

Portrayals of the holy ark, or Torah shrine, in synagogues have been known for years (see, for example, the ark at Hammath Tiberias, Slide 85). However, actual physical remains of arks in ancient synagogues were unknown until the 1980 excavation at Nabratein. This top portion, or pediment, from the ark was discovered in the third-century C.E. synagogue. The excavators believe that an earthquake in 306 severely damaged the building and the ark. As a result, the pediment stone and other elements of the ark were buried in the synagogue floor. Note the typical elements of Jewish art on this pediment, such as the shell, the recumbent lions and the rosettes.