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ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE BIBLE AND ITS RECEPTION

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Birsha – Chariot of Fire

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amó could consist of Torah ark curtains (*parokhot*) and/or the precious textiles from the bride's trousseau. Variations of the Turkish *talamó* are known from the Sephardi communities in the Balkans, Morocco, and 19th- and early 20th-century Jerusalem.

The "canopy of bridegrooms" – usually meaning a special seat or bench in the synagogue for the bridegroom (and in some places also for the bride) – was known among some Jewish communities in Islamic countries – chiefly in Afghanistan, Egypt, and Kurdistan. In most Islamic countries, however, the accepted practice has been to spread a *tallit* over the bridal couple. Known till the mass immigration to Israel, this practice is recorded, inter alia, in Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Bukhara, and Erets Israel. In Iran, the corners of the *tallit* were held by four men above the heads of the couple. In some communities (Afghanistan, Yemen, Kurdistan), no ordinary *huppah* covered the couple during the ceremony, though, as required by *halakhah*, a separate "yihud [seclusion] room" was prepared for them. In modern Israel an elaborate fixed, though free-standing, *huppah* has become the norm.

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Shalom Sabar

III. Visual Arts

The canopy or baldachin adds visual importance to the event, person, or object that covers it. Both worldly and heavenly rulers often sit, stand, or sleep underneath a tent-like canopy to enhance their presentation (see fig. 24). Holofernes, general of Nebuchadnezzar, is decapitated by the Jewish heroine Judith whilst drunk and asleep. "Next she rolled his body off the bed and pulled down the canopy from the posts" (Jdt 13:9), in order to hide her action and leave the enemy's camp with his head in her food bag. God the Father reigns from under a canopy in the Master of Flémalle's *Trinity* (St. Petersburg Hermitage, ca. 1430; see → plate 13.b), Mary presents her little son to the onlooker protected by a small rectangular baldachin (Rogier van der Weyden, *Saint Luke drawing the Virgin*, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, ca. 1435), and Abraham meets Melchizedek while angels hold a large cloth of honor above their heads (*The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek*, Peter Paul Rubens, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, ca. 1625). At cer-



Fig. 24 "Judith and Holofernes" (book illumination, 13th cent.)

emonial events like coronations, funerals, and liturgical processions, a canopy pays tribute to the major figures (Jules Breton, *The Blessing of the Wheat in Artois*, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Arras, 1857).

In ecclesiastical architecture, a fixed vaulted canopy supported by four columns is called a ciborium. It covers the altar in a church, and is free-standing in the sanctuary. Since the early 5th century CE the use of ciboria is recorded in Thessaloniki and elsewhere in the Byzantine Empire (Cormack 1985: 62–68 and figs. 18, 23, 27, 29). A number of medieval ciboria survive, mainly in Italy, such as those in the Sant' Ambrogio in Milan (with 12th-cent. stuccowork), the San Nicolò in Bari (12th cent.), and the late 13th-century one in the Santa Cecilia in Rome by Arnolfo di Cambio. The best-known canopy, resting on four giant spiral columns, was designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini for Saint Peter's in Rome (1624–33) in order to honor and cover the tomb of the first apostle. It is also called by its Italian name *Baldachino*.

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See also → Booth

Cantata

The term "cantata" applies, strictly speaking, to a Baroque genre of vocal music that developed in Italy from ca. 1620 to the late 18th century. It is a form of chamber music, usually written for a solo voice with instrumental accompaniment, which came to embrace contrasting movements of recitatives and arias. Although it most commonly dealt with love, mythology, and Greco-Roman history, the Italian cantata came increasingly to approach



b) Master of Flemalle, *The Trinity* (ca. 1430)