

*Moses and the Burning Bush*, mural in Dura-Europos, Syria

Art selection and commentary by [Heidi J. Hornik](#) and [Mikeal C. Parsons](#)

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Moses and the Burning Bush, mural in Dura-Europos, Syria, ca. 239 CE. Photo © Art Resource, NY.

Dura-Europos, a Roman military outpost along the Euphrates River (in modern-day Syria) that was abandoned in the third century, was one of the most significant archaeological finds of the 20th century. Among the discoveries there were the remains of a Jewish synagogue, whose walls were covered with murals recounting the history of Israel. One painting from ca. 239 CE shows Moses and the burning bush. The presence of God is indicated not only by the fire in the bush but also by

the detached, gesturing hand in the upper left corner. The divine hand is a key element in the synagogue iconography, appearing also in the frescoes depicting the sacrifice of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, Elijah reviving the widow's son, and Ezekiel's vision of the restoration of national life.