the menorah with shallow branches that the Lead Book Centre uses as its logo, another is the menorah formed of 70 small circles that I shall tell you about later. There are also rows of diagonal crosses, and human faces.

The faces have proved very controversial. There are male and female faces, and there were immediate claims that some were face of Jesus. Sceptics said they had been made from coins, but how they were made is not the same as asking *why* they were made. Why in particular did the lead books have the face of a man?

Most of the images are obviously temple images: there is a seven-branched lamp, the willow branches and the fruiting almond rods. The diagonal X crosses were the ancient sign of the name of the LORD that was marked on the forehead of a high priest when he was anointed, but they had not been used for many centuries because the anointing oil was lost. Further, there was not just a single high-priestly X mark but there were whole rows of them. Perhaps they were a lot of high priests?

And then there were the faces. The blessing given by the high priests in the old temple was that the people would see the shining face of the LORD, and experience his grace and peace. 'May the LORD make his face to shine on you and give you peace' (Numbers 6.24-26). The idea that the LORD had a human face became very controversial; it was thought to be blasphemy. In the time of the second temple - we do not know when- people no longer explained what the blessing meant. Some would not even translate it from Hebrew into the Aramaic they normally spoke.

The Christians, however, emphasised that they had seen the face of the LORD because they had seen Jesus. John emphasised this in his Gospel and in his first letter (John 1.14; 1 John 1.1). The face of the LORD was part of the Christian proclamation. It is possible that the tradition preserved in the lead books included the old belief that became so controversial. They may have been expressing the hope to see the face of the LORD. Or they may indeed be books made by the followers of Jesus who had received the great blessing and seen the face of LORD. We do not know.

The important question is: Why did some people who wrote in archaic Hebrew choose to include a human face? It does not matter how the face was made, or if it was copied from a coin. Why was a human face included in the books? The faces in the books cannot prove that they were made or even used by Christians, but they might have been. The Christians had a place in their teachings for the face of the LORD.

Now I need to tell you a little about the history of the second temple period, the years from about 530 BCE when the second temple was built in Jerusalem to 70 CE, when it was destroyed by the Romans. These 600 years were a period of great change and controversy. Many people did not accept the second temple or its new teachings. The people who returned from exile in Babylon to build the temple followed the new ways introduced by King Josiah in 623 BCE. The people who did not accept the new temple and its ways said that Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians as God's punishment for the new ways (e.g. Jeremiah 44.15-19)..

The new ways were a religious revolution when much of the older religion was destroyed. The temple was purged to remove all traces of the veneration of a female figure, whom we shall call the Lady (2 Kings 23.4-14). She had many titles, and had been the heavenly Queen in the city for centuries. She was the heavenly Mother of the royal family, and the royal high priests were said to be her sons. She protected the city. The revolutionaries were successful, and, since they later controlled how the texts of the Hebrew Bible were collected and transmitted, very little about the Lady survived in the Hebrew Bible. The Lady was lost.
Then she began to reappear.

First, archaeologists found hundreds of small figurines of a woman with large breasts and huge eyes. They were about 15 cm tall. Most of the archaeological evidence for the religion

of old Jerusalem is these figurines, so they must have been very important. Many had been deliberately smashed during the revolution, and there were no figurines from the second temple period.

Second, discoveries among the Dead Sea Scrolls made scholars realise that the text of the Hebrew Bible had been changed in several places over the years. For example, texts about seeing the face of the LORD had been changed. The archaeologists had used the Bible as their guide for identifying what they found, and because they read nothing about the lady, they assumed the little figurines were not part of the religion of old Jerusalem. They said they were foreign imports, or even toys.

We are now fairly certain that they were images of the Lady, kept in people's homes just as some people today have small statues of Mary.

In 1929, archaeologists found a collection of clay tablets in Lebanon, in the ancient city of Ugarit. They read for the first time about the lady of Ugarit, and were able to see how fragments of evidence in the Hebrew Bible about the Lady of Jerusalem fitted into a bigger picture. The Lady of Ugarit had many names. She was Athirat, the Great Lady, a sun deity called the lamp of the gods. She was the mother of the 70 sons of God, and she was the heavenly mother of the king. Texts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (4 Q Deut j), the Septuagint and the translation of Deuteronomy into Aramaic (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of Deuteronomy) show that this story of a heavenly mother and 70 sons was once part of the Hebrew Bible.

Using another sort of archaeology - digging underneath the Hebrew text - scholars began to find more and more about the Lady. Much of the evidence is from the earliest texts, such as the writings of the prophet Isaiah and his contemporaries who were active in Jerusalem from about 750 BCE onwards.. There was an early attempt to remove the Lady from the temple in their time, although she was later restored. They knew the Lady of Jerusalem as *Ashratah*, the Hebrew version of the Ugaritic name Athirat. The name meant 'the one who makes happy' or 'the one who keeps you on a straight path', and she can be found, almost hidden, in the earliest parts of the book of Isaiah. She had been cut down, said the prophet, but she would return. Isaiah and his fellow prophets eventually fled from Jerusalem and settled in an area that is now the Kingdom of Jordan. [You can read about this in *The Ascension of Isaiah*]. They kept alive the memory of the Lady and her teachings.

Other people left Jerusalem after the final successful attempt to banish the Lady in 623 BCE. Some went to Egypt, where they did not forget the Lady, and others, who had been priests in the old temple, went to settle in a place they called 'Arabia', which was probably the southern part of the present Kingdom of Jordan (Jerusalem Talmud Ta'anith 4.5). Archaeologists have found evidence of a great goddess worshipped there called Allat, the Great Lady, who had attendants called 'servants'. She was the mother of the male god. Moses' sister Miriam was buried there, as was his brother Aaron, so it had been a Hebrew holy place for many centuries (Numbers 20.1). The lead book I shall talk about today was bought in this area, although nobody said exactly where it was found. *We do not know if these facts are connected.*

The gospel of John shows that Jesus often went across the Jordan when life was too dangerous for him in Jerusalem (e.g. John 10.39-40; 11.53-54). He went to a desert place, presumably

because he had somewhere to live when he was there. And finally, in the Book of Revelation, when John saw the woman clothed with the sun –the Lady - return to the temple, he also saw her escape to the desert when she was attacked by the red dragon (Revelation 12.13-14). There, said John, she stayed for time, a times and half a time –more mysterious words!

Now the gold book. I shall describe one page in detail, because this seems to tell us about the Lady of the temple who was banished and fled with her followers into the desert. It describes many other things as well, for example, the Garden of Eden, Adam, the LORD, the Messiah, but today we are concentrating on the Lady.

In the centre of the page is a menorah, formed of 70 small circles. It is sprouting leaves from its base. The letters form a symmetrical pattern around the central stem of menorah

The two lines of letters at the top represent heaven, and the line at the bottom is earth.

- There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, but only 17 of them are used on this page. 5 letters are missing.

- Using one form of *gematria*, the Hebrew custom of using letters to represent numbers, the number 17 is the sum of the letters in a Hebrew word for **glory**, *kbd*, k=11, b=2, d=4. *
- The five missing letters are each the initial letters of five Hebrew words for glory, *zohar, tohar, kabod, šonah, pe'ēr*.

This page is telling us that the glory has gone, and in the history of Jerusalem, this was when the glory left the city. The page shows this by removing the initial letters of the five Hebrew words for glory. The people who devised this pattern of letters were very sophisticated, and left clues for those who read it. Without the letters that made the word for glory, many words were not possible. You cannot, for example, make the word for angels, nor the word for king, and there were no angels and no Davidic king in the second temple.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the glory leaving the temple in Jerusalem, after King Josiah's temple purges and the destruction by the Babylonians in 597 BCE (Ezekiel 10.1-22; 11.22-25; also Ezekiel 1.1-28). This was the time when some of the old priests fled east of the Jordan, and other refugees went to Egypt. **This is the context for the menorah page.** Ezekiel saw the Lady, the throne and the LORD leaving the city which had rejected them. He described

the Lady as the Spirit and the Living One (Ezekiel 1.20-21). Both these titles appear on the page, and their partner words reveal more about the Lady. She was the Living One and the Sustainer and she was linked to the Servant, the human figure whom Ezekiel saw on the heavenly throne. Note that the words are written as triangles, and that they intersect at a node of the menorah.

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The Lady's great symbol was the tree of life, represented in the old temple by the menorah which originally stood in the holy of holies, the most sacred part of the temple. When John had a vision of the old temple restored, he saw that the tree of life had returned to the holy of holies (Revelation 22.1-5). This is the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, the end of the great vision. During the temple purges, the golden tree was cut down and burned. The ancient storytellers said that the Creator intended Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of life, but when they disobeyed and ate from the forbidden tree of knowledge, they were barred from the tree of life and driven from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2.16-17; 3.22-24).

This is how the storytellers described the fate of the priests of the old temple. One of the Lady's names was Wisdom, Adam and Eve were the priesthood, Eden was their temple, and

the Lady's tree of life fed them with her wise teaching. The Lady opened their spiritual eyes-remember, those little figurines had huge eyes – and so they became wise. The snake who tempted them was the deceiver. He said that his tree would open their eyes and make them divine, and they believed him (Genesis 3.1-7). They ate from the forbidden tree- the tree of the knowledge of good and evil- and so lost everything. They lost their temple and access to the ancient wisdom, their spiritual eyes were closed.

The people who fled from Jerusalem preserved the teachings of the old temple. One of their texts is a poem which scholars call the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (in *1 Enoch* 93.1-10, then 91.12-17; the text is in the wrong order). It is a brief history of Jerusalem which divides history into ten eras called 'weeks'. The first five tell of Noah and Abraham and building the temple; the second half begins with the purges in Jerusalem that banished the Lady. It says that the people in the temple lost their spiritual sight when they forsook Wisdom. After that, Jerusalem was a city of unbelievers, and the faithful people were scattered. We do not know who wrote this poem, but it says that when Jerusalem abandoned the Lady, it lost the old faith, and this was the most important point in its history (*1 Enoch* 93.8-9).

In his vision of the Lady leaving the temple, Ezekiel described the Lady as the Spirit, and the patterns in the gold book show that she was the One Spirit or perhaps the uniting Spirit, and that she was the female teacher and the perfume. Later legends said the perfume was the anointing oil which came from her tree. Note that the triangles intersect at a node of the menorah.

Now I shall show you some of the patterns about Shaddai, which was one of the Lady's titles. As the Lady moved in the chariot throne, Ezekiel heard the voice of Shaddai. 'The thunder of the Almighty' which he heard is literally 'the voice of Shaddai' (Ezekiel 1.24).

Shaddai means 'the one with breasts - the female deity who suckled her children with wisdom. It also means 'the destroyer'. Her name is at the centre of the page as two large letters. She judged the wicked and destroyed her enemies, sometimes by taking away their minds so that they could not 'see' (e.g. Isaiah 29.9-12). The partner words are join in union, word, mighty.

Here the name is linked to many partner words: uprightness, happiness, thought, pouring out. She is the Holy One, a pattern with two intersections at nodes, and she threshes her enemies (Micah 4.13).

The Lady and her throne were hidden in her bright cloud (e.g. Job 26.9, which literally says 'he covers the presence of the throne, and spreads over it his cloud'). Ezekiel saw her cloud flashing with fire (Ezekiel 1.4). One of Isaiah's prophecies of the future saw the Messiah, with his title the Branch again in *Zion and a shining cloud above* (Isaiah 4.2-6). Another pattern shows her sprouting from the earth. She sprouts from Zion, which means the birth of her Messiah, she hivers above in her bright cloud.

Legends often preserve interesting information, since the scribes could not censor how people told their stories. One Jewish legend said that there was no anointing oil in the second temple, a way of saying that the Lady, her tree, and her oil were not there. The legend also says that five things were missing from the second temple - the ark, the menorah, the Spirit, the fire and the cherubim (Numbers Rabbah XV.10). When the oil returned and the Messiah was anointed, they said he would rebuild the true temple and the five missing items would be restored. These five were all symbols of the Lady: Ezekiel saw the Spirit, the fire and the cherubim leaving the temple as the Lady departed, and her menorah tree had been cut down. Nobody knows when the ark disappeared.

The Lady was Wisdom, and at the four corners of the page are clusters of grapes that represented wisdom teaching. The followers of the Lady had taught her ways in Jerusalem. The king was the chief of these wise teachers; King Solomon was famous for his wisdom. The new regime that drove the glory from the city also collected the wisdom teachings and edited them. What we find in the Bible is only a small and carefully edited collection that has removed all mention of the Lady.

The old royal wisdom survived in the writings of her last teacher, Jesus ben Sira, who lived in Jerusalem about 200 BCE. Some manuscripts of his book say his name was Jesus ben Asira, that is, Jesus the son of Ashratah. He was a disciple of the Lady, and in his book he lamented that he was the last watchman, like one who looks for grapes after the harvest (Ben Sira 33.16). He compared his own search for wisdom to a flower becoming a ripe grape as he followed the Lady's straight path.

From blossom to ripening grape, my heart/mind delighted in her;

My foot entered upon the straight path, and from my youth I followed her steps (Ben Sira 51.15).

Since the name Ashratah means 'the one who keeps you on the straight path', there is no doubt that Ben Sira was a disciple of the Lady. He wrote a poem that described her as the perfumed oil.

He also wrote 'Look out on all the works of God. All of them are in pairs, one opposite another' (Ben Sira 33.15-16). These are the pairs on this page. It is divided into two matching halves, and there are 17 letters on each side of the pattern. You read by finding triangles and other shapes on one side and then finding the exact opposite on the other side.

The top line of the page says 'Alas, the gleanings'. These were the last fruits of Wisdom. The four letters at the corners of the two top lines say 'Jesus' if you read clockwise, and 'wise teacher' if you read anti-clockwise. . There is a similar pattern of letters that form a vertical grid around the central stem of the menorah. Was this Jesus of Nazareth or Jesus ben Sira? This block of 12 letters at the top can be read many ways, and later I shall show you one more. I have over 200 of these patterns, so can only show you a small selection today.

In the centre of the page is the menorah, the great symbol of the Lady of the temple. It represented the tree of life which stood in the Garden of Eden, and every time there was an attempt to remove the Lady from the temple, her tree was cut down and destroyed. It was not one type of tree: Ben Sira compared it to many trees including an oak and a vine (Ben Sira 24.13-14). The Book of Exodus says it was like an almond tree (Exodus 25.31-39).

Beautiful imagery like this was used to express the theology of the temple. Later Christian teachers said the tree of life gave perfumed oil (Clementine Recognitions 1.46) which was used to anoint the king and high priests and give them wisdom. We all know what that means. They said the perfumed oil transformed people into the messengers of Lady Wisdom; they became her angels. Angel and Messenger are the same word in Hebrew. The anointed ones were the children of the Lady. The Lady was the Mother of the angels, the holy ones.

There are many links between this menorah page and the Book of Revelation. Here is one example. The woman who replaced the Lady in Jerusalem appears in the Book of Revelation as her exact opposite; the harlot (Revelation 17.1-6). She was 'the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth'. The Book of Revelation is now in Greek, but

there is no doubt that it originally in Hebrew. If you put the words ‘harlots and abominations’ into Hebrew you have two words whose letters can also mean ‘holy ones and anointed ones’ (Revelation 17.5).

Hebrew words are written only with consonants. If you pronounce them one way they can mean one thing, and if you pronounce them another way, they can be something entirely different. In Hebrew, ‘the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth’ was written in the same way as ‘Mother of the holy ones and the anointed ones’ but it meant the exact opposite. There are many examples of this wordplay in the lead books, and many parallels can be found in the Hebrew Bible, for example in the Book of Isaiah (e.g. Isaiah 5.7).

In Hebrew, an anointed one is a Messiah, and a holy one is an angel. Gabriel told Mary that her child would be a holy one called Son of God, and that he would sit on the throne of David (Luke 1.32-35). This was the old royal theology, and Mary here is the Lady on earth, giving birth to a Holy One who is Son of God. In the old temple, the Lady Wisdom was the Mother of the Messiah, and her children were called the branches of her tree. One of the titles for the Messiah was the Branch or the Shoot (e.g. Jeremiah 23.5-6; Zechariah 5.12), and this is why Isaiah said that a new branch would grow up from the stump of the tree (Isaiah 11.1). The story of the Lady was always told in images like this.

There are pairs of words in the pattern that show the Messiah and the Branch. There are two Hebrew words for Branch that are used to describe the Messiah. Some patterns on the page have only one meaning, some have two and some have three: there is the pair ‘Branch and counsels’, where the three letters for Branch can be read from another apex of the triangle to be Messiah. Both have partner words: Branch and knowledge; Messiah and witness.

The other word for Branch also means ‘guardian or preserver’, and the partner word is ‘my witness’. This is the word used on Jesus’ cross, which did not say ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ but ‘Jesus the Branch/guardian or preserver’ (John 19.19).

The prophet Ezekiel lamented that the great vine of Jerusalem, the Mother of her kings, had been uprooted and planted in the desert. There were no more branches to be kings (Ezekiel 19.10-14). According to the prophet Jeremiah, the refugees in Egypt said Jerusalem had been destroyed by enemies because the Lady was no longer there to protect her city (Jeremiah 44.17-19).

Her faithful followers looked forward to the day when the Lady and her tree would return to the temple. Enoch has a vision of her tree being transplanted, so that its fruit could again feed her people (1 Enoch 25.5). Her priests would serve in the temple again, and she would become great. There are patterns that look forward to her return and the return of her priests, and to her tree being transplanted to stand again in the temple.

The menorah in the gold book is formed from 70 small circles. The menorah was often shown as a pattern of small circles, but I have not found elsewhere one made of precisely 70 circles. The number 70 suggests the 70 angel sons of God Most High, the children of the Lady. They were the guardian angels of the nations, and the firstborn was Yahweh, the angel of Israel (Deuteronomy 32.8, and 4Q Deut j). Yahweh is found many times on this page, and the partner words reveal his place in the Lady's temple. He was, for example, the Servant and the shepherd: 'the LORD is my shepherd' is one of the word pairs. .

The seventy sons of the Lady are not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, but the Lady of Ugarit, known as the lamp of the gods, had 70 sons. This form of the menorah suggests that a similar image was used for the Lady of Jerusalem; her children were part of her lamp, and she shone through them.

At the end of the Book of Revelation, John describes his vision of the tree of life restored to the holy of holies. All the servants of the LORD were there, with the name of the LORD on their foreheads. This means they were all high priests. There are rows of diagonal crosses below an image of the menorah. They represent the high priests standing before the menorah-tree, as in John's vision at the end of the Book of Revelation. .

Part 2

We have restored the Lady and her tree to the holy of holies. Now we shall glimpse her as she Hebrew Bible, but are consistent with its text and in many cases clarify the original meaning. . The significant patterns for the Lady's titles intersect at a node of the menorah.

The Lady was the Queen in the holy of holies, the most sacred part of the temple; she joined together and she destroyed. The holy of holies was often called the watchtower, and the Lady was a wall encircling the city. Isaiah, writing in the eighth century BCE, said that a choice

vine and a watchtower were set in the LORD's vineyard (Isaiah 5.2). The vine was the Lady, and from her tower she looked out to guard her people. These words form a pattern around the menorah, the shape of the words themselves in some way reflecting their meaning. This is a feature of the lead books. The prophet Micah, one of Isaiah's companions in Jerusalem who fled with him from the wicked city, said the Lady had been dragged from the tower which was the place of her kingdom, but she would return and bring judgment on her enemies (Micah 4.8-13).

Archaeologists have found several small statues of a Lady looking out from her tower often identified as a prostitute looking out for new clients. It is in fact the Lady looking out, watching from her tower-shrine. The name Magdalene, which we associate with Mary Magdalene, was originally a title for the Lady: it means both 'the Lady of the tower' and also 'the exalted Lady', and its partner word is 'sevenfold knowledge.' The Lady of the Tower was Lady Wisdom at home in the temple. Magdalene is an example of Jesus' disciples adopting the names and titles from the old temple.

The temple represented the creation. The Lady and her wisdom were therefore at the heart of the creation. This aspect of the creation story in the Bible is not often mentioned. We hear only of God giving commands and separating the various parts of the creation into their different roles, and then resting on the seventh day. The forgotten Lady held all that diversity in one system, as we shall see. She united the creation and held it in harmony with her wisdom. Her angels sang, and this was a sign of the harmony.

When the Lady and her Son returned, the shepherds at Bethlehem heard angels singing about the glory in heaven and peace on earth. This meant peace restored to the earth when the Lady had given birth to her Son (Luke 2.14).

First we must look briefly at temple symbolism. The part of the building called the tower was on a higher level, and was separated by a huge curtain, usually called the veil of the temple. The hidden area behind the veil was the holy of holies, the place of the divine presence. Everything outside the veil was the visible, material world, the world of time. Beyond the veil was the hidden state beyond time. In Hebrew, 'hidden' is the same word as 'eternal'. The holy of holies represented the source of creation, the beginning. Here, the Lady reigned as Queen. She set the time for everything. [There are complex calendar patterns which I do not have time to show today.]

When John first saw her in the temple, she was the Queen, clothed with the sun and crowned with stars (Revelation 12.1-2). She was the ruler of the calendar and she gave birth to the King.

The word 'Queen' occurs many times on the menorah page. She rules the kingdom and brings peace. She rules the creation and the weather. These words are all found, together with many others, in complex star-shaped patterns, all absolutely symmetrical.

.Her priests went up into her tower. They went into her presence in a mystical ascent and experienced her light and peace. The menorah page shows this pattern of ascent, setting the words themselves in an ascent pattern. The seven letters at the sides of the page lead to the key words for the ascent from earth to heaven. Thus that Lady's banished priests return to her holy place, and she becomes great again (Isaiah 61.5-7).

In the Book of Revelation, when John saw the heavenly Jerusalem coming down from heaven, he saw it as the Lady in all her finery. It was built from gold, with high jeweled walls and gates of pearl (Revelation 21.9-21). We do not know how the Lady and the city were one, because we do not think in that way, but this is what John wrote. Other texts also described the Lady as the city (e.g. 2 Esdras 10.40-54).

In the time of Isaiah, when the Assyrian army threatened Jerusalem, King Hezekiah asked the LORD for guidance, and the reply came through the prophet. *He spoke words from the Lady.*

The Virgin daughter Zion despised her proud enemies and would save her city. She would bring forth salvation. The words 'son' and 'knowledge' are also part of this pattern. Her son would teach her ways, and thus save her people. The enemies had raised their voices against the Holy One of Israel. She had long ago planned their defeat, and she would drive them away (Isaiah 37.28-29).

Who was the Holy One of Israel? It is always assumed that it was the LORD, and the Hebrew lexicon gives no feminine form of the word 'holy', so how could 'holy' be a title for the Lady? The sense of this menorah-page text, however, is that the speaker is the Lady, and the title Qudshu, meaning 'Holy One', appears several times on the menorah page. Here it is at the centre, and the partner word is 'Righteous'. It seems that 'Holy One' was a title for the Lady as well as for the LORD (1 Kings 14.24, where the Hebrew actually says 'Holy One was then in the land').

Shaddai, also meant ‘destroyer’, and in Isaiah’s words to King Hezekiah, we glimpse the Lady as the Holy One destroying her enemies. Sometimes she took away her wisdom and so made them mad. When she herself was driven away, her city was destroyed. This is what the refugees in Egypt told the prophet Jeremiah after they had fled from Jerusalem.

According to the first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, the banished Lady longed to pour out her Spirit again on her foolish children, and she warned them that disasters would come to those who rejected her teachings (Proverbs 1.20-33). All this can be read from the menorah page.

The less well known biblical story of creation is in the Book of Proverbs, when the Lady described her own role in the forming the world. She was beside the Creator as he marked out the foundations of the earth before the visible world was made, and then she held all things together in harmony (Proverbs 8.30). The Book of Job, a mysterious ancient text, says that when the LORD laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars, who were the sons of God, were singing with joy (Job 38.4-7). These were the children of the Lady, although she is not mentioned here.

The better known creation story in Genesis has the Lady hidden in the very first line, although she does not appear in the translations. The story begins ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth... and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters’ (Genesis 1.1). But you can read those words another way, and we know that some the early Christians did. ‘In the beginning God created’ can be read ‘*By means of the net, God created*’ (implied in the Greek transliteration in Origen’s Hexapla for Genesis). What was this net? The story implies the Lady was a weaver, and her web held the creation together, to balance the Creator’s acts of separating. This is another example of text archaeology recovering information about the Lady.

In the Book of Proverbs, where the Lady declared that she was with the Creator before the world was made, she said: ‘Ages ago, I was established’ (Proverbs 8.23). That is the usual translation, obtained by altering the Hebrew text and assuming that a scribe had made a mistake. The Hebrew actually says ‘Ages ago, I was *weaving*, at the first before the beginning of the earth’. This was her net, known in this menorah page, but unknown to recent scholars of Proverbs who ‘corrected’ the Hebrew to make it give an idea they recognized.. The storytellers used the image of a woman weaving, and in the revolution in

623 BCE, women who were weaving fabric for the Lady were driven out of the temple. Archaeologists have found evidence on other sites that sacred weaving was part of her cult.

The Lady was the Living One and the Sustainer of life. The Psalmist sang: 'O LORD, how many are your works. You have made all of them with Wisdom' (Psalm 104.24). The earliest Aramaic translation of Genesis, made just before the time of Jesus, had a few extra details in the story (Neofit Targum to Genesis). Maybe this was to make sure that the original was not forgotten. In the Aramaic version, Genesis begins: 'In the beginning the LORD with Wisdom created the heaven and the earth'. People knew that the Lady was present at the creation, even though she disappeared from the first lines of Genesis and only her net remained.

The women in the old temple wove a special fine linen, a soft white fabric with a sheen like marble (2 Kings 23.7, but the Hebrew text is damaged here). It was a symbol of the Lady and her gift of heavenly life. Her servants wore this fabric, which is why we still imagine angels with shining white garments. The fabric represented the good actions of her servants by which the Lady was seen in the creation. When she appeared again in the Book of Revelation, John saw her wearing 'fine linen, bright and pure', which represented the righteous deeds of her holy ones. (Revelation 19.8). The Lady and her fine linen are on the menorah page.

The Lady's net was her covenant. In the Old Testament it is called 'the covenant of peace' (e.g. Isaiah 54.10) or 'the covenant of eternity' (e.g. Genesis 9.16). In the Book of Enoch, it was called 'the Oath' which bound all things together: 'This Oath holds dominion over them, and through it they are kept; their paths are kept also, and their ways are not destroyed' (1 Enoch 69.25).

Since Ashratah can mean 'the Lady who keeps you on a straight path' or 'The Lady who gives happiness', here we see her covenant oath that keeps all things on their paths.

'Oath' is the word for covenant used on the menorah page, and it appears many times. The letters of the word can be read in many ways, for example to mean covenant and oath, but also satisfaction and abundance. It is the word for 'seven', which was the sign of completion – the seventh day and the sevenfold spirit. It was also the word for colour, since the visible world is a place of colour and the Lady's holy place was a place of light whence to colour emerged. The partner words for 'oath' reveal more about the Lady's covenant:

- It was made in Eden
- It was made with Adam, as Hosea 6.7, which says there was a covenant with Adam, but which modern scholars assume was as scribal error and so ‘correct’ the text here.
- It was the mysteries of number and measurement in the creation, just as the later chariot mystics knew.
- It protected the creation, and it ensured the fertility and prosperity of creation.

The Orthodox Church gives thanks for the Lady’s net at Pentecost, when the Spirit and the fire returned, the two signs of the Lady that were missing from the second temple.

Blessed art thou O Christ our God, who has revealed fishers most wise, sending down upon them thy Holy Spirit, and thereby catching the universe as in a net’. (Liturgy for Pentecost, Antiphon III).

This was the Lady, holding all things together again. Her covenant was renewed and restored.

The creation story in Genesis also says that the Spirit was *moving* over the face of the waters. In fact the word is ‘fluttering’ (Genesis 1.2). The Hebrew says the Spirit was fluttering like a bird over the process of creation. The Lady was often described as a dove with hovering wings, and small statues of birds have been found with those little figurines. When Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan, he had a vision of a dove, and he heard a voice saying ‘You are my beloved Son’ (Mark.1.11). This is always understood to be the voice of God the Father speaking to Jesus, but the first Christians, *who wrote the story*, understood it differently. They said the voice was Jesus’ heavenly Mother (Gospel of the Hebrews 7),

The Lady’s best known title in the Old Testament is Virgin, because this occurs in the Bible readings for Christmas; ‘Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and you shall call his name Immanuel’ (Isaiah 7.14). The word Virgin can also be translated ‘Eternal Lady’ or ‘Hidden Lady’. The hidden eternal Lady was the Lady behind the veil of the temple, the Lady Wisdom.

Isaiah gave this prophecy about the Lady giving birth, meaning that there would be a new king in Jerusalem. Just like the Lady of ancient Ugarit, the Lady of Jerusalem was the heavenly mother of the king, and she was also called the eternal or hidden Lady. . When King Ahaz feared for the future of his royal house because enemies threatened him and his

city, the prophet assured him that there would be another king (Isaiah 7.14 and 8.8: Immanuel was the name of the Lady's Son and also the title of the king in Jerusalem). The Lady giving birth would be a sign of the next Immanuel.

The royal court in Jerusalem was the image on earth of the Kingdom of heaven. In heaven, the Lady was the Queen, and her son was the LORD, the King. On earth, the human king was the LORD in human form, and his mother, not his wife, was the queen. . She was called the Great Lady (1 Kings 15.13; Jeremiah 13.18; 29.2: the Hebrew 'Great Lady' is usually translated Queen Mother). The partner word here is 'Bee', and the Lady's teaching was often described as 'honey' (Proverbs 24.13; Ben Sira 24.20). There were Mother and Son in heaven, and Mother and Son on earth.

The king was called Immanuel, which means 'God with us', and his mother was the Bearer of God. This title was later given to Mary, and caused great controversy in the Church in the fifth century, because some people no longer remembered the temple context of the title. In Greek the title is *Theotokos*, usually translated 'Mother of God', but until recently, there was no example of the title in Hebrew. **It is here in Hebrew, set as the four key letters at the corners of the menorah page.**

The angels who appeared to the shepherds at Bethlehem when Jesus was born said that the baby was 'the sign'. This was Isaiah's prophecy fulfilled - the sign of the Lady giving birth to her Son: 'This will be for you the sign. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger'. (Luke 2.12). The oldest copies of Luke's gospel say 'the sign' not 'a sign', and so we know that the first Christians saw Mary giving birth to Jesus as the Lady on earth giving birth to her Son. .

In the Book of Revelation, a great sign appears in heaven. First the lost ark is seen again, and then a woman clothed with the sun appears in the temple, like the sun Lady of Ugarit. She gives birth to the Messiah who is taken to sit on the throne of God. This is the image in Isaiah and in Luke's gospel, but here in the Book of Revelation, another of the Lady's ancient titles is used. She is the Lady of the Sun (Revelation 12.1-6). The prophet Malachi, writing long after the Lady had been banished from the temple, said she would return. The Sun of righteousness, he said, would rise with healing in her wings (Malachi 4.2). From this we know that the Lady was imagined as a winged angel figure who brought healing and light.

Mary enthroned with her unborn Son visible within her is depicted in an ikon called The Lady of the Sign. Another way to read the top two lines of the menorah page is as **a picture in letters of the Lady of the Sign.**

The top two lines represent heaven. Here on the very top line, the four marked letters say 'Allat', the name of the Lady in the community across the Jordan (See John Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp.108-114) It means 'Goddess' or 'Shining One'. The four marked letters in the second line say is 'Smitten' or 'Suppressed'. The Lady had been put down from her rightful place, echoed in Maty's words in the Magnificat: 'the low estate of his handmaiden'. Embedded within those letters which describe the low estate of the Lady are four in the shape of a diagonal X, which was the sign of the Name of the LORD. They say 'Servant'. Here is a picture in letters of the rejected shining Lady, enclosing the Servant who has the Name of the LORD.

In one of the most complex patterns on this page, a series of nesting triangles with a common vertex, the Lady is shown with her titles:

- She is the princess
- She is the Tower or Majesty
- She is the Lamp
- She is the Stream or the Lion [I have not had time today to show you those patterns]
- She is the protector and the honey. One of her titles was the Bee, and her teaching was the honey to feed her children.
- She was the Mirror of God, a title used in the Book of Wisdom (Wisdom 7.26),

The menorah page also shows us Mary, in Hebrew Miriam. This was one of the names of the Lady Wisdom.

The Bible says she was the older sister of Aaron the high priest and Moses the law giver (1 Chronicles 6.3 lists the children of Amram, boys first, but Exodus 2.4 shows the sister was older than her brother Moses). In other words, Wisdom was older than the high priesthood and the Law of Moses. Moses claimed to be the only one who spoke the words of the LORD. Miriam disagreed with him and was punished with leprosy. She was sent outside the camp for seven days. Then she was cured and returned, but had no further role in the life of her people (Numbers 12.1-16)

People remembered what those stories really meant; that Wisdom was rejected when Moses and his disciples became dominant. She died and was buried in the desert (Numbers 20.1), not far from the place where our menorah book was bought as a tourist souvenir.

Miriam appears in several patterns. Her name forms a pattern with words for womb, so she was the holy Mother. There are blocks of letters that form pairs of words, and sometimes the letters are woven from other words. The 4 letters of the word Miriam are divided into two words. On the left side is one word for womb, enclosed by 2 of the letters for Miriam. On the right is the other Hebrew word for womb, enclosed by the other two letters of the word Miriam. The 2 pairs of letters from the word Miriam say myrrh and Mother, and the partner words for womb are 'prepared' and 'holy'.

The name Miriam appears many times on this page. In some of the triangle patterns and their partner words there are Miriam, with brightness, rejoicing, flower [the golden plate on the high priest's forehead]. Parts of the Miriam pattern say 'Myrrh and fire', or 'Light and majesty', or 'Mother and fine linen' Another pattern around 'Miriam' includes Majesty, song, and lament.

Do you recall the five items that were missing from the second temple? The ark, the menorah, the Spirit, the fire and the cherubim were all symbols of the Lady. In the Book of Revelation, John saw the ark again just before the woman clothed with the sun appeared, he saw the menorah and the cherubim as the tree of life and the throne in his final vision of all the high priests in the holy of holies, and the fire and the Spirit returned at Pentecost (Acts 2.2-3). The first Christians claimed that the Lady had returned.

There is a clear link between the Book of Isaiah, which is the most quoted biblical book in the New Testament, the Book of Revelation, and the way the Nativity stories are told in the Gospels.

The images of the Lady and her titles were used by the first Christians to describe Mary, showing that she was recognized as the Lady.

The earliest Christian hymns composed to honour Mary have the same pattern of words. The greatest hymn to Mary is the Akathist. Nobody knows when it was composed. The author,

Romanos, was a convert from Judaism, and the hymn is in the style of the old wisdom poems written by disciples of the Lady.

Here are 27 titles for Mary from the Akathist hymn. These are all on the menorah page of the gold book. There are many more which I have not had time to show you.

Mary is honoured as:

- the leader and defender of her city
- the One through whom joy shines forth
- the One who restores fallen Adam,
- the throne for the King,
- the womb of divine incarnation
- the One through whom creation is renewed
- the One who knows God's wisdom
- the One whose wisdom greater than the knowledge of the wise,
- the sunrise that illuminates the minds of the faithful,
- the vine with a Branch that never withers
- the One who makes the garden of Eden flower again
- protection against unseen enemies
- shining revelation of grace
- the One who clothes us in glory
- the Mother of the Star that never sets
- the light of the mystical day
- flower of incorruption
- the tree with glorious fruit to feed the faithful,
- the most holy chariot of him who rides upon the cherubim,
- the one who brings opposite to harmony,
- the one who illuminates many with knowledge,
- the one who gives good counsel
- the lamp of living light,
- the perfume of the Anointed One,
- the living temple
- greater holy of holies

- the Mother of God, *Theotokos*.

What does this mean? The Lady is returning.

The politics of Church history have obscured her real identity and sometimes even banished her from the Church. She is needed now as much as she ever was. Knowledge is increasing all the time, but it is destroying the creation. It is not the Lady's wisdom that now rules our world, but the knowledge of good and evil that the snake, the great deceiver, offered to Adam and Eve as something better. They lost everything.

Environmentalists are emphasizing that everything is part of the great web of life that human intervention is destroying. We are breaking the Lady's covenant, destroying her net. Trees are being destroyed on an industrial scale. As Isaiah said, the angels of peace are weeping (Isaiah 33.7; the Hebrew says 'angels of peace'). Our world is ruled by black oil from the earth, not by the Lady's golden anointing oil from her tree of life.

But, curiously, the energy crisis facing all of us- the problem of non-renewable resources - has turned us back to the Lady for our sources of renewable power. Her sun, wind and water are now providing solar energy, wind energy, and energy from water. I have not told you today about her waters of life - there was not time - but we have looked a little at the sun and the wind - which is the same Hebrew word as Spirit. What we pray for now is a return to the Lady in other ways.

I conclude with some lines from the Wisdom of Solomon.

Wisdom is radiant and unfading,
and she is easily discerned by those who love her,
and she is found by those who seek her.
She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her (Wisdom 6.12).

She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other
And she orders all things well (Wisdom 8.1).

The full range of images to accompany this article will be published later in book form. For copyright reasons they are not included here.