New Approaches to the Study of Biblical Interpretation in Judaism of the Second Temple Period and in Early Christianity

Edited by

GARY A. ANDERSON, RUTH A. CLEMENTS, AND DAVID SATRAN

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New Approaches to the Study of Biblical
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Period and in Early Christianity

Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

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New Approaches to the Study of Biblical Interpretation in Judaism of the Second Temple Period and in Early Christianity

Proceedings of the Eleventh International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jointly Sponsored by the Hebrew University Center for the Study of Christianity, 9–11 January, 2007

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PART THREE

INTERPRETIVE TRAJECTORIES

PREFACE

The present volume represents the fruits of the Eleventh International Orion Symposium, which took place June 18–21, 2007, at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and was cosponsored by the University's Center for the Study of Christianity. This symposium, the second cooperative venture for the two Centers, drew its inspiration from the foundational work of their initial joint project, the Ninth International Orion Symposium: "Text, Thought, and Practice in Qumran and Early Christianity" (2004). At that earlier gathering, Jewish and Christian scholars articulated what was then emerging as a new paradigm for thinking about the connections between Qumranic and early Christian texts—less a conception of direct connections or genetic influence than a renewed assessment of the light these corpora mutually cast on one another, as expressions and outgrowths of a shared milieu. The participants in that first symposium concurred that an important next step in the investigation of the relationship between early Jewish and Christian literary creativity would be to explore innovations in method.

Hence the theme of the Eleventh Symposium and of this collection of papers: "New Approaches to the Study of Biblical Interpretation in Judaism of the Second Temple Period and in Early Christianity." The symposium itself adopted an innovative format, combining conventional presentation–discussion sessions with workshops, some team-led, where participants were able to work through specific texts, while bearing in mind the larger question of relationships to outside materials. All the papers included in this volume began as presentations at the conference and benefitted from the spirited and collegial exchanges that took place there. Some of the papers directly tackled the theoretical issues of methodology raised by specific approaches to target materials, while others focused more explicitly on the texts themselves and addressed the issue of interpretive frameworks and methods in the course of their presentations. The goal was to provide a wide-ranging survey of some of the new perspectives that have been brought to the study of early biblical exegesis, highlighting the ways in which these perspectives have begun to transform both our understanding of early Judaism and Christianity and, just as importantly, our appreciation of the manner in which these systems interacted with and influenced one another in these formative early centuries.

Given the wide-ranging and highly variegated character of the materials that might be explored under such a rubric, the papers included in the volume have been distributed, somewhat restively, into three divisions. The paper by Michael Stone opens the volume and addresses explicit theoretical issues that constitute a prolegomenon of sorts to the other essays, examining the terminology of "Bible" and "canon" and assessing its appropriateness for the literature of the Second Temple period. The essays by Gregory Sterling and Michael Segal, as well as the complementary papers by Maren Niehoff and Serge Ruzer on the Letter of James, focus primarily on the contemporary contexts of the texts under investigation and the interpretive backgrounds underlying them. Segal investigates the exegetical transformation of Isa 2:1–4 in Diaspora contexts and the eventual use of these verses in the LXX story of Susanna; from this vantage point he is able to suggest the resolution to a thorny interpretive crux and consequently to propose a new understanding of the message of the tale. Sterling focuses on the interpretation of Gen 1:27 in order to articulate Philo's central role within an established tradition of neoplatonizing Jewish biblical interpretation in Alexandria. The papers by Niehoff and Ruzer emerged from their joint workshop; read in concert, their essentially, indeed almost diametrically, opposed (but equally enlightening) analyses of the Letter serve to exemplify the possibilities inherent in highly divergent interpretive understandings and the fruitfulness of a dialectical approach to this text.

The next set of essays presents a range of comparative studies. Gary Anderson, Menahem Kister, and Naomi Koltun-Fromm each investigate the potential connections between the interpretations of specific biblical passages in the intertwined traditions of early Judaism and Christianity. Anderson examines conceptions of almsgiving from the Second Temple period onward; Koltun-Fromm tracks rabbinic and patristic transformations of the biblical notions of holiness and sexuality; and Kister compares the range (and limits) of allegorical or figural interpretations of a number of biblical passages, with a focus on Philo, the rabbis, and Origen. Ruth Clements's essay concludes this section by injecting a visual dimension into the comparative efforts, as she explores the connections between Second Temple readings of the Akedah and early Christian and Jewish art, with a view to understanding the broader cultural reception of biblical stories and their extrabiblical ramifications.

And finally, the two remaining essays of the volume follow exegetical trajectories into later literature. Richard Layton charts the Alexandrian legacy over nearly four centuries, examining attitudes toward biblical

"literalism," from Philo through Origen to Didymus the Blind. Sergio La Porta traces the transformation of the first-century apocalyptic eschatology of the book of Revelation into a vision of long-term perfection of the cosmos in the sixth-century writings of Dionysius the Areopagite.

The present volume is by no means a conspectus of an entire field of inquiry. The study of biblical exegesis has "exploded" over the past decades, and no single volume can hope to encompass the whole. Yet even this brief survey of the contents of this collection indicates the extent to which the papers touch upon a broad array of exegetical subjects and scholarly issues: ranging from the basic problematic of determining what is a biblical as opposed to an apocryphal text; through the complex philosophical discourse that Philo introduced into the ancient exegetical workshop; to the patterns of reading demarcated in rabbinic and patristic works that continue to shape Jewish and Christian identities in our own day. The scholars whose studies are included in this volume were asked to do what they do best, and the result is a set of cutting-edge essays that will open new vistas onto the exegetical heritage that the early Synagogue and Church have left to us. Taken together, the papers well represent the spirit of the symposium for which they first were conceived and demonstrate repeatedly the conceptual gains that have been (and remain to be) made from the vantage point of considering early Jewish and Christian documents as heirs to and developers of a shared biblical and extrabiblical interpretive heritage.

One of the striking features of the volume certainly has been the interdisciplinary and intraconfessional nature of this work. The reader enjoys the fruits of Jewish scholarship critically engaged with the New Testament and early Christian literature, and of Christian scholarly assessments of rabbinic texts. A careful reading of the latter, for example, suggests new ways of approaching Origen; and a deeper consideration of Jewish traditions embedded in the Gospels leads to fresh ways of reading Tannaitic and Amoraic materials in the rabbinic corpus. Not satisfied with a simple genealogy of how a specific Jewish or Christian exegetical tradition emerges, many of the authors push further in an attempt to see how the interaction of the two traditions shaped the way their proponents read these sacred texts.

We would like to thank the Orion Center and the Center for the Study of Christianity for their sponsorship and administrative support of the symposium and the resulting volume. Thanks also go to the Orion Foundation and the Sir Zelman Cowen Universities Fund for their support of

the Orion Center and its activities, as well as to Hubert and Aldegonde Brenninkmeijer-Werhahn for their ongoing support of the activities of the Center for the Study of Christianity. As always, we appreciate the pleasant professional assistance of the staff at Brill Academic Publishers, especially Ms. Mattie Kuiper and Ms. Tessel Jonquière, in bringing this volume through the production process.

Gary A. Anderson
Ruth A. Clements
David Satran

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Ed. D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ACO	Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANF	*Ante-Nicene Fathers.* Ed. A. Roberts, J. Donaldson; rev. A. C. Coxe. 10 vols. Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885–1896. Repr. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum: Series graeca. Turnhout: Brepols, 1977–
CPG	*Clavis patrum graecorum.* Edited by M. Geerard. 5 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987
CSCO	Corpus scriptorum christianorum orientalium
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
CWS	Classics of Western Spirituality
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DSAM	*Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique: doctrine et histoire*. Ed. M. Viller. 17 vols. Paris: Beauchesne, 1937–1995
DSD	*Dead Sea Discoveries*
EBib	Études bibliques
FC	Fathers of the Church. Washington, D.C., 1947–
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechische christliche Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
GRBS	*Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament

HSM   Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR   *Harvard Theological Review*
HTS   Harvard Theological Studies
HUCA   *Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC   International Critical Commentary
JANES   *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University*
JAOS   *Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL   *Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS   *Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JJA   *Journal of Jewish Art*
JJS   *Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR   *Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRASup   Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplements
JSJ   *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Periods*
JSJSup   Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNT   *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSOT   *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSP   *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSPSup   Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSQ   *Jewish Studies Quarterly*
JTS   *Journal of Theological Studies*
KEK   Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neuen Testament
LCL   Loeb Classical Library
LSTS   Library of Second Temple Studies
MSU   Mitteilungen des Septuaginta-Unternehmens
NHMS   Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NTS   *New Testament Studies*
NovT   *Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup   Supplements to Novum Testamentum
OBO   Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OTP   *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Ed. J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–1985
PACS   Philo of Alexandria Commentary Series
ParOr   *Parole de l'orient*
PG   Patrologia Graeca [Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca]. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886

PhilosAnt	Philosophia Antiqua
PL	Patrologia latina. Edited by J.-P. Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
RB	*Revue biblique*
REJ	*Revue des études juives*
RevScRel	*Revue des sciences religieuses*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des religions*
RRJ	*Review of Rabbinic Judaism*
RSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*
RSPT	*Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques*
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and its Literature
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SC	Sources chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
SE	*Studia evangelica I, II, III* (= TU 73 [1959], 87 [1964], 88 [1964] etc.)
SEAug	Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SP	Sacra Pagina
SPhilo	*Studia Philonica* (Chicago: The Philo Institute, 1972–1980)
SPhA	*Studia Philonica Annual* (1989–)
SSyr	Scriptores Syri
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STGM	Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters
StPatr	Studia Patristica
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVF	*Stoicorum veterum fragmenta.* Ed. H. von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Tr. G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
THKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*

TS	*Theological Studies*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum / Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
VC	*Vigiliae christianae*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZKT	*Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*
ZWT	*Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE CATEGORIES
"BIBLE" AND "APOCRYPHA"*

Michael E. Stone

The Hebrew Bible is traditionally viewed as composed of three parts: Torah or Pentateuch, that is the five books of Moses; Nevi'im or Prophets,[1] the three major and twelve minor written prophetical books, together with the historical cycle of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (corresponding to the time span of the writing prophets); and Ketubim (Writings or Hagiographa), containing all the other books, such as Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Daniel, Chronicles, Esther, Lamentations, and others.

I argued that of the tripartite Hebrew Bible, while the collections of Torah and Nevi'im were firmly established in the first century BCE and CE, the collection of Ketubim was not yet closed, though its central works had come together.[2] The evidence underpinning this view is the following:

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* This paper was written and submitted in 2007. Since then, in further research, I have modified my views; they have now been published in a new book, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

[1] D. M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 264, suggests that the term "prophets" in the references to "Torah and Prophets" designated "all non-Torah, pre-Hellenistic works included in the Hasmonean collection" of the Hebrew Scriptures, which corpus he understands to have been established by the Hasmoneans. This meaning of the term is strongly advocated by J. Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); see n. 11 below. For a summary of some earlier views, supporting the tripartite division as also current in Alexandria, see A. C. Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church* (HTS 20; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), 207–9.

[2] A much more conservative point of view is argued by S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences 47; New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1976). He dates the closing of what he calls "the Prophetic canon" to about 400, and the Hagiographa to shortly after the death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (164/163); see pp. 25–33. His perspective leads him to argue for the maximal antiquity of each piece of evidence. The so-called "Alexandrian Canon hypothesis," first postulated by John Grabe (1666–1711) and John Semler (1752–1791), has been thoroughly refuted by A. C. Sundberg, "The Old Testament of the Early Church (A Study in Canon)," *HTR* 51 (1958): 205–26; repr. in *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays* (ed. E. Ferguson, D. M. Scholer, and P. C. Finney; New York: Garland, 1993), 63–84; likewise by Leiman, *Canonization*, 5, though Leiman disagrees emphatically with Sundberg on many other matters.

1) Specific names come to designate groupings of texts. Explicit mention of, or the implication of, the existence of distinct collections is found in 4QMMT from Qumran;[3] the Prologue by the grandson of Ben Sira to his Greek translation of the book, from 132 BCE; the reference to the Law, Prophets, and Psalms in Luke 24:44; and, less convincingly, the passage on the holy books of the Therapeutae in Philo's *Contempl.* 3.25.[4] These references are not explicit as to the contents of the supposed parts.

2) By the end of first century CE a more or less fixed number of "holy" books was recognized. That there was a fixed number by the turn of the first century is clear both from Josephus' mention of 22 books in his treatise *Against Apion* 1.37–38, and from *4 Ezra*'s allusion to 24 revealed and exoteric books, in chapter 14:44–45.[5]

3) Yet, apparently, by ca. 70 CE the collection was not yet final. This is evident from the diversity within:

   a. Patristic lists of books included in the Old Testament;[6]
   b. the contents of the oldest Christian Greek manuscript copies of the Bible;
   c. the range of works cited using "scripture" formulae by authors as late (from the point of view of this discussion) as Clement of Alexandria (latter part of the second century CE).[7]

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[3] See however, K. Berthelot, "4QMMT et la question du canon de la Bible hébraïque," in *From 4QMMT to Resurrection: Mélanges qumrâniens en hommage à Émile Puech* (ed. F. García Martínez, A. Steudel and E. Tigchelaar; STDJ 61; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1–14.

[4] Leiman, *Canonization*, 31, says, "The correspondence to the tripartite division of the canon is obvious." This is emphatically denied, however, by others, such as E. Ulrich, "The Non-attestation of a Tripartite Canon in 4QMMT," *CBQ* 65 (2003): 202–14, esp. 205–14. For John Barton's dissenting view on the overall issue of tripartite canon, see n. 1 above and n. 13 below.

[5] This is also the number of books of the Bible found in canon lists such as those published by H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 200–22; see n. 28. The evidence conventionally used is reviewed by J. C. VanderKam, "Revealed Literature in the Second Temple Period," in idem, *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (JSJSup 62; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1–10.

[6] Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church*, 55–60.

[7] Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church*, 129–72. M. R. James and A.-M. Denis give numerous such citations; see M. R. James, *The Lost Apocrypha of the Old Testament: Their Titles and Fragments* (Translations of Early Documents 1; London: SPCK, 1920); and A.-M. Denis, *Fragmenta Pseudepigraphorum quae supersunt graeca una cum Historicorum et Auctorum Judaeorum Hellenistarum Fragmentis* (PVTG 3; Leiden: Brill, 1970).

Likewise, even in rabbinic literature, there are indications that the issue of a closed collection was not completely resolved in the second century.[8]

Behind these simple statements lie questions concerning the history of the growth and development of the collections of literature that eventually constituted the Hebrew Bible. These seem to me to centre on the following matters (and I stress that my remarks are relevant only to the Second Temple period; that is, before the destruction of the Temple):[9]

1) Torah: When did the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy come to be designated by the name "Torah" or "Law of Moses," with special status and standing?

2) Nevi'im: When did the collection now known as "Prophets" or Nevi'im come together and when did it gain special standing? Were its contents the same in antiquity?

3) Authoritative status: Since these two collections came together sequentially, what was their standing in various circles in Second Temple Judaism and among the Dead Sea community?

4) The concept of canon: It is clear that even if the concept of canon, meaning a unique fixed collection of books containing divine revelation, closed and exhaustive of God's word to humans, existed in antiquity, which I rather doubt, there is no way that such a canon and, consequently, the very concept of canon, could have existed before the collections that constituted it had grown and evolved. For the Hebrew Bible this is at the end of the Second Temple period.[10]

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[8] *T. Yad.* 2:13, 14; 3:5; *m. Šabb.* 15:2, 6; see also on Ezekiel, *b. Ḥag. 3a* ("they sought to hide Ezekiel"). For a critique of the theories of Leiman and Beckwith, who would view the closing of the three parts of the Hebrew Bible and even of the whole corpus as having taken place in the second century BCE, see VanderKam, "Revealed Literature," 12–18.

[9] Shemaryahu Talmon strongly denies the relevance of the concept of canon for the Qumran Community, who, he says, regarded themselves as still living in the biblical period: S. Talmon, "The Crystallization of the 'Canon of Hebrew Scriptures' in Light of Biblical Scrolls from Qumran," in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries* (ed. E. D. Herbert, and E. Tov; London: The British Library; New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll; in association with The Scriptorium: Center for Christian Antiquities, 2002), 5–20. If this is the case, different attitudes may have obtained among the Qumran sectaries and other contemporary Jewish groups.

[10] This conception of canon is rather specific and helps to clarify the problem here being discussed. Other uses of the term "canon" might lead to a modification of my formulation here but the question of whether there was a closed corpus in the Second Temple period would remain. For one aspect of this problem, see n. 58 below. The issue of ancient and medieval Christian attitudes, especially to the corpus of the Old Testament writings, is another. To discuss these later issues here, however, would muddy the waters.

Our questions, however, bear on the period before the Destruction: was there a collection of books that was regarded as the revealed word of God? If there was such a collection, was it considered to be closed and conclusively defined? Exactly what was its status? For example, was it alone considered to contain authentic divine revelation from which all knowledge about the divinity derived? Or were there other works that were considered also to be divinely inspired but were not in this special collection?[11]

My present conclusions are:

1) The status of Torah and Nevi'im: A group of five books of Moses held pride of place by the fourth century BCE. They embodied the standard, national tradition. These books never lost their position as the most significant embodiment of inspired writing.[12] The prophetic writings, which had become a set corpus between 400 and 200 BCE, held a somewhat subordinate position, and, by the way, have continued to do so. These two collections must have existed *as collections* in the Second Temple period. In making this statement, we assume, for the present, that Nevi'im was substantially identical with the collection that that name designates in the current Hebrew Bible. This is, however, an assumption with no unambiguous evidence to support it. We assume this for thus we may explain the move to a clearly defined biblical corpus of 22 or 24 books, itself also assumed to have been tripartite, within 30 years of the Destruction.[13] A more cautious view might be more flexible on this point. I think it wisest, therefore, to distinguish between (1) the process of the literary genesis and development of the books and collections; and (2) the issue of their role and/or status.

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[11] John Barton, *Oracles of God*, 13–93, deals with the issue of the tripartite canon in considerable detail. His reformulation of the view of canon (in summary on p. 43) is intriguing and certainly should be taken to modify views about the significance of the tripartite division. His focus is on the term "prophets" and what it designated in antiquity, which he says was, "any book with scriptural status outside the Pentateuch" (43). Indeed, this perception might modify statements about the closing of the corpus of Nevi'im, which collection is viewed as basically similar to today's in the Hebrew Bible. The rethinking of these categories, however, still lies ahead. See also n. 1 above.

[12] Ben Sira identified the Torah with Wisdom and it held a special place in his consciousness. On the privileging of the Torah at Qumran, see Carr, *Writing* 238–39.

[13] See, however, Barton's summary in *Oracles of God*, 93 and his preceding argument, especially as it bears on Josephus (58–62). These arguments may, on further consideration, lead to a nuancing of my perhaps overly dogmatic statements.

2) Revelation was multiform: In the period of the Second Temple, as far as is represented at Qumran and by certain other sporadically surviving sources, these two collections of books were not regarded as the sole fruits of divine revelation, as the only significant and revealed writings, or even as the exclusive embodiment of the ancient, national tradition.[14] But they did hold a specially revered position and for that reason so much Second Temple literature was written in conversation with them or was derived from them.

   a. Nonbiblical revelation: Other channels were also considered to transmit revealed information. In some circles this continued revelation was ongoing and self-authenticating, as in some Qumran works or in early Christian writings. Thus writings could be inspired and venerated and not be "biblical."[15] The examples of the roles of *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* among the Dead Sea Scrolls are well-known;[16] but the 70 additional books regarded as the true source of wisdom by the author of *4 Ezra* (see 14:47) constitute another; and the remarks of Ben Sira about his own writing, as well as those of his grandson, constitute yet a third.[17]

   b. Revelation derivative of Torah and Nevi'im: In other circles, revealed information was in some way or another derivative of Torah and at times of Nevi'im. Such instances include pseudepigraphic

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[14] R. A. Kraft, "Scripture and Canon in Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (ed. M. Saebø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 1: 199–216; on 208–9 he remarks on the range and number of books, presumably authoritative, that are mentioned in ancient sources.

[15] Leiman, *Canonization*, 15–16, basing himself on rabbinic literature, would distinguish between "canonical" books—i.e., "books accepted by Jews as authoritative for religious practice and/or doctrine, . . . binding for all generations"—and "inspired" books, "believed by the Tannaim and Amoraim to have been composed under divine inspiration."

[16] Kraft, "Scripture and Canon," 204–5 n. 15 remarks that some "('marginal')" early Christian witnesses included parts of the Enochic material "among 'Scriptures.'" In contrast, Leiman, *Canonization*, 100–2 speaks of sectarian "veneration" of Ben Sira, though the evidence he adduces (see especially n. 475) does not show that the sectarian attitudes to Ben Sira were such as to make it imperative for the rabbis to assert its noncanonical status.

[17] See the Prologue; compare also Ben Sira's remarks on his own learning in chapter 24:30–34. Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are categorized according to their attitudes to "scriptural materials" by Kraft, "Scripture and Canon," 204; he sets forth the evidence in ibid., 204–15.

apocalypses (books of visions) or inspired *pesharim* (commentaries written by the Qumran sect).[18]

3) Tradition history: One further remark is appropriate. There is no reason to assume that the Torah and the preexilic prophetic writings were the only traditions of the First Temple period that were transmitted down through the centuries. Other traditions, some in forms fuller and perhaps older than those found in the Torah, came to be incorporated in various works written down in the Second Temple period, such as *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*.

Preliminary Conclusion

The long and short of this, then, is that the term canon, and all it implies, should be set aside when considering Jewish writings from before 70 CE. Moreover, with its implication of deliberate decisions taken by an authoritative or legislative body, it is probably completely inappropriate to assign this term to Jewish usage at any time. As for the term "Bible," a similar but not identical problem arises. There does not seem to have been, in fact, "a Bible" in the period under discussion; but it seems to me that, lacking a better term, we are compelled to use the adjective "biblical" (somewhat anachronistically) to designate works that later became part of the Hebrew Bible. However, collections of Torah and Nevi'im (or, if you will, "Law and Prophets") and an emerging Ketubim ("Writings") did exist, with the first and second having especially revered roles and status. Different groups used, in addition to these, certain other writings that they considered authoritative, but that were not part of these two collections, to some extent at least because their emergence was the result of a different literary history.

When modern scholars, referring to the Second Temple period, talk of a corpus of writing as "biblical" or "canonical," or refer to the "biblical canon," or describe a book as "noncanonical," or as a "biblical paraphrase," they are applying later concepts and terminology that only came into being after a long process of evolution. These terms, "Bible" and "canon,"

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[18] Kraft, "Scripture and Canon," 204, remarks on the high estimation that many apocalypses and cognate works have of their own status. He provides a substantial list of instances in n. 14. See also M. E. Stone, "Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered," *RRJ* 9 (2006): 1–15.

were used chiefly on the Christian part, not the Jewish, and certainly not in the Second Temple period. At the end of the first century CE, about thirty years after the destruction of the Temple, Josephus and *4 Ezra* know a collection of 22 or 24 books, the number usually reckoned in the Hebrew Bible. Earlier, in the pre-Christian period, the grandson of Ben Sira and 4QMMT mention or hint at Law, Prophets and perhaps a third book or books, which may indicate that distinct groups of books existed with their own names and special roles, positions, and status (see above). But these distinct groups of books did not combine to form a canon of scripture or a Bible. It is clearly misleading to apply later terminology that refers to the collection as a whole to periods before that collection had completely come into existence. However, it is equally inadequate to take a minimalist position, underplaying the existence or significance of such collections of books as had developed. It is precisely at this point that further, nuanced, scholarly consideration is demanded.

Some Reservations

The Second Temple period shows varying tendencies with regard to inspired writings—they may be more or less in number, within accepted corpora or outside them; their authority may be drawn from their occurrence within accepted corpora or, less often, from other sources such as direct revelation. It would be unwise to take either an extremely conservative or a completely revolutionary position on the question of authoritative books, either to insist on the early formation of a tripartite closed canon or to deny the relative antiquity of the process of crystallization of the collections that eventually constituted the Hebrew Bible. Instead, we must strive to perceive the tensions that are expressed through diverse strategies of authoring, different techniques for claiming authority, and variations of content and function. These tendencies are keys to the diverse self-understandings of different groups within, and varying periods of, ancient Judaism.

Furthermore, we should also remember that the Qumran sectarian writings and collection(s), about which we know most, very probably represent only one of a number of attitudes that existed, and that other views may have been cultivated in other loci in ancient Jewish society.

Finally, we must consider the role of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE in precipitating the crystallization of various aspects of Judaism and Jewish society, the building of new barriers to protect and define different

aspects of the threatened national heritage. This process may be observed
in the textual history of the biblical books, with the post-70 disappearance
of variant textual forms so striking at Qumran. Societally, the apparent
disappearance of most sects should be remarked;[19] in literature there was
a concern for the delimitation of authoritative books.[20] After the destruc-
tion in 70, a shift in genre took place that resulted in the disappearance of
books written by a single author in Hebrew or Aramaic; this phenomenon
persisted down to the middle of first millennium CE (except, perhaps, in
the mystical tradition).[21] This process of stabilization also implies the
enhanced fixedness of the collections of books that came to make up the
Hebrew Bible.

For reasons of space, I cannot provide here the full argumentation to
substantiate all these claims, nor can I add an exposition of all the further
permutations of these corpora of material and the data concerning their
existence. All I can do in the compass of this paper is to add some remarks
bearing on certain aspects of the principles noted above.

The Privileged Position of the Torah

A gradual growth of the attribution of a special role, authority, and stand-
ing to the Torah as *the* divine revelation took place during the Second
Temple period. The identification of Torah with Wisdom is full-blown
in Sir 24:23 (early second century BCE), but was already foreshadowed in
Bar 4:1. This gave Torah a cosmic dimension, for Wisdom is associated
with God in creation. Therefore, Torah became not just the specific rev-
elation to Moses on Sinai, but the pattern according to which the universe
was created.[22]

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[19] Of course, this may be an "optical illusion" caused by the nature of the data pre-
served, see the author's "Our Perception of Origins: New Perspectives on the Context of
Christian Origins," chapter 1 of idem, *Ancient Judaism*, 1–30.

[20] Compare Josephus, *Against Apion* 1:39–41; *4 Ezra* 14:41–46; see Leiman, *Canonization*,
60–63.

[21] This may be because the mystical experience bore within itself authentication and
authority. The antiquity of the mystical tradition is debated. See most recently P. S. Alex-
ander, *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* (Compan-
ion to the Qumran Scrolls 7; LSTS 61; London: T&T Clark, 2006).

[22] G. W. E. Nickelsburg and M. E. Stone, *Faith and Piety in Early Judaism* (Philadelphia:
Fortress, 1983), 203–19. See Carr, *Writing*, 225–26 for a different perspective on the reap-
plication of wisdom terminology.

After the return from the Babylonian exile, there was a public reading of the Torah under Ezra's tutelage (Nehemiah 8). It has been suggested that the text thus read was the Pentateuch, but other possibilities have also been vetted with some plausibility, particularly that it was Deuteronomy.[23] It has also been observed that under the Persians, Jewish religious law was given state backing; that law was most probably the Pentateuch, as we shall soon show.

Further developments affected this evolution of the status of the Torah, notably the growth in the prestige of antiquity. This process is well-known in history of religions and even in historiography: the golden age devolves to iron mixed with clay; the generations degenerate (*m. Soṭah* 9:9–16); "For the age has lost its youth, and the times begin to grow old" (*4 Ezra* 14:10).

The Idea of Canon

I would customarily remark that the idea of "canon" as such did not exist in Judaism; that the "Synod of Jamnia" (a scholarly construction designed to correspond to the Christian synods of Nicea and Ephesus, etc.) never happened;[24] and that there was no central authority in Judaism that could decide or decree which works were "canonical" and which were not. Indeed, it is a truism that down to this day there is no Hebrew word for "canon." Judaism's authority structures were and still are different from those of Christianity and it did not have an ecclesiological view that attributed divine authority to an assembly of bishops or rabbis, or anything similar to that.[25]

It does seem, however, that by the time of the destruction of the Temple, Judaism was well on the way to an accepted corpus of authoritative writings that were written *be-ruaḥ haqqodeš*; that is, "with/in the holy spirit."[26] Not only the enumeration of sacred books given by Josephus and *4 Ezra*—the difference between which (24 and 22) can be resolved by

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[23] The reading "from early morning until midday" suggests that it was not the whole Pentateuch; compare, however, Neh 8:18.

[24] See Swete, *Introduction*, 440 for a very standard exposition of this view. It is assumed to be factual by Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church*, 211–13. I do not deny that discussions took place at Jamnia (Yavneh), but I assert that this was not a "synod," with synodical authority to make decisions accepted in general Jewish usage.

[25] It could be maintained that the extension of Mosaic authority over the Oral Law of the rabbis fulfils an analogous functions (observation by Gary A. Anderson).

[26] See, e.g., *t. Yad.* 2:14; *b. Meg.* 7a.

a little ingenuity—but several *baraitot* in Amoraic sources[27] give strong indications in this direction, and the idea is clearly known in second-century canon lists in patristic writings.[28]

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The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Canon

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Before I discuss the implications of the Dead Sea Scrolls for the canon, I should emphasize that they are a special and unique case. First, the very survival of the Scrolls is almost unique. Second, they were a collection of books that belonged to a specific, sectarian group holding very distinctive views. Thus, the situation at Qumran was not necessarily identical with that obtaining among other contemporary Jews in the land of Israel or the Greek- or Aramaic-speaking Diasporas (or perhaps even among the "marrying Essenes"). Who knows? There is no evidence either way.

It is well known that all the books that came in later times to be in the Hebrew Bible are represented at Qumran, except for Esther.[29] Moreover, because of the technology available, usually each book was written on a single scroll. For the codex, the assembly of sheets into gatherings and the sewing together of these gatherings, as in a modern book, had not yet been invented. Until the development and diffusion of the codex, it was physically impossible to include all the writings of the Hebrew Bible in a single artefact.[30] Only the invention and the subsequent development of the large codex made collections of numerous books within one single manuscript possible.[31] It is worth considering how far our modern questions about canon are determined by the question: what should be put

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[27] *B. B. Bat.* 14b; *b. Ber.* 57b.

[28] Swete, *Introduction*, 220–22, cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 1.1.8; a later source is published in M. E. Stone, "Armenian Canon Lists IV: The List of Gregory of Tathew (14th Century)," *HTR* 72 (1979): 241.

[29] There are a number of references to Esther being odd; see Sundberg, *The Old Testament of the Early Church*, 56–57. Sidnie White Crawford has ably summarized the situation with respect to the work that Milik claimed to be "proto-Esther." See S. W. Crawford, "4QTales of the Persian Court (4Q550^{A-E}) and its Relation to Biblical Royal Courtier Tales, Especially Esther, Daniel and Joseph," in Herbert and Tov, *Bible as Book*, 121–37.

[30] M. Haran, "Archives, Libraries and the Order of the Biblical Books," *JANES* 22 (1993): 51–61, especially p. 61, suggests that large scrolls were used for the copying of several books. He also maintains that the codex as a form for copying biblical books (he does not say, but clearly means, Hebrew biblical books) was rather late, reaching the Near East from Christian Europe, only after the Arab conquest (p. 51). Only then, he maintains, was the physical form of the artefact such as to raise issues of order. The baraitha in *b. B. Bat.* 13b–14a he regards as relating to large scrolls containing several books.

[31] See Kraft, "Scripture and Canon," 202 and n. 7.

between two covers? In antiquity, the actual physical presentation of the books in itself could provide little evidence for how they were regarded.[32]

Some scholars have made the point that when the term "Torah" or "Law of Moses" is used, it cannot be proved that this was the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses as we have them. Do my remarks on the technology of book production bear upon this question? Modern and medieval Jewish usage is to write the whole Pentateuch in a single scroll, but as anyone can attest who, after reading the early chapters of Genesis, then wishes to consult the last chapters of Deuteronomy, rolling a whole Pentateuch from beginning to end is a major task.

In view of this we must question what can be learned from the instances at Qumran of more than one book written in a single scroll. There are not many such; a few cases of two books of the Pentateuch and two of two and one of three or four books of Enoch.[33] The Torah manuscripts are 4QGen–Exod[a], "approximately 125–100 BCE";[34] perhaps 4Q[Gen–]Exod[b];[35] 4QLev–Num[a], "from approximately the middle or latter half of the second century BCE";[36] 4QExod–Lev[f], "mid-third century BCE";[37] 4QpaleoGen–Exod[l], dated to "the first half or first three-quarters of the first century BCE."[38] Three points should be made: (1) In all instances books of the Torah occur in their conventional order; (2) It is noteworthy that 4QExod–Lev[f]

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[32] J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, "The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes," *HTR* 70 (1977): 51–65, especially pp. 51–55; repr. in M. E. Stone, *Selected Studies in the Pseudepigrapha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition* (SVTP 9; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 198–202; J. C. VanderKam, "Some Major Issues in the Contemporary Study of *1 Enoch*: Reflections on J. T. Milik's *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4*, in idem, *From Revelation to Canon*, 354–65, pp. 358–62.

[33] See J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976); VanderKam, "Major Issues," 358–59. See also Stone and Greenfield, "The Enochic Pentateuch." Carr, *Writing*, 230, suggests that such scrolls with more than one pentateuchal book might even originally have contained "copies of broader parts of the Torah, if not the entire Torah." According to Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, Table on p. 6, 4QEn[d] and [e] have both Watchers and Dream Visions, and 4QEn[c] has Watchers, Dream Visions, and Epistle.

[34] E. Ulrich and F. M. Cross, et al., *Qumran Cave 4.VII: Genesis to Numbers* (DJD 12; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994; repr. 1999), 8.

[35] E. Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 165.

[36] Ulrich and Cross, DJD 12.154.

[37] Ulrich and Cross, DJD 12.134.

[38] P. W. Skehan, E. Ulrich, and J. E. Sanderson, *Qumran Cave 4.IV: Palaeo-Hebrew and Greek Biblical Manuscripts* (DJD 9; Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

is from the third century BCE.[39] (3) There are no combinations of one pentateuchal book and one nonpentateuchal book. Thus, judging from the codicology it seems that we have Genesis to Numbers in overlapping manuscript attestation, though Deuteronomy does not happen to occur. This adds *prima facie* corroboration to the occurrence of the five books together at the beginning of the Septuagint, to be discussed directly.

A further consideration indicating the early crystallization of the Pentateuch is the following: The history of the growth of the Pentateuch impels historical scholars to see in it edited deposits of earlier traditions,[40] probably reaching much its present form by the time the Chronicler wrote or somewhat later. Whether P precedes or follows D is under discussion, but both views imply the existence together of what became Genesis to Numbers. The idea of fluidity of the contents of the Torah of Moses would imply that these works were open to flexibility, yet that sits ill with literary history. The Torah, moreover, was translated rather quickly into Greek.

The Date of the Greek Translation of the Torah

According to the tradition preserved in the *Epistle of Aristeas*, the LXX of the Torah was translated at the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–247 BCE). *Aristeas*, however, is largely fictional and cannot be used for dating the translation.[41] The earliest external use of the Septuagint appears to be in Demetrius the Chronographer, who has been claimed to know Gen 30:14–15.[42] He probably wrote shortly before 200 BCE; thus, we can

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[39] Further evidence for the Pentateuch in its present order is *4QReworked Pentateuch*. I base my remarks on the article "Reworked Pentateuch," by S. W. Crawford in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2: 775–77. She says, "unlike the other Torah manuscripts from Qumran . . . the Reworked Pentateuch copied all five books on one scroll" (p. 775). She does not date the work, but the earliest manuscript is "middle to late Hasmonean." She thinks it might be dependent on *Jubilees* but also admits that *Jubilees* might equally be dependent on it. The work is not decisively either sectarian or nonsectarian. Its Numbers text belongs to the proto-Samaritan family. See on reworked Bible manuscripts from Qumran, G. J. Brooke, "The Rewritten Law, Prophets, and Psalms: Issues for Understanding the Text of the Bible," in Herbert and Tov, *Bible as Book*, 31–40.

[40] On the various nuances that most recent scholarship would add to the assessment of the contents of the Hebrew Bible, see J. J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

[41] See the remarks of B. G. Wright III, "Translation as Scripture: The Septuagint in Aristeas and Philo," in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (ed. W. Kraus and R. G. Wooden; SBLSCS 3; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 47–61, esp. 50–57.

[42] Swete, *Introduction*, 17–18.

say that the Greek translation of the Torah was made before that date, i.e., in the third century—consequently not so far from the date given by *Aristeas*. It would be hypercritical to claim, it seems to me, that this only shows that Genesis was translated into Greek, and that this happened immediately before Demetrius wrote (220–210).[43] The translation is at least as likely to be somewhat earlier and to have included the whole Pentateuch. In any case, even if Demetrius's evidence is discounted (and why should it be?), there is no doubt that the Jewish philosopher Aristobulus (early part of the second century BCE) asserted that the Law was completely translated by the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus.[44] Indeed, Dorival would date the translation at the latest in 282.[45] Whether or not his arguments are accepted, it seems not unlikely that the Pentateuch was translated into Greek early in the third century BCE.

It is increasingly the view of Septuagint scholars that the Septuagint was made initially in order to be used "in concert with the Hebrew." As Wright points out, the relationship of the Septuagint to the Hebrew was originally a dependent or subservient one.[46] Indeed he argues with considerable plausibility that the function of *Aristeas* was to provide an ideology not for the creation of the Septuagint, but for a subsequent event: i.e., the inception of its use as a self-standing work, not dependent on the Hebrew text. This implies a period of time during which the Septuagint changed its character and became independent of the Hebrew. Wright and others regard this as having happened between the early third century BCE and the composition of *Aristeas*. John Wevers has pointed out that not only are the oldest surviving papyri of the Greek of some pentateuchal books from the second century, but that also the Greek of the Torah shows some grammatical and orthographic features that were lost from the Hellenistic

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[43] See in detail G. Dorival, M. Harl, and O. Munnich, *La Bible grecque des Septante: Du judaisme hellénistique au christianisme ancien* (Initiations au christianisme ancien; Paris: Cerf, 1988), 57.

[44] See Dorival, Harl, and Munnich, *La Bible grecque*, 4. Dorival rejects the implication of Aristobulus that there was a partial translation earlier than that; see 51–54.

[45] Ibid., 58 and 76–77.

[46] Wright, "Translation as Scripture," 49, building on A. Pietersma, "Exegesis in the Septuagint: Possibilities and Limits (The Psalter as a Case in Point)," in Kraus and Wooden, *Septuagint Research*, 33–45. This status resembles that of the Targum in a later period, as analysed by S. D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Views of the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. I. Levine; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 253–86, especially p. 273 and the summary on pp. 282–83.

Greek of the papyri by the second century.[47] All of these indications lead me to prefer a third century date for the Greek translation of the Torah—and thus the Septuagint provides direct support for the existence of the Five Books of Moses as such in the third century.

It is significant that while most of the books in the Septuagint have been arranged by genre or type (historical, poetic, prophetic), the five books of Moses are in the same order and position as in the rabbinic Hebrew lists and, as far as such exist, as in the Hebrew texts themselves. The *Rewritten Pentateuch* texts discovered at Qumran witness to the same books and order.

"Rewritten Bibles"[48] and the Torah[49]

On various grounds, *Jubilees* is attributed to the first third of the second century BCE.[50] Scholars have maintained that *Jubilees* was composed in dialogue and in tension with the Torah and that it often resolves exegetical difficulties in the pentateuchal text.[51] In this respect, it serves to show

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[47] See J. W. Wevers, *Text History of the Greek Deuteronomy* (MSU 13; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 99–100.

[48] Kraft, "Scripture and Canon," 203 n. 11 justly expresses dissatisfaction with the term "rewritten scriptures" or "rewritten Bible" because of the assumptions it makes about existence of "particular 'Scriptures' in roughly the forms that have been transmitted in our Bibles, and the presence of developed attitudes . . . that roughly approximate 'Scripture consciousness.'"

[49] A number of these issues have been reviewed recently by S. W. Crawford, "The Rewritten Bible at Qumran," in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Volume One: Scripture and the Scrolls* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2006), 131–48. She maintains that the *Temple Scroll* and *Jubilees* draw on *4QReworked Pentateuch* and that the *Genesis Apocryphon* knew *Jubilees*. Thus, considering these four major texts at Qumran, she concludes that "the manuscripts from Qumran are not eclectic, but a collection, reflecting the theological tendency of a particular group" (147).

[50] See G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (2d ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 73–74 and nn. 19–26 on p. 362 for an excellent bibliography. Most recently Martha Himmelfarb has advanced the view that *Jubilees* was written towards the end of the second century, see M. Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Jewish Culture and Contexts; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 77.

[51] The common and widely accepted view is that *Jubilees* is a rewritten and ideologically expanded version of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus. An early protagonist of this view was G. Vermes, "Bible and Midrash: Early Old Testament Exegesis," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible, Volume 1: From the Beginnings to Jerome* (ed. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 199–231; repr. in G. Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* [SJLA 8; Leiden: Brill, 1975], 59–91). See also B. Halpern-Amaru, *The Empowerment of Women in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), particularly chapter 7. Likewise, see J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, *Primaeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1–11 in the Book of Jubilees* (JSJSup 66; Leiden: Brill, 2000), and others. The *Temple Scroll*

both that Genesis and part of Exodus stood before it, and also that Genesis and Exodus had such standing as to demand resolution of difficulties in its text. But, equally truly, *Jubilees* incorporated some independent ancient traditions stemming back into preexilic times and not found in the Pentateuch.[52]

For decades now a number of scholars have maintained that traditions and material from the period of the First Temple or even before, not included in the works that came to be the Hebrew Bible, reappear in the Second Temple period in apocryphal works. It is also the case that *Jubilees*, the Enochic Book of the Watchers and Book of the Luminaries, and the *Aramaic Levi Document*, as well as other works, incorporated traditions and conceivably literary tradition units[53] originating in periods prior to the crystallization of the Pentateuch. To choose obvious examples, not everything stated or claimed in the Second Temple period about Enoch is derived exegetically from Genesis 5; nor is all the material about the Watchers from Gen 6; nor that about Behemoth and Leviathan from scattered traditions particularly in prophets and Psalms.[54] The exile did not wipe the collective consciousness of Judea clean of everything but the material in Genesis, the prophets or the Psalms.

Some have questioned whether Genesis in particular, but in principle the other four pentateuchal books as well, were regarded at Qumran as

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similarly is in dialogue with Numbers and Deuteronomy. The literature surrounding this scroll is vast, and will not be discussed here; see Carr, *Writing*, 232. Tov sets forth an overview of his research on text types at Qumran in his, "The Biblical Texts from the Judaean Desert—An Overview and Analysis of the Published Texts," in Herbert and Tov, *The Bible as Book*, 139–67, especially 156–57.

[52] J. C. VanderKam, "Enoch Traditions in *Jubilees* and other Second-Century Sources," in idem, *Revelation to Canon*, 305–31, pp. 306–10 and 325, argues that *Jubilees* knows a series of sources from all parts of *1 Enoch* except the Similitudes, and that it knows a number of Enochic sources, as well as some Noachic ones, that are not included in Genesis. His analysis is one among a number relating to Second Temple writings that show them using extrapentateuchal sources. See further n. 54.

[53] This was early argued by D. Dimant, "The Fallen Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them" (Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974), 22–23 and p. iii (in Hebrew). Many scholars have taken this position.

[54] See P. Grelot, "La légende d'Hénoch dans les apocryphes et dans la Bible: Origine et signification," *RSR* 46 (1958): 5–26, 181–210; and idem, "Hénoch et ses écritures," *RB* 82 (1975): 481–500; H. L. Jansen, *Die Henochgestalt: Eine vergleichende religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Oslo: Dybwad, 1939); H. S. Kvanvig, *The Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (WMANT 61; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1988); K. W. Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (HSM 63; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006); VanderKam, "Enoch Traditions."

uniquely belonging to "the Torah of Moses"; and whether those five books had a special status distinct from other retellings of the early history and law of Israel such as the *Book of Jubilees, Temple Scroll* and the works called *Rewritten Pentateuch* or "parabiblical" writings.[55] Such scholars would "level the playing field."[56]

However, for the reasons stated above, the present writer would maintain that the expression "Torah of Moses" designated the Pentateuch from about the time of Ezra on. (Of course, I am far from the first to do so.) I would also maintain that there was a set corpus of works called "Prophets" that existed by the second century BCE, while the collection of books called "Writings" was not fixed or finalized until after the destruction of the Temple and after the point at which Christianity split from Judaism.

Consequently, the issues that have been discussed turn out to be in good measure due to asking questions using the wrong terminology; or rather, posing to ancient textual realities questions that involve applying modern presuppositions.[57]

Two central problems seem to remain:

1. What was the status or type of authority accorded to the accepted collections of Torah and Nevi'im or Prophets? The idea of "Bible" did not exist, for no Bible existed, as is clear from the fluidity of Ketubim on the one hand, and the lack of an unambiguous term meaning "Bible" on the other. So the option of seeing these books as a final and closed collection

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[55] Such scholars stress that the Torah of Moses is not listed in terms of books until rather late and ask why should *Jubilees* not have been considered part of the Mosaic Torah instead of Genesis? See, however, the recent article by Crawford, "The Rewritten Bible at Qumran."

[56] Typical of such views is the interesting and thoughtful article by J. E. Bowley and J. C. Reeves, "Rethinking the Concept of 'Bible': Some Theses and Proposals," *Henoch* 25 (2003): 3–18. For example, they say on p. 10: "[t]here is no unambiguous evidence among the Dead Sea Scrolls that the book of Genesis was any more (or any less) 'Bible' than was the *Book of Jubilees* or portions of *1 Enoch* or even *1Q Genesis Apocryphon*. 'Bible' is not a category invoked by the writings at Qumran. There would appear to be no equivalent term within the Scrolls for what is later identifiable (from parochial perspectives) as 'the Bible.'"

[57] Crawford, in discussing *Reworked Pentateuch*, remarks, "The words *canon* and *scripture* are anachronisms in regard to the Qumran texts" ("Reworked Pentateuch," 776). She goes on to distinguish books that were authoritative at Qumran, remarking (ibid.): "Many of the books that seem to be authoritative at Qumran later became part of the Jewish canon." Yet this levelling of the field at Qumran seems to me to sidestep the issue of the Torah and its position in Jewish use from well before the foundation of the Qumran sect, as well as the distinctive character of Nevi'im.

of the unique, unchangeable, and exclusively inspired, revealed, and authoritative word of God does not exist. Canonicity and Bible in the modern sense are meaningless terms for the Second Temple period.[58] Yet it is equally clear that Torah and Nevi'im (or some broader collection of "Prophets") existed and were particularly venerated, as is already to be seen in the writings of Ben Sira and his grandson, not to speak of the LXX and MMT.[59]

2. Authoritative Books at Qumran: Among the Qumran manuscripts there is quite a lot of evidence for the special status of *Jubilees*. It exists in an exceptionally large number of copies and is cited (*pace* Devorah Dimant) in sectarian works.[60] Similar, but less persuasive evidence exists for a like status of *1 Enoch* (or rather, parts of it) and less probably for *Aramaic Levi Document* and *Instruction*. It appears that these works at least were accorded a very high standing by the sectarian community. The *Temple Scroll* and MMT may also have held a special position in the eyes of the Qumran community.[61]

Moreover, 1QH, for example, or 1QpHab's statements concerning the Righteous Teacher's instructions, show them also to have been considered inspired (1QpHab 7:1–5). Since at Qumran, inspiration or revelation,

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[58] There is a broader and, in my view, different concept of canonicity prevalent in recent research. See, for example, T. Stordalen, "'An Almost Canonical Entity': Text Artifacts and Aurality in Early Biblical Literature," in *Houses Full of All Good Things: Essays in Memory of Timo Veijola* (ed. J. Pakkala, and M. Nissinen; Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 95; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 666–83. I do not deny the relevance of this concept for the study of ancient Israel and Judaism. It does not, however, address the issue we are considering here. Further bibliography on the matter may be found in Stordalen's article.

[59] E. Ulrich, "The Non-Attestation," argues that the reading of MMT C 9–11 in fact refers only to Torah and Nevi'im, while the references commonly used to prove the existence of the collection of Ketubim in the second century are in fact simply references to other esteemed or significant works. K. Berthelot, "4QMMT et la question du canon," 1–14, maintains, with some plausibility, that Torah and Navi' in MMT indicate not the collections but, like "David," specific works, respectively. Ulrich is, in my view, quite convincing when he says that in the Prologue to Ben Sira, the text means exactly what it says and reflects a distinction between two established corpora, Torah and Nevi'im, and "books that are not scriptural but are valued works" (p. 212). This involves a rethinking of the tripartite canon concept.

[60] See D. Dimant, "Two 'Scientific' Fictions: The So-Called *Book of Noah* and the Alleged Quotation of *Jubilees* in CD 16:3–4," in *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, and the Septuagint Presented to Eugene Ulrich* (ed. P. W. Flint, E. Tov and J. C. VanderKam; VTSup101; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 230–49. A number of works written after the style of *Jubilees* have been identified, which shows that it was an exemplar for emulation.

[61] See Crawford, "The Rewritten Bible at Qumran."

and "biblical" status were not identical (scriptural books were inspired
and sacred, but not all inspired or sacred books were scriptural), there
is no real reason to disregard literary history and the evidence we have
mentioned above relating to the Torah of Moses. There seems to be no
contradiction between the view that the Pentateuch gained a special
role or position, and the claim of *Jubilees* to have been written at divine
dictation.[62]

Conclusions

We may thus conclude that the use of the terms "canon" and "Bible" is
inappropriate in the Second Temple period. Yet, the collections that even-
tually constituted the Hebrew Bible were in the process of coming into
being and had gained a special status. Indeed, it appears to be the case
that the collection of Prophets must have been brought together after the
Torah. This is so because of the presence in it of the Deuteronomic His-
tory and of prophetic books, Haggai and Zechariah, whose composition
may be dated clearly enough to the fifth–fourth centuries. By the second
century, a literary corpus entitled "the Prophets" was in existence, and
was well known by that name (but see our *caveats* above). A body of what
were called "the other books" seems to have existed, but not as a finalized
corpus, before the separation of Christianity from Judaism. Even if Bar-
ton's view on "the Prophets" is accepted, the special status of the works
remains unchanged, and their literary history is a powerful argument.

It is not certain that the attitude to authoritative writings discernable
at Qumran was held universally in Second Temple Judaism. But it seems
that the Essenes, and perhaps other groups, regarded certain "nonbiblical"
works as authoritative. They also did not think that "biblical" and "inspired"
were identical. Inspired books were not necessarily biblical.

Consequently, we must be open to the possibility that a much more
complex situation obtained in relation to authoritative books than we
might have thought. Above all, we should remember that our task is that
of historians of Judaism. The questioning of terms like Bible and canon
derives from the growing recognition of the complexity of Judaism in the
Second Temple period.

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[62] See D. Lambert, "Did Israel Believe that Redemption Awaited Their Repentance? The
Case of *Jubilees* 1," *CBQ* 68/4 (2005): 631–50.

PART ONE

INTERPRETATION IN CONTEXT

"FOR FROM ZION SHALL COME FORTH TORAH…" (ISAIAH 2:3): BIBLICAL PARAPHRASE AND THE EXEGETICAL BACKGROUND OF SUSANNA[1]

Michael Segal

Many of the fundamental debates in early Judaism were not held in a literary vacuum; rather, the interlocutors formulated their arguments according to the contours of passages from the Hebrew Bible. They presented core beliefs, ideas, practices, and values using the language and rhetoric of specific biblical verses. Since these ideas did not always correspond directly to the scriptural source-text, they often recast and reformulated the earlier material in order to correspond to their very own positions.

In this article, I would like to analyze the use of one biblical passage that served such a role amongst Jews in antiquity: the prophecy in Isa 2:1–4. This study will examine three Jewish sources from antiquity that employed this prophecy, especially v. 3, in order to address questions of communal identity; specifically, the issue of the status of the Jewish community or communities in the Diaspora. Scholars have already noted the first two instances of such usage, and those cases will be adduced in this article as a model for solving an interpretive crux in another Jewish text from antiquity.

Before analyzing each of these interpretive texts, it is first necessary to examine the verse in its biblical context in order to appreciate its meaning and surrounding themes.

Isaiah 2:1–4[2]

(1) הדבר אשר חזה ישעיהו בן-אמוץ על-יהודה וירושלם. (2) והיה באחרית הימים נכון יהיה הר בית-ה' בראש ההרים ונשא מגבעות ונהרו אליו כל-הגוים. (3) והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל-הר-ה' אל-בית אלהי יעקב וירנו מדרכיו ונלכה

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[2] While I refer specifically to Isa 2:1–4 throughout this paper, an almost identical form of the prophecy is found in Mic 4:1–3. The relationship between these two passages has been treated extensively in biblical scholarship, and is beyond the scope of this discussion.

בארחתיו כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר-ה׳ מירושלם. (4) ושפט בין הגוים והוכיח
לעמים רבים וכתתו חרבותם לאתים וחניתותיהם למזמרות לא-ישא גוי אל-גוי
חרב ולא-ילמדו עוד מלחמה.

(1) The word that Isaiah son of Amoz prophesied concerning Judah and Jeru-
salem. (2) In the days to come, the mount of the Lord's house shall stand
firm above the mountains and tower above the hills; and all the nations
shall gaze on it with joy. (3) And the many peoples shall go and say: "Come,
let us go up to the mount of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may instruct us in his ways, and that we may walk in his paths."
For instruction shall come forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from
Jerusalem. (4) Thus he will judge among the nations and arbitrate for the
many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their
spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not take up sword against nation;
they shall never again know war.[3]

In this prophecy, Isaiah describes a future time when the mount of the
Lord's House will rise above those around it, causing all of the nations
to gaze at it, or "stream" to it.[4] Many nations will ascend to the mount
to receive instruction, and to hear the "word of the Lord" in Jerusalem.
Verse 4 indicates that the context of this visit to Jerusalem is divine jus-
tice—the nations will come to the mountain in order for God to adjudi-
cate their disputes. Once their quarrels have been resolved, the nations
of the world can lay down their weapons, as there will be no more need
for instruments of war (contrast Joel 4:9–10). In the context of Isa 2:1–4,
the word תורה (v. 3) does not refer to specific statutes or regulations, but
rather reflects a general term, with the meaning of either "legal ruling" or
"instruction" provided by God,[5] and is paralleled by "the word of the Lord"
in the following hemistich.

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[3] All translations of the Hebrew Bible throughout this study are adopted from NJPS
unless otherwise noted; all critical notes drawn from the NJPS commentary refer to the
standard edition, *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the
Traditional Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1988).

[4] The word ונהרו is often translated as "they will stream," understood as a denominative
verb from the substantive נהר, "river." However, as noted by B. J. Schwartz, "Torah from
Zion: Isaiah's Temple Vision (Isaiah 2:1–4)," in *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and
Modernity* (ed. A. Houtman, M. J. H. M. Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz; Jewish and Christian
Perspectives Series 1; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 11–26, at pp. 14–15, Ibn Janah had already sug-
gested (followed by R. Eliezer of Beaugency, H. L. Ginsburg, and the NJPS *Tanakh*), that
the verb carries the meaning "see, gaze," derived from the substantive נהר, meaning "light"
(Job 3:4; and well attested in biblical Aramaic—see Dan 2:22; 5:11, 14). For a similar mean-
ing of this verb, see Isa 60:5; Jer 31:11; 51:44; Ps 34:6. As noted by Schwartz, the verse division
in MT also reflects this understanding of the verse, because otherwise it would be more
appropriate to join this last clause to the opening sentence of v. 3.

[5] Note the arguments of J. Jensen, *The Use of tôrâ by Isaiah: His Debate with the Wisdom
Tradition* (CBQMS 3; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1973).
For the former meaning, cf. Deut 17.8–11; Jer 18:18; Hag 2:11–13; Mal 2:7.

The judicial context explains the placement of this short prophecy immediately on the heels of ch. 1, which ends with a divine promise to restore Jerusalem's judiciary to its former glory, so that Jerusalem will be known as the "city of righteousness, a faithful city" (v. 26). Following the assurances of Isaiah 1, the more radical vision, in which the Lord serves as the judge for the nations, follows a natural progression from judgment upon the integrity and righteousness of individuals, to national judgment meted out by God himself.[6]

For the eighth-century BCE prophet Isaiah son of Amoz,[7] the description of the Temple in Jerusalem as the central locus and seat of justice was both eminently reasonable and appropriate, in light of the juridical role of the Levitical priests and the judges connected with the Temple—as expressed, for example, in Deut 17:8–11.[8] Scholars have demonstrated the literary connections between Isa 2:1–4 and Deuteronomy's description of this judicial aspect of the Temple.[9]

In the context of Isaiah 2, the contrast between Jerusalem/Zion and the "other" is configured as the contrast between Israel and the nations. Israel in Jerusalem will serve as a moral and ethical light to the nations, and they in turn will gaze at the mountain of the Lord as a beacon of justice, raised above the rest of the world. While the prophecy clearly locates the divine seat of justice in Jerusalem, it does not do so in comparison to Israelite or Jewish settlements outside the Land of Israel. That question is irrelevant to this preexilic prophet, who is more concerned with the central role of Zion and the Temple as an "International Court of Justice" where disputes between nations can be resolved.

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[6] See A. HaCohen, "The Sequence of the Oracles in Isaiah 1–4," *Megadim* 4 (1987): 55–62 (in Hebrew); Schwartz, "Torah from Zion," 24–25.

[7] This passage has been dated by some scholars to the postexilic period, making more complex the discussion of its relationship to the Deutero-Isaiah passage considered below; cf. e.g., R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 39–42 (esp. 40); M. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–4 and the Post-Exilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988), 165–74; H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 146–55. However, see the convincing response of B. D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 242–44 n. 15, who argues that there are no valid grounds for denying an eighth-century date for this passage.

[8] The term "juridical" here is used in a broad sense, since B. M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University, 1997), 127–29, has demonstrated the oracular role of the Levitical priests in dispensing judicial rulings according to Deut 17:9 (ודרשת והגידו לך).

[9] HaCohen, "Sequence," 58–59; Schwartz, "Torah from Zion," 18–21, and the opinions quoted in n. 16 there.

This contrast between Zion and "other," which in its original context referred to other *nations*, was transformed in later texts to refer to differences between groups within Judaism, and specifically came to mark the distinction between those Jews living in Zion, in the Land of Israel, and those found outside its borders. From the period of the Babylonian exile onwards, there was always a significant proportion of the Jewish population residing outside of the Land, and this presence gave rise to a series of theological and religious questions. For example, if one assumes that God's central locus is his House in Jerusalem, what is the relationship of the exiles to their deity? If the authoritative judiciary is found solely in the Temple in Zion, what is the status of the religious and judicial leadership in the Diaspora relative to the religious center in Jerusalem? What is the status of a prophet who speaks in the name of God, outside of the Land? If the word of God is found specifically within the Land of Israel, could a Jewish community outside its borders function without recourse to the central community? How should the community in Israel relate to those far away from the Land, and vice versa?

As with many other fundamental notions in early Judaism, these discussions were not presented as independent questions, but were addressed according to the contours of relevant biblical passages. This dependence upon biblical passages in order to address such issues invariably resulted in the interpretation or reinterpretation of the passages under discussion. As I hope to demonstrate, Isaiah 2:3 was reworked and reformulated by different groups, both in Israel and the Diaspora, in order either to support their own claims of legitimacy or to delegitimize their opposition: thus, this passage served an important function in the self-perception or identity formation of the respective communities.

Isaiah 51:3–5[10]

The earliest reuse of this verse can be found within the Bible itself, and even within the same book. Deutero-Isaiah, speaking to an exilic audience, reformulates the earlier Isaianic verses:[11]

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[10] See the important discussion of Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 78–80, which forms the basis for this description.

[11] The relationship of v. 3 to vv. 4–5 here is unclear, since the former is formulated in the third person and the latter in first person. Furthermore, v. 4 opens with the formula הקשיבו אלי עמי, seemingly marking a new section. Thus the scribe of 1QIsaᵃ left a large

(3) כי-נחם ה' ציון נחם כל-חרבתיה וישם מדברה כעדן וערבתה כגן-ה' ששׂון
ושׂמחה ימצא בה תודה וקול זמרה. (4) הקשׁיבו אלי עמי ולאומי אלי האזינו כי
תורה מאתי תצא ומשׁפטי לאור עמים ארגיע. (5) קרוב צדקי יצא ישׁעי וזרעי
עמים ישׁפטו אלי איים יקוו ואל-זרעי ייחלון.

(3) Truly the Lord has comforted Zion (ציון), comforted all her ruins (חרב־
תיה); he has made her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the Garden of
the Lord, gladness and joy shall abide there, thanksgiving and the sound
of music. (4) Hearken to me, my people (עמי), and give ear to me, O my
nation, *for teaching goes forth from me* (כי תורה מאתי תצא), *and my judg-
ments* (ומשׁפטי) as a light for *the peoples* (לאור עמים), in a moment I will
bring it. (5) My deliverance is near, my salvation has gone forth, my arms
shall judge the peoples (עמים ישׁפטו). Islands will look eagerly to me, and for
my arm they will have hope.

The concentration of common terms and expressions, including ציון, mul-
tiple references to the nations (עמים) and the usage of words from the
root ש-פ-ט, only serve to strengthen the obvious parallels between Isa-
iah 51:4 and Isaiah 2:3—instead of כי מציון תצא תורה, "From Zion shall
come forth instruction," the later prophet has reformulated this expres-
sion to reflect a new theological and geographical reality, "For teaching
shall go forth from me (כי תורה מאתי תצא)." The exiles and this prophet
found themselves far away from Zion, and therefore the message of Isa 2:3,
according to which teaching and the word of God emanate specifically
from Jerusalem, became problematic. If God's message and judgment are
confined to the borders of the Land of Israel, or even more narrowly to the
Temple itself, how is the exiled Jewish community in Babylonia supposed
to maintain its relationship with God?

Similarly, the entire notion of authentic prophecy in the Diaspora was
subject to question. If God's message was delivered in the Land of Israel,
from where did an exilic prophet derive his authority? While Jerusalem
still remained the central locus according to Second Isaiah, his refor-
mulation of Isa 2:3 simultaneously addressed both issues. God's instruc-
tion is not limited to a specific location, but can be imparted wherever
he so chooses. Similarly, God's communication to his nation, through
his prophet, is also not limited to a specific location. The formulation of
vv. 4–5, ostensibly reflecting the words of God, is itself ambiguous, and
may also be understood as the prophet's speech. Similar language to
describe the role and status of the prophet is found elsewhere in Second

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vacat after v. 3, and started v. 4 on a new line. Similarly, the Masoretes interpreted vv. 4–6
as a new subunit, delimited by a "closed" paragraph between vv. 3 and 4.

Isaiah, e.g. 42:1–4; 49:1–6.[12] Thus, while still confirming the centrality of
Jerusalem as the focal point of God's presence, the reformulation of Isa 2:3
informs the exiles that they need not be alarmed at their distance from
that central locus, Jerusalem; the dispensing of justice and divine instruc-
tion is not a function of the Temple's location, but rather of the presence
of God in that or any other location. If God, through his prophet, is pres-
ent in the Diaspora, then they will receive instruction there, because the
instruction emanates from him.[13]

   This first example demonstrates the recasting of the verse in the hands
of an author outside the Land of Israel, who felt the need to establish
the religious and theological basis for his service and authority in the
Diaspora.[14] The interpreting text has reformulated the interpreted source
in order to express a new idea. At the same time, despite the changes, it
is still readily apparent that the base text is Isaiah 2:3.

Y. SANHEDRIN 1:2 (18D–19A)[15]

In the next example, one can see how those inside the Land used the
same verse polemically *against* those who lived in the Diaspora. The Jeru-
salem Talmud records a fascinating exchange in the period soon after the
Bar Kokhba Revolt. The historicity of the event is less of interest to this
discussion than the underlying tensions referred to in this story, along
with its treatment of Isa 2:3. The story appears in a number of parallel
passages in the Jerusalem Talmud. The following translation reflects the
version in *Sanhedrin*, chapter 1:[16]

> "There is no intercalation of the year except in Judea, but if it was interca-
> lated in the Galilee, then it is a leap year. R. Hanina of Ono testified: if it could

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[12] These verses were noted in the footnotes to the NJPS translation of Isa 51:4.

[13] A similar notion is expressed in rabbinic passages that tackle the same theologi-
cal issue following the destruction of the Second Temple, by positing that the *shekhi-
nah* accompanied the Israelites into exile. See the discussions of A. J. Heschel, *Theology
of Ancient Judaism* (תורה מן השמים באספקלריה של הדורות) (3 vols.; London and New
York: Soncino, 1962–1990), 1:68–70 (in Hebrew); E. E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts
and Beliefs* (trans. I. Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press,
1975), 1: 54; 2: 705–06 n. 62; N. Hacham, "להיכן גלתה השכינה? עיון בעיצובה של תודעה יהודית
גלותית," (in press). I want to thank Benjamin Sommer for the first reference.

[14] For another such attempt by an exilic prophet, compare the approach presented
in Ezekiel 1 and 9–11 (as noted by Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 244 n. 17).

[15] A parallel version of the story is found in *y. Ned.* 6:9 (40a).

[16] The translation is adapted from that provided by I. M. Gafni, *Land, Center and
Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity* (JSPSup 21; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic,
1997), 106–8.

not be intercalated in Judea, then they intercalated it in the Galilee." There is no intercalation of the year outside the Land, and if they intercalated it, it is not a leap year. You see that in the Galilee they do not intercalate it—yet outside the Land it should be intercalated? In the Galilee they do not intercalate, but if they did intercalate—it is intercalated. Outside the Land they do not intercalate, but if they did intercalate—it is not intercalated. [This refers to] when they could intercalate in the Land of Israel, but when they could not intercalate in the Land of Israel, then they intercalate it outside the Land. Jeremiah intercalated outside the Land; Ezekiel intercalated outside the Land; Baruch son of Neriah intercalated outside the Land.

Hananiah the nephew of R. Joshua intercalated outside the Land. Rabbi (= the Patriarch) sent him three letters with R. Isaac and R. Nathan. In one he wrote, "Dedicated to Hananiah"; in another he wrote, "the kids that you left have become goats"; and in the other he wrote, "if you do not accept upon yourself (our authority), then depart to the desert of brambles and be a slaughterer, and Nehunion a sprinkler." He read the first one and honored them; the second one and he honored them; the third one, he wished to shame them. They said to him, "you cannot because you have already honored us."

R. Isaac stood and read from the Torah, "These are the festivals of Hananiah the nephew of R. Joshua." They said: "These are the festivals of the Lord" (Lev 23:4). He replied: "By us!" R. Nathan stood and supplemented (i.e., recited the *hafṭarah*), "For out of Babylonia shall come Torah, and the word of the Lord from the Peqod River." They said: "For out of Zion shall come Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3). He said to them: "By us!"

He (Hananiah) went and complained about them to R. Judah b. Bathyra at Nisibis. He (Judah) said to him: "After them, after them." He (Hananiah) said: "I do not know what is there. And how am I to know that they are wise in thought like me?" [He (Judah) replied:] Since you do not know their thoughts/knowledge, they must listen to you?! Since they are wise in thought like him, he should listen to them!" He (Hananiah) rose and rode on his horse. Where he reached—he reached, and where he did not reach—they observe in error.

It is written: "And to the rest (יתר) of the elders of the exile (גולה)" (Jer 29:1)—The Holy One Blessed be He said: The elders of the Diaspora are the most (ביותר) to me, [but] a small band in the Land of Israel is more beloved to me than the Great Sanhedrin outside the Land.

This extended passage relates to the statement of Haninah of Ono (third generation Tanna; 110–135 CE), recorded in *t. Sanhedrin* 2:13, that he had witnessed intercalation of the extra lunar month, in the Galilee, at a time when it was impossible to do this in Judea.[17] Moving one stage further

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[17] A parallel to this passage is quoted in *b. Sanh.* 11b, but there Haninah of Ono reports that intercalation in the Galilee does not result in an intercalated year.

away from Judea, the Palestinian Talmud extrapolates that, in contrast to the Galilee, if one intercalates outside the Land of Israel, then the year does not become a leap year. In response, the author of this *sugya* posits that this negative outcome only occurs in those instances when it is actually possible to intercalate in the Land of Israel. At times when intercalation is not possible in the Land, such as it was in the days of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Baruch—i.e., in the period of the destruction and the exile—then indeed it is permissible, and presumably imperative, to do so outside the Land.

The narrative in this passage revolves around another figure, R. Hananiah, the nephew of R. Joshua, who also began to perform this juridical function outside of Israel, in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba uprising. From the tale itself, and from other sources, it emerges that Hananiah departed from the Land and settled in Babylonia. Furthermore, as becomes clear from the story, he was one of the leading teachers in Israel, who left behind young students in the Land. The Patriarch in Israel sent emissaries to rebuke Hananiah for his behavior, through a series of messages or letters that culminated in the demand that he accept the authority of the Israeli sages. The first letter was a general compliment to Hananiah. The second epistle informed him that the young students that he left behind were now mature scholars, who could assume the responsibility of maintaining the calendar, and presumably therefore the condition for performing this activity outside of the Land was no longer valid. The final letter presents Hananiah with an ultimatum that he accept the authority of the Israeli courts or else perform his aberrant juridical practices in the desert.[18]

Following the delivery of these messages, which themselves are presented in a sarcastic fashion, the two visiting emissaries from Israel proceed to further antagonize Hananiah and those around him by mocking him in their reading of the Torah and *haftarah*. In each case, they purposefully misquote the verse in question in order to describe his behavior, as if Hananiah's actions or behavior were tantamount to a distortion of the words of the Bible itself. These (young?) sages manage to elicit an angry reaction from the crowd twice, each time adopting their response as a rhetorical argument against the establishment of the festivals outside the Land of Israel. The verse from the Prophets is the same citation from

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[18] This statement should be understood as metaphorical hyperbole, with the intended meaning that Hananiah's behavior places him beyond the pale of the community. For reference to the problematic cultic status of the temple of נחוניון (= Onias), see *m. Men.* 13:10; MS Kaufman has the same spelling.

Isaiah 2:3 as that used above by Second Isaiah. Here too, the verse is not quoted verbatim, but was reworded to express a specific idea. As above, the rewriting was done minimally, so that the reader or listener would recognize the source. This passage leaves no doubt that such recognition was the intention and result of this rewording: the story includes the reformulation of the verse, the correction of the crowd, and the planned response of the emissary. The successful repetition of this ploy demonstrates that this purposeful misquotation was a literary stratagem of the author, who was aware of the authority-conferring implications of each of the verses. Leviticus 23:4 refers specifically to the festival cycle, and in fact, this verse, along with others from the larger context of Leviticus 23, is used elsewhere in rabbinic literature as a source for the court's authority in the setting of the calendar.[19] The use of Isa 2:3 here should be viewed in light of its original Isaianic background, which relates to a judicial context. It is thus especially appropriate for this scenario, which revolves around the issue of an authoritative judiciary. According to the conclusion of this passage from the Jerusalem Talmud, as long as the authorities in Israel were of sufficient stature to preside over the setting of the calendar, then the geographical superiority of the Land of Israel trumps all other scholars found outside the Land, even if they were of greater wisdom than those in Israel.[20] A similar notion is expressed in the final statement that even a small group in Israel is more beloved than the Great Sanhedrin outside the Land.

In this source, Isa 2:3 was explicitly and sarcastically reworded to make a point. The replacement of "Zion" by "Babylon" and "Jerusalem" by "the Peqod River" was not a paraphrase that was intended to express the opinion of the author, but rather was proposed in order to demonstrate the

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[19] According to *Sifra Emor* 10 (quoted by Rashi ad Lev 23:4), the reference to intercalation of the calendar is derived from v. 2, while v. 4 refers specifically to the declaration of the New Month by the court. Similarly, *m. Roš Haš.* 2:9–10 interprets Lev 23:4 as referring to the New Month. The story here apparently understands v. 4 in a slightly broader context, as referring to general calendrical activity, although the literary nature of this passage prevents us from drawing specific conclusions about its reading of the verse.

[20] As noted by Gafni, *Land, Center and Diaspora*, 102–10, the Babylonian Talmud (*Ber.* 63a–b) presents the same passage, but with some small, yet significant, differences. Most important for the current discussion is the criterion for determining which rabbis controlled the process of intercalation. According to the version of the story in the Jerusalem Talmud, the primary factor for determining control is location. Once the Israeli sages had matured and were capable of fulfilling this role, then they merited the responsibility, based upon their geographical superiority over the Diaspora leadership. In contrast, according to the Babylonian Talmud, the calendar was to be established by the greater scholar, regardless of location.

folly of the actions of the Diaspora leadership. I would label this as an
example of intentional misquotation like the misquotation of Lev 23:4.
The occasion on which these "mistakes" were inserted, during the weekly
reading of the Torah and *haftarah*, further emphasizes the problematic
behavior of R. Hananiah. His actions fly in the face of the authoritative
text, and thus cannot be sanctioned.

   This example differs from the passage in Second Isaiah in two ways.
First, while Isaiah 51 solved the theological problem of the status of proph-
ecy and prophets outside the Land by positing that God's instruction and
teaching are *not* limited geographically, the misquotation in this Talmu-
dic passage purports to suggest that God's presence *is* still geographically
delimited—but to Babylon, rather than Zion and Jerusalem! While the
author of this story clearly rejects this notion, it is instructive to compare
it to the famous words of the twelfth-century French Tosafist, Rabbeinu
Tam, who proclaimed in his work *Sefer HaYashar*: "For from Bari shall
come forth Torah, and the word of the Lord from Tàranto," in praise of
the Italian rabbinate.[21] This much later text also transfers the source of
authoritative instruction to an alternate location, but in this case, the
intent of the rewriting is positive; the words of a leader of one Diaspora
community extol the leadership of another. Second, the author of our Tal-
mudic passage is a member of the community in the Land of Israel, and
therefore reinterprets Isa 2:3 in the opposite direction from that of Second
Isaiah—to reinforce his own community's authority and delegitimize the
authority of the religious leadership outside the Land of Israel.

<div align="center">Susanna</div>

While tendentious paraphrase and playful misquotation have already
been noted by scholars in connection with the first two sources, its pres-
ence in the third source, the story of Susanna, has gone unnoticed as an
additional example of the reworking and rewording of Isaiah 2:3:

Susanna is one of the Additions to the Book of Daniel found in the Sep-
tuagint. Like the rest of the Greek version of Daniel, Susanna has been
preserved in two different recensions or editions, commonly referred to
as the Old Greek and Theodotion. While the version of Daniel attrib-

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[21] *Sefer HaYašar le-Rabbenu Tam* (*Responsa*)(ed. E. Z. Margolioth with notes by
F. Rosenthal; Berlin: Itzkovitski, 1898), §46; translation my own.

uted to Theodotion is preserved in the overwhelming number of Greek manuscripts, the Old Greek version has been preserved in only two Greek witnesses (MS 88 and Papyrus 967), and in the Syro-Hexapla. In the synoptic sections elsewhere in Daniel, the version attributed to Theodotion is generally much closer to the Masoretic text of Daniel, and was almost certainly the product of an attempt to revise the Greek text to agree with a Hebrew and Aramaic version similar to MT. In numerous sections of the book, especially in chapters 4–6, the Old Greek preserves a version significantly different from that of MT, and not only with regard to minor textual variations. The question of the primary and secondary status of these two editions in those chapters is still a matter of debate; the question is complicated by the fact that both versions continued to grow even after they had each developed into independent literary forms. In the case of Susanna, the Old Greek is notably shorter than Theodotion, and there are sections found in the latter that are absent from the former, including the introduction and conclusion. In my opinion, and that of many scholars, the Old Greek version of Susanna, the shorter of the two, reflects the earlier edition of the story, which was then expanded by a number of additions, of varying purposes.[22] I will therefore focus my remarks on the Old Greek version of the story, with recourse to the edition attributed to Theodotion only where it contributes to the discussion.

Scholars generally agree that Susanna was not originally a part of the book of Daniel, and was added only after the initially independent stories in chapters 1–6 were combined together in the book. Those stories are all located in Babylonia and represent court tales; they describe the competition and intrigue between the Jewish exile, Daniel (occasionally along with

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[22] Cf. C. A. Moore, *Daniel, Esther, and Jeremiah: The Additions. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 44; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 78–80; H. Engel, *Die Susanna-Erzählung: Einleitung, Übersetzung und Kommentar zum Septuaginta-Text und zur Theodotion-Bearbeitung* (OBO 61; Freiburg [Schweiz]: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985); L. M. Wills, *The Jew in the Court of the Foreign King: Ancient Jewish Court Legends* (HDR 26; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 77–79; J. W. van Henten, "The Story of Susanna as a Pre-Rabbinic Midrash to Dan. 1:1–2," in *Variety of Forms: Dutch Studies in Midrash* (ed. A. Kuyt, E. G. L. Schrijver, and N. A. van Uchelen; Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 1990), 1–14, at 2–6; J. J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 426–28; *pace* A. Rofé, *Introduction to the Literature of the Hebrew Bible* (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2006), 196–97 (in Hebrew). The issue of the original language of the OG story, as well as that of Theodotion's version of Susanna—does it reflect a Greek revision of a Greek text or a Greek translation of a Semitic revision of a Semitic text?—is beyond the scope of this discussion.

his three compatriots), and the local Babylonian sorcerers, magicians, and advisors to the king. In each of the stories, either Daniel's faith in God, or his adherence to the law, lead to his success in this foreign world. These stories were composed as paradigms for Jews in the Diaspora, encouraging them to succeed in the foreign court, but at the same time to preserve their religious and ethnic identity. In common with these stories, Susanna describes a contest between Daniel and more established members of society. However, in sharp contrast, his adversaries are not the Babylonian king's courtiers, but rather the members of the Jewish religious establishment, judges or elders. The difference in subject and setting, coupled with the absence of this story from the MT, confirm the claim that it was not an original part of the book of Daniel, but was added secondarily.

The story of Susanna revolves around a pious and beautiful Israelite woman. Two judges, elders, the villains in this tale, spot her as she is walking in her garden, and each independently desires her. They continue to spy on her, "stalking" her, to use the modern parlance. When they chance upon each other watching Susanna, they confess their distress, and agree to join forces to take advantage of her. When they proposition her, she refuses to sin, knowing full well that she is likely to suffer for her refusal. Frustrated by her rejection, the judges later summon her to appear at the assembly, where they falsely accuse her of intercourse with an unknown young man, who had supposedly fled before he was caught. Due to their status as elders and judges, the entire assembly uncritically believes their accusation, and Susanna is sent to her execution. As she is led out, a youth named Daniel, identified here as if for the first time,[23] is given the spirit of wisdom by an angel, and demonstrates that the judges had trumped up these charges. Daniel successfully disproves their fabrication by separating

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[23] This is a suggestive argument for the original independence of Susanna from the rest of the Book of Daniel. The argument is further borne out by the textual evidence, since Susanna is placed in different locations in the different editions and manuscripts that reflect the expanded version of Daniel. In MS 88, the Syro-Hexapla and the Vulgate, the story is found following Daniel 12 (the end of the book in the MT), and prior to the tale of Bel and the Dragon. In Papyrus 967 (the best exemplar of the OG), it is found after Bel and the Dragon. It appears at the beginning of the book in Theod, attested in the overwhelming majority of Greek codices and manuscripts. Variation in the placement of a stretch of text among different witnesses is frequently a sign of the secondary nature of the floating passage. Since the passage was inserted into an already extant composition, scribes naturally differed (intentionally or unintentionally) as to its proper location within the newly expanded work. Furthermore, its presence at the beginning of Theodotion is part of the transformation of Susanna to a new introduction to the book (see below, n. 34). I intend to expand the discussion of this transformation in a future publication.

the witnesses and asking them details about the event, specifically regarding under which tree in the garden this act of indecency took place. When each provides the name of a different tree, it becomes abundantly clear to the entire assembly that Susanna is innocent of the charges leveled against her, and that these judges are indeed corrupt. They are sentenced to death on the basis of the Deuteronomic law according to which false witnesses receive the same punishment that the falsely accused suspect would have received had he or she been convicted (Deut 19:15–21). The story ends with a homily about the unblemished, righteous nature of young people, represented in this story by Daniel, who stands in sharp contrast to the negative portrayal of the elders throughout the tale.

I will focus my analysis on an interpretive crux at the opening of the story that has long perplexed exegetes. In the Theodotion version, the story begins with an exposition focusing on the *dramatis personae*, including Susanna, her husband Jehoiakim, and the two elders. The setting of the story is clearly indicated as Babylonia, and Jehoiakim is described as a wealthy man, prominent in the Babylonian Jewish community (vv. 1–5a). These four and a half verses are absent from the Old Greek version (according to Papyrus 967; the verses are marked by *obeli* in Ms. 88 and the Syro-Hexapla). In contrast, that edition begins with a quote and its interpretation, v. 5b according to the accepted numbering of the verses:[24]

(5b) Περὶ ὧν ἐλάλησεν ὁ δεσπότης ὅτι ἐξῆλθεν ἀνομία ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος ἐκ πρεσβυτέρων κριτῶν, οἳ ἐδόκουν κυβερνᾶν τὸν λαόν. (6) καὶ ἤρχοντο κρίσεις ἐξ ἄλλων πόλεων [P. 967 πολλῶν] πρὸς αὐτούς.

(5b) Concerning what[25] the Lord said: "For lawlessness came forth from Babylonia"—From the elders, the judges, who seemed to guide the people. (6) And cases from other cities [or: many others, P. 967] came to them.

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[24] The Greek text is presented here according to the edition of O. Munnich, *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum 16.2; Göttingen, 1999), 216–18; rev. 2d ed. of *Susanna, Daniel, Bel et Draco* (ed. J. Ziegler; Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum 16.2; Göttingen, 1954). The translation is a slightly modified form of Collins, *Daniel*, 420.

[25] As noted by J. T. Milik, "Daniel et Susanne à Qumran," in *De la Tôrah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles* (ed. M. Carrez, J. Doré, and P. Grelot; Paris: Desclée, 1981), 337–59, at 345–46; Engel, *Die Susanna-Erzählung*, 15; and Collins, *Daniel*, 430, a similar introductory formula is used at the beginning of 1 Cor 7:1 as part of the heading of that section: Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε "Now concerning the matters about which you wrote…" (NRSV). There is therefore no need to assume that the opening of the OG version is actually a secondary, fragmented version of the supposedly original, longer opening found in Theodotion, which refers specifically to the elders, and which would be translated "concerning *whom*" (*pace* Moore, *Additions*, 95, 99; R. T. McLay,

The Greek δεσπότης refers here to God, as it does throughout Daniel 9 (vv. 8, 15, 16, 17, 19). The opening of this sentence consists of a citation formula: "Concerning what the Lord said." This is a slightly different citation formula from that found later in Susanna (v. 53), τοῦ κυρίου λέγοντος, "the Lord said," which is followed by a clear quotation of Exod 23:7, "the innocent and righteous you shall not kill (ונקי וצדיק אל תהרג)." However, in 5b, scholars have had difficulty identifying the referent verse following this introductory formula, since it does not match any known biblical passage in either the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint. The identification of the verse is of special importance for understanding the message of this tale, because the entire story is presented as an expanded homily of this sentence.

Two primary suggestions have been proffered as to the source of this "quote." First, there are those who see a connection between the story of Susanna and Jer 29:20–23:[26]

> (20) But you, the whole exile community which I banished from Jerusalem to Babylon, hear the word of the Lord! (21) Thus said the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab son of Kolaiah and Zedekiah son of Maaseiah, who prophesy falsely to you in my name: I am going to deliver them into the hands of King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon, and he shall put them to death before your eyes. (22) And the whole community of Judah in Babylonia shall use a curse derived from their fate: "May God make you like Zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babylon consigned to the flames!" (23) Because they did vile things in Israel, committing adultery with the wives of their fellows, and speaking in my name false words, which I did not command them. I am he who knows and bears witness—declares the Lord.

This passage shows some similarity to the story of Susanna: two Jewish leaders in the Babylonian exile are accused of fornication with married women and speaking falsely, and they are eventually to be put to death by fire. However, there are also numerous differences between the stories:

"Sousanna," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* [*NETS*] [ed. A. Pietersma and B. G. Wright; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 986–90, at 987).

   [26] Origen, *Letter to Africanus* §7–8 (quoting learned Hebrews); Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 13 (= Susanna): 5; idem, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 29:20–23 (also quoting Hebrew scholars)—for an extended analysis of the possible early Jewish background of these sources, see J. Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel: A Study of Comparative Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Hebrew Bible* (CBQMS 7; Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1978), 126–31. Amongst modern scholars, see R. H. Pfeiffer, *History of New Testament Times with an Introduction to the Apocrypha* (New York: Harper, 1949), 434–35, 452–54; Moore, *Additions*, 96; J. W. Wesselius, "The Literary Genre of the Story of Susanna and its Original Language," in Kuyt, Schrijver, and van Uchelen, *Variety of Forms*, 15–25; and others.

1) The two elders in Jeremiah are prophets and not judges.[27] 2) In the context of Jeremiah 29, the accusation of speaking falsely relates not to testimony in a court of law, but rather to so-called prophets who offer false hope to the exiles in Babylonia. 3) Finally, the judges in Susanna were not put to death by the Babylonian king, but rather by the people present at the trial, with the assistance of an angel. Since the quotation in Susanna 5b does not match any particular verse in Jeremiah 29, Pfeiffer was forced to label it a "confused reminiscence of Jer 29:23."[28] While the story in Susanna shares some themes with the passage in Jeremiah 29, and was perhaps influenced by this earlier prophecy, there is almost no linguistic correspondence between this proposed source and the quotation in 5b, and thus "it is difficult to see how this verse could be even a 'confused reminiscence' of Jer 29:20–23."[29]

Due to these differences, John Collins proposed another possible biblical source for this quotation—Zech 5:5–11.[30] That vision refers to an *ephah* containing wickedness, symbolized by a woman, which is carried to Shinar (= Babylonia in Gen 10:10; 11:2, 9), where a house or shrine will be constructed for it. While this possibility has the advantage of including elements found specifically in the quotation in Susanna, namely wickedness traveling or emerging, and Babylonia, it has the distinct disadvantage of referring to the wrong direction. Instead of wickedness emerging *from* Babylon, as in Susanna, this vision specifically refers to the traveling of wickedness *to* Babylon. Moreover, beyond the formal correspondence between elements in Zechariah 5 and the verse in Susanna, it is difficult to identify any connection between them on the level of content or themes.

I would like to suggest a new identification of the verse, in light of my remarks until this point: that is, the quotation in Susanna reflects a paraphrase of Isa 2:3 // Mic 4:2. Note both the common and the contrasting elements in the verses:[31]

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[27] This argument is found, e.g., in Moore, *Additions*, 85.
[28] Pfeiffer, *History*, 454.
[29] Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 430 n. 41.
[30] Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary*, 430; Rofé, *Introduction*, 198 n. 21.
[31] Both Isa 2:3 and Mic 4:2 are presented here in Hebrew and Greek to demonstrate different possibilities for the translation of this clause. Closer affiliation to the Greek translation of Micah, specifically with reference to the Greek word used to represent the Hebrew כי, does not necessarily indicate direct dependence of Susanna upon that version. Rather,

MT Isa 2:3//Mic 4:2: כי מציון תצא תורה
LXX Isa 2:3: ἐκ γὰρ Σιων ἐξελεύσεται νόμος
LXX Mic 4:2: ὅτι ἐκ Σιων ἐξελεύσεται νόμος
OG Susanna 5b: ὅτι ἐξῆλθεν ἀνομία ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος

Shared Elements

(1) Both clauses open with a similar particle כי/ὅτι/γὰρ. Most scholars
    have interpreted the particle ὅτι in Susanna v. 5b as a case of ὅτι *rec-
    itativum*, which functions together with a verb of speech as a marker
    of direct speech. It is therefore often omitted in modern translations,
    and represented by a colon or a quotation mark. That interpretation
    is certainly possible, but not necessary, and I suggest that in this case
    ὅτι should be taken as part of the quotation itself.[32]

(2) The same verb is used in both cases, as can be seen by comparing
    the Greek texts, which each employ a different form of the verb
    ἐξέρχομαι. The only difference between the usages relates to the tense,
    as Susanna reflects an aorist verb, while Isaiah and Micah employ an
    imperfect form.

Contrastive Elements

Two differences between the verses reflect "reversals" of the earlier source
in the later text:

(3) Instead of "from Zion" as in the Isaiah text, the verse in Susanna reads
    "from Babylonia." These two toponyms stand in opposition to each
    other elsewhere in the Bible; for example, Psalm 137:1 reads: "By the
    rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, and we wept, when we remem-
    bered Zion." The interchange between the two is the same as that
    found in the Jerusalem Talmud in the anti-Diaspora intentional mis-
    quotation, while here it is part of a tendentious paraphrase of the
    same verse.

(4) In a further "reversal," תורה in Isaiah 2:3, translated into Greek by
    the stereotypical equivalent νόμος, has been replaced in Susanna by

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they probably both reflect independent attempts to translate the common Hebrew word
by the same frequent translational equivalent ὅτι.

[32] It is possible that the ὅτι *recitativum* construction was not used in Susanna since it
would have resulted in consecutive instances of the Greek word, first as the direct dis-
course marker, and then as part of the quotation.

the contrastive term ἀνομία.[33] If instruction and righteousness emerge from Zion, then the opposing characteristics, wickedness and lawlessness emerge from Babylon.

When taken together, the shared and contrasting elements cover all of the components of Isaiah 2:3, bolstering the notion of a deliberate paraphrase.

I would further suggest that the identification of Isaiah 2:3 as the verse paraphrased in Susanna 5b also assists in understanding the origins of certain themes throughout the story. In particular, the judicial context of the story, a description of corrupt judges, can be traced back to the original Isaianic passage, which addresses the corruption of the judicial system in Jerusalem and suggests that it will eventually become righteous once again. Similarly, other elements in Susanna relate to the rules and proper behavior of the judiciary, as detailed in the collection of laws in Deut 16:18–19:21. The most obvious connection of Susanna to these regulations is the law of false witnesses, found in Deut 19:16–21. The two villains in the story, the unrighteous judges, testify falsely, with the result that Susanna was to be put to death. According to the Deuteronomic law, a false witness is to be punished "as he schemed to do to his fellow" (Deut 19:19), and this law is explicitly fulfilled at the end of Susanna (vv. 60–62).[34] The requirement of the law, that "the judges shall make a thorough investigation (ודרשו השפטים היטב)" (Deut 19:18), appears to be the source for Daniel's investigation of the two magistrates (v. 48): "Are you such fools,

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[33] This contrast is better highlighted in the Greek versions, and is less pronounced if one attempts to reconstruct a Semitic *Vorlage* underlying Greek Susanna, since there is no Hebrew or Aramaic word that functions as the negation of תורה in the same way as ἀνομία.

[34] The Old Greek version contains an additional two verses (vv. 62a–b) that extol the virtues of youths, including their piety and single-mindedness. These verses have no parallel in the Theodotion version, which adds two other verses not found in the OG: the first describing the praise bestowed upon Susanna by her family members (v. 63), and the second a comment about Daniel's stature before the people from that day on (v. 64). Verse 64 almost certainly is an editorial addition that functions as a bridge between the story of Susanna, and the rest of the book of Daniel to which it was attached. Verse 63 focuses the conclusion of the story on Susanna and her righteousness as expressed by her parents, husband and family members. This conclusion is appropriate in the Theodotion version, which also has additional material at the beginning of the chapter (vv. 1–5a), introducing Susanna and her family, and describing her piety. However, in the OG version, which opens in v. 5b with the paraphrase of Isaiah 2:3, the more appropriate ending is the punishment meted out to the corrupt judges, as described in vv. 60–62. These verses are the final passage common to both versions, and probably reflect the original ending of the story.

Israelites? Would you, without having investigated or learned the plain truth, kill a daughter of Israel?"[35] The application of the Deuteronomic law in Susanna thus reflects the same concern for a righteous judiciary as Isaiah 1–2.[36]

Slightly further removed from Deut 16–19, but still related to the definition and description of proper behavior for judges is the only other quotation in the story, found in v. 53—"the innocent and righteous you shall not kill," taken verbatim from Exod 23:7. This verse appears within a list of instructions for proper judicial behavior (Exod 23:1–9).

Interestingly, the Deuteronomic laws of the judiciary were connected to the same passage in Isaiah (1:26–2:3) in the choice of the *haftarah* portion that was read according to the triennial cycle in the land of Israel. According to the Genizah evidence,[37] the additional passage from the Prophets that accompanied Deut 16:18–17:13 (beginning שפטים) was the Isaianic prophecy (1:26–2:3) describing the future righteousness of Jerusalem, and the central function of the Temple. The combination of these elements in Susanna provides further, earlier evidence for the exegetical combination of these passages.

The version of the story of Susanna found in the Old Greek version focuses on a righteous judiciary, or more precisely, on unrighteous judges from Babylonia. The equation of the iniquity emerging from Babylonia with its judges, and the subsequent story in which Daniel is portrayed as their righteous antithesis, implies that Daniel is not part of the current Diaspora leadership, but rather, in consonance with the explicit descriptions in the Masoretic book of Daniel, had arrived as a youth among those exiled from Judah to Babylon (1:6; 2:25; 5:13).[38]

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[35] The translation is drawn from Collins, *Daniel*, 422 and McLay, *NETS*, 989, with modifications. There is no need to relate Daniel's words to the maxim of Simeon ben Shetach in *m. Abot* 1:9: "Examine the witnesses extensively," as was suggested by N. Brüll, "Das apokryphische Susanna-Buch," *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur* 3 (1877): 1–69, who interpreted the story of Susanna as part of a Pharisaic anti-Sadducean polemic from the first century BCE.

[36] I therefore suggest that the theme of false witnesses is not related to, or more precisely not a "reversal" of, the successful false testimony found in the story of Jezebel and Naboth's vineyard (2 Kgs 21); *pace* Rofé, *Introduction*, 194–99.

[37] See the table provided by Y. Ofer, "The Masoretic Divisions (*Sedarim*) in the Books of the Prophets and Hagiographa," *Tarbiz* 58 (1989): 155–89, at 184–85 (in Hebrew).

[38] Daniel is first introduced in Susanna 45 as "a young man" with no further identifying characteristics. If the story was composed as an introduction to the book of Daniel, its author perhaps assumed that the reader was aware of this piece of information. The alternative option is that the story of Susanna was composed independently of the stories in MT Daniel, and was subsequently added to the book (see nn. 23 and 34 above).

What then is the message of this story? I suggest that the use of Isa 2:3 is highly significant within the context of Susanna, as it stands at the beginning of the entire passage. In some ways, it is similar to a rabbinic midrash or homily, which opens with the quotation of a verse and then proceeds to interpret the verse, often with the addition of references to other biblical passages and even a story to exemplify the message.[39] If the paraphrase of Isaiah 2:3 at the beginning of the story, "For from Babylon shall come forth iniquity," follows the pattern of the two examples discussed in the first part of this lecture, and relates to the relationship of the Diaspora Jewish community to the Land of Israel and its leaders, then presumably Susanna should also be understood as a criticism of the leadership of the Jewish community in the Babylonian Diaspora along these same lines. The author of this passage portrays the Jewish judges and leadership in Babylonia as sinners, who cannot control their most base urges, and who use their power and authority in order to pursue their dastardly deeds. The author of this story, was therefore probably located in Israel, and was writing against the Babylonian Jewish leadership.[40]

The three examples presented here all interpret Isaiah 2:3 in different ways. In each case, the wording of the verse was altered in order to achieve this goal, while still leaving enough of the original so that the reader or listener could recognize it. In the first passage, the rewording of the verse was performed in order to legitimize the religious status of the Diaspora community, while the latter two were intended to call into question the authority of Diaspora customs and leaders. The use of the same verse to support opposing viewpoints indicates its importance for the identity-formation of the Diaspora community. In these passages, biblical interpretation intersects with the fundamental self-perceptions of each of the two communities, and it is this nexus that produces the dynamic of use and reuse of this ancient prophecy.

This option is perhaps bolstered by the absence of Theodotion v. 64, which emphasizes Daniel's rise to greatness in the eyes of the people from that day forward, and which appears to be a secondary attempt to connect the story to the book as a whole.

[39] Both van Henten, "Susanna as a Pre-Rabbinic Midrash," and Wesselius, "The Literary Genre," view Susanna as the product of midrash-like interpretation of Jer 29:20–23 (Wesselius) or Dan 1:1–2 (van Henten). However, many aspects of their analysis appear unconvincing. L. M. Wills ("The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity," *HTR* 77/3–4 [1984]: 277–99, at 293–94) classifies Susanna (in the Old Greek edition) as a sermon, in light of its homiletic conclusion extolling the virtues of youths over elders.

[40] Cf. I. M. Gafni, *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era: A Social and Cultural History* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1990), 61, 76 (in Hebrew).

DIFFERENT TRADITIONS OR EMPHASES?
THE IMAGE OF GOD IN PHILO'S *DE OPIFICIO MUNDI*

Gregory E. Sterling

Laurence Peter, best known for his formulation of the Peter Principle, once said, "Originality is the fine art of remembering what you hear but forgetting where you heard it." Benjamin Franklin is credited with a more candid formulation of the same principle: "Originality is the art of concealing your sources." Philo of Alexandria, like most ancient authors, illustrates the accuracy of these aphorisms: he rarely mentioned his sources by name, although on occasion he alluded to a pagan author. So, for example, in *De opificio mundi* Philo referred to Plato twice by name.[1] These two explicit references hardly provide comprehensive documentation for Philo's use of Plato in the treatise, however. On other occasions, the Alexandrian referred to the Athenian obliquely; e.g., Plato was "one of the ancients."[2] In still other places he paraphrased or alluded to Plato without any reference to the Athenian philosopher.[3] His practice of referring to Jewish authors was even less explicit: he referred to them either anonymously or not at all; he never referred to them by name. There are at least two anonymous references to his colleagues in *De opificio mundi.* In one section, he challenged those who took "in the beginning" temporally;[4] while in another, he seconded those who offered a rationale for the fact that human beings were created last.[5] In still other passages, he offered multiple and even conflicting interpretations without any references to other exegetes. Do passages with opposing views point to anonymous Jewish exegetes who either preceded or were contemporary with Philo? Can we read Philo to reconstruct the views of other Jewish exegetes? Unlike Philo's use of Plato, where the source is extant, we must decide whether to postulate sources for his compatriots.

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[1] Philo, *Opif.* 119, refers to Plato, *Tim.* 75d; and *Opif.* 133 refers to Plato, *Menex.* 237c–238a.

[2] Philo, *Opif.* 21, alludes to Plato, *Tim.* 28d–e.

[3] E.g., see below in my discussion of Philo, *Opif.* 69–71. For a full analysis see D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato* (PhilosAnt 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986).

[4] Philo, *Opif.* 26.

[5] Philo, *Opif.* 77.

Philo's use of Jewish exegetical traditions has long been noted. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Wilhelm Bousset used the presence of such materials as part of his argumentation for the existence of an Alexandrian school.[6] The same evidence led a group of scholars to found the Philo Institute and launch the *Studia Philonica*. The group set out to work through the layers of exegetical traditions in Philo. Unfortunately, their ambitious project was never realized; only a handful of programmatic essays by Robert Hamerton-Kelly and Burton Mack were published.[7] Others, however, have noted the same phenomena. The most important treatment of these traditions to date is the revised Harvard dissertation of Thomas H. Tobin on the interpretations of the creation of human beings in Genesis 1–2.[8] Tobin argued that some Philonic texts preserved exegetical traditions that conceived of a single creation of humanity, while other texts preserved traditions that were based on the notion of a double creation of humanity. Within the traditions that reflected a single creation perspective, some anti-anthropomorphic tendencies led to a Platonizing interpretation that included the Logos, based upon a distinctive reading of Gen 1:26–27; while others led to a Stoicizing interpretation that focused on the *pneuma* in Gen 2:7. The traditions that reflected a double creation perspective tended to harmonize the two Genesis stories: some traditions referred to two human beings while other texts referred to two minds. The complicated stratigraphy of these traditions led a number of Philonists, most notably David T. Runia and David Winston, to challenge Tobin's views and to argue that the differences are due to varied emphases.[9] Tobin's analysis was not, however, the most radical treatment. Richard Goulet contended that the allegorists whom Philo cited anonymously composed a full commentary on the Pentateuch that Philo ineffectively condensed.[10] Goulet's reversal of Philo's place in the evolution of the

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[6] W. Bousset, *Jüdisch-christlicher Schulbetrieb in Alexandria und Rom: Literarische Untersuchungen zu Philo und Clemens von Alexandria, Justin und Irenäus* (FRLANT 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1915).

[7] R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Sources and Traditions in Philo Judaeus: Prolegomena to an Analysis of His Writings," *SPhilo* 1 (1972): 3–26; B. L. Mack, "Exegetical Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism: A Program for the Analysis of the Philonic Corpus," *SPhilo* 3 (1974–1975): 71–115; idem, "Weisheit und Allegorie bei Philo von Alexandrien," *SPhilo* 5 (1978): 57–105.

[8] T. H. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (CBQMS 14; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983).

[9] D. T. Winston, review of T. Tobin, *The Creation of Man, JBL* 104 (1985): 558–60; and Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 556–58.

[10] R. Goulet, *La philosophie de Moïse: Essai de reconstruction d'un commentaire philosophique préphilonien du Pentateuque* (Histoire des doctrines de l'Antiquité classique 11; Paris: J. Vrin, 1987).

tradition from the apex to the nadir, and the corresponding depreciation of the treatises of Philo, have led most to take a skeptical stance towards his thesis.[11]

I would like to enter the debate by exploring a limited but important exegetical tradition, i.e., the interpretation of creation in the image of God (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ; Gen 1:27) in *De opificio mundi*, the opening treatise in Philo's commentary series that we know as the Exposition of the Law.[12] Philo offered three different interpretations of the phrase in the same treatise: he identified the image of God with the Logos, with the human mind, and with the idea of a human being. We will explore each interpretation in an effort to understand whether the differences are due to Philo's incorporation of earlier exegetical traditions or to his own way of reading and commenting on the text.

The Logos

The first interpretation occurs in the course of Philo's exposition of "day one" in the creation account (§§15–35, esp. 15–25).[13] The Alexandrian argued that the use of the cardinal number "one" in the phrase "day one" (ἡμέρα μία) set the first day of creation off from the other days that use the ordinal numbers "second" (ἡμέρα δευτέρα) through "sixth" (ἡμέρα ἕκτη). He applied the distinction between "day one" and the "second day" through the "sixth day" to the Platonic divide between the intelligible and sense-perceptible worlds. He suggested that "day one" referred to the creation of the intelligible cosmos that the Creator used as a model for the sense-perceptible cosmos created on the "second" through "sixth" days. He made

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[11] See the critique by D. T. Runia, in his review of R. Goulet, *La philosophie de Moïse*, *JTS* 40 (1989): 590–602; reprinted in idem, *Exegesis and Philosophy: Studies on Philo of Alexandria* (Collected Studies 332; Aldershot: Variorum, 1990).

[12] The most important treatments of the image of God in Second Temple Judaism include J. Jervell, *Imago Dei: Gen 1, 26f. im Spätjudentum, in der Gnosis und in den paulinischen Briefen* (FRLANT 58; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), 15–70; J. R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baruch* (JSPSup 1; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988); and G. H. van Kooten, *Paul's Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, and Early Christianity* (WUNT 2.232; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), esp. 1–69. On Philo see also F.-W. Eltester, *Eikon im Neuen Testament* (BZNW 23; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1958), 43–59.

[13] I have used the *editio major* of L. Cohn, P. Wendland, S. Reiter, and I. Leisegang, eds., *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* (7 vols.; Berlin: George Reimer, 1896–1930; repr. 1962). All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

the point emphatically by using his interpretation of "day one" as an *inclusio* for his exposition of Gen 1:1–5 (§§15, 35).

Philo prefaced his treatment of the biblical text proper with a comparison between creation and the establishment of a city—he probably had the founding of Alexandria in mind (§§17–25).[14] An architect thinks through a plan and then has the city built (§§17–18). So God thought the "ideas" before the sense-perceptible world was founded (§§19–20).[15] The location of the ideas was in the Logos: "If someone wanted to use clearer words, he would say that the intelligible cosmos is nothing other than the Logos of God in the act of creating the cosmos" (§24). Philo explained: "For the intelligible city is nothing other than the reasoning capacity of the architect who is in the process of thinking through the founding of the intelligible city" (§24). In case someone objected that this was good Platonic philosophy but not scriptural exegesis, he stated: "This teaching comes from Moses; it is not mine. For, as he describes the creation of the human being, he expressly acknowledges in the following statements that he was cast *in the image of God*" (§25).

Philo unpacked the phrase "in the image of God" (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ) with two conditional sentences (§25). The first is: "If the part is an image of an image (εἰκὼν εἰκόνος), it is clear that the same is true for the whole." The protasis is supported by the biblical text: a human being is an image of the image of God. Philo did not explain here how he reached this conclusion, but did do so elsewhere. This is one of seven passages where Philo explicitly associated the "image of God" with the Logos.[16] In the *Allegorical Laws*, treatises in the Allegorical Commentary, Philo offered a series of examples of individuals who were endowed with various gifts by God, including Bezalel, the chief craftsperson of the Tabernacle. Working from Exod 31:2–3, Philo drew from an onomasticon to note that "*Bezalel* means 'in the shadow of God.'" He then explained: "God's shadow is his Logos, which he used like an instrument to create the cosmos. This shadow—and its representation (τὸ ὡσανεὶ ἀπεικόνισμα), to give it a name—is the archetype of other things" (*Leg.* 3.96).

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[14] For details see D. T. Runia, "Polis and Megalopolis: Philo and the Founding of Alexandria," *Mnemosyne* 42 (1989): 398–412; reprinted in idem, *Exegesis and Philosophy*.

[15] On the ideas as the thoughts of God in Philo see R. Radice, "Observations on the Theory of the Ideas as the Thoughts of God in Philo of Alexandria," *SPhA* 3 (1991): 126–34; and the critique in D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses: Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (PACS 1; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 151–52.

[16] The seven passages are *Opif.* 25; *Leg.* 3.96; *Her.* 231; *Spec.* 1.81; 3.83, 207; *QG* 2.62.

The relationship between God and the Logos is thus that of the real to the shadow. Philo made a connection between the popular etymology of Bezalel and the metaphor of Plato's cave in *Republic* 7.[17] However, the shadow has the same relationship to other things that God has to the shadow. Philo continued: "For just as God is the model for the Image (παράδειγμα τῆς εἰκόνος), which has just been called shadow, so the Image (ἡ εἰκών) is the model (παράδειγμα) for other things, as he made clear at the outset of his legislation by saying, 'and God made the human being in the image of God'" (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ). The exegete concluded: "Thus the Image (ἡ εἰκών) was cast to represent God and the human being to represent the Image (ἡ εἰκών), which had acquired the power of a model" (παράδειγμα).[18] Humanity is not God's Image, but is "in God's Image." The Image is the Logos. Thus Philo has a three-tiered hierarchy: God, the Logos, and humanity. The key is the preposition "in" or "according to" (κατά) in the phrase *in the image of God* (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ); i.e., human beings were created *according to the Image of God*. Reasoning *a minore ad majus*, Philo moved to the apodosis: what was true for the part, i.e., a human being, must be true for the whole, i.e., the cosmos. If a human being was created on the basis of an existing Image, then the cosmos must have been created on the basis of an existing image or model.

The second conditional sentence follows: "If this entire sense-perceptible cosmos, which is greater than a human image, is a copy of a divine Image, it is clear that the archetypal seal (ἡ ἀρχέτυπος σφραγίς), which we claim is the intelligible cosmos (νοητὸς κόσμος), would be the model (τὸ παράδειγμα), the archetypal Idea of the ideas (ἀρχέτυπος ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν), the Logos of God (ὁ θεοῦ λόγος)." The protasis of the second conditional sentence has picked up the apodosis of the previous conditional sentence: "the same is true for the whole" has become "if this entire sense-perceptible cosmos . . . is a copy of a divine Image." In other words, the sense-perceptible cosmos is a copy of the intelligible cosmos. The apodosis drawn from this is problematic; the intelligible cosmos must be the Logos, whom Philo identified in four ways: the Logos is the archetypal

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[17] Plato, *Resp.* 7.514a–517a.

[18] Philo, *Leg.* 3.96. Cf. also *Plant.* 27; *Somn.* 1.206. On Philo's use of an onomasticon see L. L. Grabbe, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: The Hebrew Names in Philo* (BJS 115; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), esp. 143–44 or #35.

seal,[19] the intelligible cosmos,[20] the model,[21] and the archetypal Idea of the ideas.[22] There is, however, a problem. It is not obvious how Philo moved from the protasis—i.e., the cosmos is a copy of the intelligible cosmos, directly to the apodosis—i.e., the intelligible cosmos is the Logos. Something is missing. It would have been more reasonable for Philo to cast the second condition in terms like these: if the sense-perceptible cosmos is a copy of the intelligible cosmos, then the intelligible cosmos is a copy of God. This would not, however, have been an acceptable conclusion for Philo, who consistently situated the Logos between God and the cosmos. It was Philo's larger system of thought—especially his emphasis on the transcendence of God—that required him to posit an intermediary between the unknowable God and the sense-perceptible world. As intermediary, the Logos served as the representative of God. While his logic is less than cogent, the thought is clear and makes sense within the framework of Philo's thought.

Philo's identification of the Image of God with the Logos is due to developments within the Platonic tradition. Philo was clearly directly indebted to Plato. In the *Timaeus*, the Athenian sage concluded his account of the creation of the cosmos with the statement: "If these arguments hold, then it is completely necessary that this cosmos is an image of another (τόνδε τὸν κόσμον εἰκόνα τινὸς εἶναι)."[23] This statement of Plato's explains why Philo introduced Gen 1:27 in connection with the reading of "day one." Philo made a direct association between the "image" in Plato's *Timaeus* and the "image" in Gen 1:27. In this way, Gen 1:27 served as a warrant for the interpretation of "day one" as the intelligible world in Gen 1:1–5. In brief, Plato's concluding statement led Philo to bring a later verse in Genesis 1 into the account of the creation of the intelligible world.

But why identify the Image with the Logos? Philo did not read Plato in a vacuum; he was heavily influenced by the Middle Platonic readings of Plato's *Timaeus*. The Middle Platonists nearly all held that a second

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[19] See also *Leg.* 1.22; *Ebr.* 133; and *Spec.* 2.152. Philo identified the Logos with the architectonic seal in *Opif.* 25 and *Ebr.* 133.

[20] See also *Opif.* 15, 16, 19, 24; *Gig.* 61; *Deus* 31; *Sobr.* 55; *Her.* 75, 111; *Mut.* 267; *Somn.* 1.186, 188; *Mos.* 2.127; *Praem.* 37; *QG* 2.54a. Philo connected the Logos with the intelligible cosmos in *Opif.* 24 and *Deus* 31.

[21] Philo connected the Logos with the model in *Opif.* 36, 139; *Leg.* 3.96; *Her.* 234; *Somn.* 1.75, 85. Cf. also *Somn.* 1.206.

[22] Compare *Opif.* 16; *Her.* 280; *Mut.* 135, 146; *Somn.* 1.188; *Spec.* 1.171; 3.83, 207. Cf. also *Leg.* 1.22; *Det.* 78; *Ebr.* 133; *Conf.* 172; *Mos.* 2.74; *Spec.* 1.327, where ἰδέα parallels key terms.9

[23] Plato, *Tim.* 29b.

principle served an intermediary role. They called the second principle by different names: "the Idea,"[24] "the heavenly Mind,"[25] "the demiurgic God,"[26] and "the Logos." The Logos appeared as early as Antiochus of Ascalon,[27] took root in Alexandria in the work of Eudorus,[28] and continued to appear throughout the tradition, up to the work of later figures such as Plutarch.[29] Philo belongs to this tradition. Since the Logos was the agent by which God created the world, it was natural for Philo to identify the Logos with the Image of God.

Philo was thus able to harmonize Plato and "Moses" by positing "day one" (Gen 1:1–5) as the intelligible cosmos created on the basis of the Image of God (Gen 1:26–27). However, the move set up a potential difficulty by offering an interpretation of Gen 1:26–27 before Philo reached this point in his exposition. The move would require him to maintain the same interpretation when he came to Gen 1:26–27 in his exposition, if he were to remain consistent. He did not.

The Mind of a Human Being

When Philo came to Gen 1:26–27 proper in his *hexameron* (§§69–71),[30] he offered a different interpretation. He explained the text in these terms: "After all the other creatures, as has been said, he says that the human being *came into existence in God's image and likeness* (κατ᾽ εἰκόνα θεοῦ καὶ καθ᾽ ὁμοίωσιν). This is exceptionally well said, since no earthborn creature more closely resembles God than a human being" (§69). Concerned that "image" might be understood literally, Philo offered an anti-anthropomorphic interpretation that fits the sequence that we find in other anti-anthropomorphic explanations in his treatises: a biblical citation is followed by an objection to a literal reading and then corrected by an

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[24] Timaeus of Locri, *On the Nature of the World and the Soul* 7.
[25] Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 10.3.
[26] Numenius, Frg. 12 ll. 1–3.
[27] See Cicero, *Acad. Post.* 28–29.
[28] The evidence that Eudorus called the intermediary figure the Logos is Philonic; that is, if it can be assumed that the two shared a common view. See J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (rev. ed. with a new afterword; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 128.
[29] Plutarch, *Mor.* 369.
[30] Philo is the first to use the term *hexameron* to refer to the exposition of Genesis 1 (in *Leg.* 2.12). Cf. also *Decal.* 100, where it refers to the six days of Genesis 1.

allegorical reading.[31] In this instance, the objection was: "Let no one think that the resemblance relates to the character of the body, for God does not have a human shape nor is the human body godlike" (§69). For Philo it was impossible to think of God in corporeal terms.[32] With this rejection, we would have expected the Alexandrian to offer a positive interpretation, in which he identified the image with the Logos, in keeping with the explanation that we read in his exposition of "day one." He did not, however; instead he wrote: "*Image* has been spoken with respect to the ruling part of the soul, the mind; for the mind in each individual was formed with respect to that one mind of the cosmos as an archetype" (§69). Philo identified God with mind[33] and connected humanity to God through the mind. The mind is thus the core of a human being. In a statement that drew on both Plato and the biblical tradition, Philo wrote: "In a certain way the mind is the god of the person who bears it and carries the image" (§69).[34] The connection between God and humanity through mind led Philo to the Stoic view that a human being is a microcosm of the cosmos: "For the relation that the great mind has to the entire cosmos is the same relation, so it seems, that the human mind has to a human being. It is invisible, yet sees all things; it has an unseen nature, yet comprehends those of others" (§69).[35]

The close relationship between humanity and God via the mind inspired Philo to compose a remarkable passage—based on Plato's *Phaedrus*—in which the Torah exegete presented the winged ascent of the mind to God. The mind ascends through five stages: through the arts and sciences it investigates the earth; it then takes wings and examines the atmosphere; it ascends even higher to the realm of Aristotle's fifth element, the ether; after it has danced with the stars, it "peers over sense-perceptible reality and longs for the intelligible"; finally, once it has intuited the ideas, the mind is filled with sober intoxication and inspired as if in a state of

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[31] On the anti-anthropomorphic interpretations see Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 36–55, esp. 37.

[32] Cf. Philo, *Deus* 57 (see §§51–68), where he offered his rationale for his opposition to anthropomorphic expressions: "Since God is uncreated and leads other things into existence, he needs none of the things that belong to created beings."

[33] See Philo, *Opif.* 8, where he made the same identification.

[34] See Plato, *Alc.* 133c and Exod 7:1 for the Platonic and biblical bases for the identification of a human with the divine.

[35] Cf. Cicero, *Somn. Scip.* 26; Seneca, *Ep.* 65.24, for the Stoic understanding of the human as a microcosm.

Corybantic frenzy, and so tries to perceive the Great King through the "unmixed and unmingled rays of concentrated light" (§§69–71).

This remarkable passage, culminating in the vision of the divine, is one of the most beautiful in all of Philo's writings. At the same time, it presents a fundamental challenge to the reader of *De opificio mundi*. We expected Philo to identify the image with the Logos and found instead that he identified the image with the human mind. In the earlier passage, he assumed the importance of the preposition "in" (κατά). He has dropped the preposition in this explanation: the result is that we have moved from an interpretation of the human being created *in* the image of *the Image of God* to a human being created *as the image of God*. Tobin argued that the absence of the intermediary in this passage suggests that Philo had pre-served a different tradition.[36] Runia countered that Philo simply wanted to make a different point.[37] How should we adjudicate between these two positions?

Philo himself provided a direct hint that has been overlooked in the debate. Several paragraphs later Philo raised the question of why human beings were created last. He gave four answers, opening the first with these words: "Those who have entered into the deepest aspects of the law and have carefully and scrupulously examined their contents to the best of their ability say that since God gave humanity a share in his rational nature, which is the best of all gifts, he did not begrudge him other gifts" (§77). This statement—one of the two indirect attributions to other Jew-ish exegetes in the treatise, as noted above—appears to settle the debate. Philo indicated that he knew of other exegetes who identified the image of God with the human mind. This does not, however, explain why Philo accepted the tradition. The rationale probably springs from a thematic connection between the first and second interpretations of the image of God. For Philo, the Logos is Reason. Human beings, who are created in the image of Reason=the Image (the first interpretation), themselves have reason (second interpretation).

While Philo did not make the thematic link explicit in this passage, he did so in other texts. Consider his treatment of the covenant that God made with Abraham in Genesis 15. Philo explained Gen 15:10 in the fol-lowing way: "*He did not divide the birds*. He calls the two forms of reason that are winged and by nature fly aloft, *birds*: one is the archetypal Reason

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[36] Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 56–77, esp. 76–77.
[37] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 223–24.

above us, the other the copy that exists in us." He then tied his explanation back to Genesis 1: "Moses calls the one above us *the Image of God*, but the one in us the impress of the Image. For he says, *God made the human being* not as an image of God but *in the image of God*." Philo then spelled out what he meant: "Thus the mind in each of us, that is properly and in reality the human being, is a third cast removed from the Creator. The middle cast is a model for our mind, a representation of God's mind."[38] In this passage, the Alexandrian made clear the threefold scope of the ontological order of the creation of humanity: God, the Logos, and humanity. The common element in all three is mind. In the second interpretation of the "image of God" in *De opificio mundi*, Philo telescoped this threefold hierarchy into two by focusing on the common element that linked the three.

The Idea of a Human Being

The third exegetical tradition about the image of God attested in *De opificio mundi* comes at the transition between the first and second creation accounts.[39] Philo understood Gen 2:4–5 to be a summary of Gen 1:1–2:3. After citing the concluding biblical statement, he asked: "Therefore is he not clearly setting forth the incorporeal and intelligible ideas that are the seals of the sense-perceptible finished products?" (§129)[40] This statement is stunning: it appears to locate the divide between the intelligible cosmos and the sense-perceptible cosmos in the biblical shift between the first and second creation accounts, thereby voiding the entire prior discussion concerning the significance of "day one" versus the "second" through the "sixth" days. Are the two interpretations coherent, or do they preserve alternate and competing Platonizing traditions?

Valentin Nikiprowetzky, who has been followed in the main by his student David Runia, argued that the two were consistent. Nikiprowetzky thought that Philo read Genesis 2 as a recapitulation of Genesis 1 from a new and different perspective.[41] Runia, in turn, suggested that Philo

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[38] Philo, *Her.* 230–231.

[39] For details see my "'Wisdom among the Perfect': Creation Traditions in Alexandrian Judaism and Corinthian Christianity," *NovT* 37 (1995): 355–84.

[40] See Philo, *Opif.* 129–130 for the full statement.

[41] V. Nikiprowetzky, "Problèmes du 'récit de la création' chez Philon d'Alexandrie," *REJ* 124 (1965): 271–306; reprinted in idem, *Études philoniennes* (Patrimoines Judaisme; Paris: Cerf, 1996), 45–78, esp. 61.

understood Genesis 1 largely in terms of an arithmological model, prompted by the seven days in the text; Genesis 2 was a repetition of the creation story, but was no longer bound by the arithmological scheme of Genesis 1.[42] Tobin, on the other hand, argued that Philo had shifted the fault line between the intelligible and the sense-perceptible worlds by identifying the intelligible world with the first creation account instead of "day one" as he had previously. Philo made the shift because he knew two different exegetical interpretations of the creation stories from a Platonic perspective: one drew the line of demarcation between "day one" and the "second" through the "sixth" days; the other drew it between the two creation accounts. He used the first when interpreting Gen 1:1–5 and the second when he came to Gen 2:4–5.[43]

Were there multiple traditions or just variations of a single perspective? It is worth noting that Philo repeated the language that he used to describe the intelligible cosmos on "day one" when he summarized the first creation account: the first creation consisted of the "incorporeal and intelligible ideas," "seals," and at the conclusion of the summary Philo said that they served as "an incorporeal model" (§§129–130).[44] The repetition of the "day one" categories for the intelligible cosmos to describe the whole of the first creation account suggests that Philo has drawn the ontological divide anew. Further, there is some evidence that other writers were aware of the tradition that "day one" referred to the intelligible cosmos, most notably the author of the Fourth Gospel and the author of *2 Enoch*.[45] These later attestations of the same tradition suggest that the traditions—or at least the tradition about Gen 1:1–5—circulated beyond Alexandria and need not be directly connected to the works of Philo. For these reasons I think that Philo has preserved two different Platonizing exegetical traditions about creation that posited the fault line between the intelligible and sense-perceptible worlds in different places.

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[42] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 310–11.

[43] Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 123–24.

[44] Philo associated all of these with "day one" in §§15–35. He referred to the incorporeal ideas in *Opif.* 18. He regularly used "incorporeal" in his description of the created cosmos of "day one." Cf. 16, 29 (*tris*), 34 (*bis*), and 36. He used "intelligible" to refer to the cosmos of "day one": 15, 16 (*tris*), 18, 19, 24 (*bis*), 25, 29, 30, 31 (*bis*), 33, 34, 35, 36. He argued that the ideas created on "day one" functioned as "seals" in 25 and 34. Finally, he regularly used "incorporeal model" to describe the cosmos of "day one": 16, 29, 36. Cf. also 18, 19.

[45] John 1:1–5 and *2 Enoch* 24:2–26:3. For details see G. E. Sterling, "'Day One': Platonizing Exegetical Traditions of Genesis 1:1–5 in John and Jewish Authors," *SPhA* 17 (2005): 118–40. See also Josephus, *Ant.* 1.29

The shift in the Platonic fault line, from between "day one" and the "second" through "sixth" days to between the first creation account and the second creation account, created some problems for Philo's interpretation of Genesis 2. At times, he was forced to make direct comparisons between the two creation accounts. So when he recounted the creation of humanity in Gen 2:7, he could not avoid the earlier creation account in Gen 1:26–27. Philo wrote: "After these things he says that *God fashioned a human being by taking soil from the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life*" (§134). He then explained: "Through the statement he sets out most clearly that there is an enormous difference between the human being just *fashioned* and the human being who earlier came into existence *in the image of God*" (§134). He first described the human being of Gen 2:7: "For the human being who *was fashioned* is sense-perceptible, already having a share in quality, consisting of body and soul, male or female, mortal by nature" (§134). He then described the human being of Gen 1:27 by way of contrast: "But the human being who came into being *in the image of God* is a type of idea or kind or seal, intelligible, incorporeal, neither male nor female, immortal by nature" (§134). Philo drew the basic language of this passage directly from the biblical text. He said that the being in Gen 1:26–27 was *in the image of God* while the being in Gen 2:7 was *fashioned*. He drew out the significance of each of the two phrases:[46]

Genesis 1:26–27	Genesis 2:7
Intelligible	Sense-perceptible
Idea, kind, seal	Shares in quality
Incorporeal	Consists of body and soul
Neither male nor female	Male or female
Immortal	Mortal

How should we understand the contrast between the human being of Gen 1:26–27 and the human being in Gen 2:7? The interpretations depend, in part, on the larger understanding of where the line between the intelligible cosmos (the cosmos of ideas) and the sense-perceptible cosmos was drawn. Scholars who argue that the second creation account was understood by Philo as a repetition of the first creation account have explained

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[46] Compare Philo, *Leg.* 1.31–32, where he makes the same contrast.

the relationship in several ways. Nikiprowetzky and Winston suggested that the human being created *in the image of God* was the Platonic idea of a human being.[47] On their reading, the ideas were created on "day one" except for the idea of a human being, which was created on the sixth day. The human being of Gen 2:7 was the sense-perceptible human being, who was fashioned on the basis of the idea of the human being that was created on the sixth day. There is thus a progression from "day one," in which the ideas were created (§§15–35); to the sixth day, in which the idea of a human being was created (§§69–71); to the second creation account, in which the sense-perceptible human being was created (§§134–135).

While this solves the tension between Gen 2:7 and the statements about "day one," it creates problems for the statements that suggest that the intelligible world was finished on "day one."[48] Richard Baer offered an alternative view. Baer thought that the human being created in the image of God was the rational mind rather than the idea of a human being. On his reading of the texts, the rational mind of Gen 1:27 (§§69–71) was placed in the sense-perceptible human being of Gen 2:7 (§§134–135).[49] Runia refined this view by suggesting that the mind of Gen 1:26–27 was the *idea* of the mind (§§69–71) and should not be confused with the mind in the sense-perceptible human being of Gen 2:7.[50] This understanding relieves the tension between Philo's expositions of Gen 1:26–27 and 2:7, but fails to account for the fact that Philo actually uses the term "human being" rather than "mind" and argues that there is "an enormous difference" between the two.

If, on the other hand, we understand that Philo distinguished between the first creation story as referring to the intelligible cosmos and the second creation story as referring to the sense-perceptible cosmos, we reach a different conclusion. Within this framework, the two accounts of the creation of human beings refer to two different beings, one heavenly or intelligible (Gen 1:26–27) and one earthly or sense-perceptible (Gen 2:7).[51]

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[47] Nikiprowetzky, "Problèmes du 'récit de la création' chez Philon d'Alexandrie," 65; and D. T. Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1985), 25.

[48] Philo, *Opif.* 36, 129.

[49] R. A. Baer, *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (ALGHJ 3; Leiden: Brill, 1970), 30.

[50] Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the* Timaeus *of Plato*, 336–38; and ibid., *Philo of Alexandria, On the Creation of the Cosmos*, 322–23, where he provides a helpful summary of the views.

[51] Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 102–34. Cf. Philo, *Leg.* 1.31–32.

Since I have argued that Philo drew an ontological divide between the two creation accounts, this appears to be the best explanation. The view is similar to that of Nikiprowetzky and Winston, except that it regards all of Genesis 1 as pertaining to the creation of the intelligible cosmos, not just "day one" and the creation of the idea of a human on the sixth day.

This leads us once again to the question of why Philo would juxtapose such divergent exegetical traditions. In §§69–71, he understood the image of God to be the human mind (interpretation two), while in §§134–135, he stated that this image was the idea of a human being (interpretation three). Should we simply recognize the tension in Philo's explanations or is there a principle that would explain how Philo could let such opposing statements stand?

I suggest that the two different lines of demarcation between the intelligible and sense-perceptible worlds preceded Philo. We have already noted that Philo himself pointed to earlier interpreters. Since the interpretations under discussion here are Platonic in nature, they could not have arisen prior to the development of Middle Platonism in Alexandria, typically thought to have occurred the time of Eudorus (*fl.* ca. 20 BCE). This means that these interpretations probably developed during the period of Philo's youth. Philo stood with the majority of Middle Platonists, who understood creation in metaphysical/ontological terms; i.e., creation is a means of demonstrating the dependence of the sense-perceptible on the intelligible. One of the clearest indications of this is his consistent rejection of a literal understanding of the temporal language in Genesis 1, in favor of an ontological understanding that maintained that the temporal sequence of the narrative represents metaphysical order.[52] In this way, Philo's ontological understanding of creation framed his entire exposition of the creation story in Genesis 1–2. Given this basic framework, Philo would not have had difficulty in presenting varying exegetical traditions, provided that they subsumed the sense-perceptible cosmos to the intelligible. The acceptance of both traditions forced him to adjust the account of the creation of humankind in Gen 2:7. The result was a third interpretation of the phrase "image of God."

While Philo did not attempt to weave all three interpretations of the "image of God" into a single presentation, he did attempt to bring together

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[52] E.g., Philo, *Opif.* 13–14, 26–28, 67. For details see G. E. Sterling, "*Creatio Temporalis, Aeterna, vel Continua?* An Analysis of the Thought of Philo of Alexandria," *SPhA* 4 (1992): 15–41.

his first and second interpretations when he explained Gen 2:7. The exegete wrote: "For it was fitting for God to use no model from the things that belong to becoming for the soul's construction, but only his own Logos—as I said" (§139). This is a reference to his first interpretation (§§24–25). He then turned to the second: "For this reason he says that the human being became a likeness and copy of the Logos when [the spirit] was *breathed into his face*" (§139). This statement drew on a Stoicizing interpretation of the inbreathing of the divine spirit into humanity and suggested that the inbreathing was the inbreathing of the image, understood as the mind, which he called the "king" (§139).[53] It would not have been hard to include his third interpretation in this as well, since the mind is the core of a human being in Philonic thought, as noted above.

Conclusion

If these observations are correct, Philo worked within a lively exegetical tradition. We have noted several Platonizing traditions that he accepted. He attests at least two major Platonic frameworks for creation: one that drew the divide between the intelligible cosmos and the sense-perceptible cosmos between "day one" and the other days of creation in Genesis 1, and a second that drew this divide between the two creation accounts, or between Genesis 1 and 2. Similarly, he knew of more than one interpretation of the phrase "the image of God." He was aware of the identification of the image with the Logos (interpretation one in §§24–25), with the human mind (interpretation two in §§69–71), and with the idea of humankind (interpretation three in §§134–135). I am not sure that it is possible to reconstruct a stratigraphy for these interpretations as Tobin has done. The reason for this is that Philo has not simply listed them; he has subsumed them within the framework of his thought. He made a connection between the Logos and rational thought, a connection that led to a harmonization of the first and second interpretations of the "image of God." He also moved in the direction of a harmonization between the second and third interpretations, although he never made harmonization explicit. He was willing to let tensions stand in his text. He was apparently willing to do so as long as the differences remained within the bounds of the larger framework of his thought, in this case the metaphysical/

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[53] See also §146. On the Stoicizing interpretation, see Tobin, *Creation of Man*, 77–87.

ontological dependence of the sense-perceptible cosmos on the intelligible cosmos. Philo was thus not simply a collector of traditions, but an informed exegete who had a sense of the hierarchy of ideas. While most modern readers might prefer for him to be more consistent, the rough edges may be the result of a school or house of prayer setting for which most of his commentaries were intended. If he, like Philodemus, Epictetus, and Plotinus, required students to read works, including his own, and attend lectures based on the readings, it may be that the rough edges were left in the commentaries to signal the presence of alternative interpretations that were discussed in the lectures.[54] Even in the case of a text such as *De opificio mundi*, which, as part of the Exposition of the Law, may have been intended for a larger audience, the presence of different traditions may have been heard as evidence for the richness of the biblical text.

This means that we should probably situate Philo's commentaries among multiple individual efforts to interpret Scripture by means of philosophy, throughout the history of the Alexandrian Jewish community.[55] Some of these reached back at least to the second century BCE—as the works of Aristobulus and Pseudo-Aristeas attest. There was considerable activity when Middle Platonism became an option during the last part of the first century BCE. It is possible that Philo may have studied directly with a Middle Platonist like Eudorus; however, it is also possible that he studied with a Jewish teacher who had already begun to read the biblical text through the lens of Platonism. We should thus read Philo, not only for his own thought, but also for the exegetical traditions that he incorporates and for the potential that these traditions have for helping us to understand other Jewish and Christian texts from the same time period.

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[54] On the school setting of Philo's commentaries see G. E. Sterling, "'The School of Sacred Laws': The Social Setting of Philo's Treatises," *VC* 53 (1999): 148–64.

[55] For an overview see G. E. Sterling, "Philosophy as the Handmaid of Wisdom: Philosophy in the Exegetical Traditions of Alexandrian Jews," in *Religiöse Philosophie und philosophische Religion der frühen Kaiserzeit: Literaturgeschichtliche Perspektiven* (ed. R. Hirsch-Luipold, H. Görgemanns, and M. von Albrecht; STAC 51; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 67–98.

THE IMPLIED AUDIENCE OF THE LETTER OF JAMES[1]

Maren R. Niehoff

The purpose and context of the Letter of James have always been subject to much debate, but have recently provoked a particularly significant controversy.[2] According to John Kloppenborg, the Letter is to be understood as a Diaspora epistle, addressed by someone from within "the Jesus movement" to an existing Jewish community in the Diaspora, which also included some members of the Jesus movement.[3] According to Oda Wischmeyer, on the other hand, the context of the Letter is definitely Christian; it belongs to a milieu which cannot be precisely located, but where christological issues were not at stake.[4] On the latter view, the implied audience is a literary construct rather than a historical reality.[5]

This discrepancy in views has, of course, to do with the nature of the text, which is extremely short and lacks precise information about its author, thus allowing for a wide range of interpretations. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the contradictory interpretations of the Letter are also indicative of important developments in recent

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[1] I wish to thank my friend and colleague Serge Ruzer for suggesting to me that I look at the Letter of James from a Philonic point of view. At the Orion conference we presented our views together at a workshop, but decided to write individual papers, as our divergent views can better be expressed in separate articles. I trust that our discussion, held in such a pleasant atmosphere, will contribute to the clarification of fundamental methodological issues in the study of early Judaism and Christianity. I also thank Oda Wischmeyer and Serge for their thoughtful comments on a draft of the paper.

[2] A good summary of the history of research can be found in W. Popkes, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (THKNT 14; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 1–7, 27–44; F. Hahn and P. Müller, "Der Jakobusbrief," *TRu* 3 (1998): 1–73.

[3] J. Kloppenborg, "Diaspora Discourse: The Construction of *Ethos* in James," *NTS* 53 (2007): 242–70; a similar view has recently been expressed by D. C. Allison, "Blessing God and Cursing People: James 3:9–10," *JBL* 130/2 (2011): 397–405, who identifies the addressees of the Letter as Diaspora Jews, and the author as Christian.

[4] O. Wischmeyer, "Reconstructing the Social and Religious Milieu of James: Methods, Sources, Possible Results," in *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in their Jewish and Christian Settings* (ed. H. W. M. van de Sandt and J. Zangenberg; SBLSymS 45: Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 33–41.

[5] O. Wischmeyer, "Beobachtungen zu Kommunikation und Gliederung des Jakobusbriefes," in *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum: Festschrift für Christoph Burchard zum 75. Geburtstag* (ed. D. Sänger and M. Konradt; SUNT 57; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht; Fribourg: Academic Press, 2006), 319–27.

research into early Christianity. At stake are two main questions: 1) What can the Letter tell us about the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity; and 2) What is the role of the author of a text in reflecting or shaping reality?

Regarding the "parting of the ways," it is significant that the model of a mother-daughter relationship between Judaism and Christianity has generally been replaced in current discussions by the notion of two sister religions emerging on the shared foundation of biblical Judaism and Hellenistic culture.[6] Research now focuses on the questions of whether the two religious movements remained intricately connected and for how long they shared a sense of community. Daniel Boyarin has gone furthest in this regard, arguing that the essential differentiation between the two movements only emerges in the fourth century CE; his argument thus implies that forms of early Christianity continued for a long time to exist indistinguishable from Judaism.[7]

In this context the Letter of James is of particular interest, because it contains only two explicit references to Christ and advocates the importance of works. These features have naturally led to arguments about its proximity to Judaism.[8] Kloppenborg's interpretation suggests that the Letter testifies to early Christianity as a movement within Judaism, maintaining irenic relations with other Jews. He argues that a member of the "Jesus movement" here addresses a group of Diaspora Jews, with the intention of promoting their "Judean identity" in the light of "constant threats of assimilation."[9] On this reading, a text included in the New Testament lacks a distinctly Christian agenda and is written with the purpose of participating in contemporary Jewish discourse. Similarly, Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr, although assuming Christian addressees, argued that the author

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[6] See esp. A. H. Becker and A. Yoshiko Reed (eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted. Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2003); J. M. Lieu, "'The Parting of the Ways': Theological Construct or Historical Reality?" *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101–19.

[7] D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia:University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). For a different recent view, see M. R. Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity from Second Century Alexandria: Revisiting Celsus' Jew," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 21.2 (2013): forthcoming.

[8] At an early stage in modern scholarship, L. Massebeau, "L'Epitre de Jacques," *RHR* 32 (1895): 249–83, designated the two Christological references (Jas 1:1, 27) as later additions and argued for an originally Jewish letter, expressing the kind of Jewish monotheism found in Philo's writings and addressing fellow observant Jews.

[9] Kloppenborg, "Diaspora Discourse," 270, develops the views of D. C. Allison, "The Fiction of James and its *Sitz im Leben*," *RB* 118 (2001): 529–70. It should be noted that these authors do not analyze the exegetical passages of the Letter.

of the Letter of James intended to strengthen the identity of "the people of God," in analogy to other Jewish Diaspora letters. The "people of God," in his opinion, consisted rather indistinguishably of both Jewish and Gentile Christians.[10] On this reading, too, boundaries are rather blurred. Wischmeyer, by contrast, points to a specific Christian identity expressed in the Letter of James. To be sure, the Letter, in her opinion, is based on some biblical motifs and monotheistic convictions, yet it cannot be interpreted by analogy to Jewish Diaspora letters.[11]

Significant scholarly developments have also occurred in considering the role of the author in ancient literature. Although traditionally, ancient texts tended to be seen as more or less direct reflections of historical and social realities, Benedict Anderson has stressed the author's active role in constructing and creating communities.[12] Anderson suggests that a group's self-perception as a community originates in the collective imagination and is subsequently translated in some manner into a historical entity. The present debate about the Letter of James ties into this discussion as well. Wischmeyer acknowledges that no real community can be reconstructed from the Letter. Concerned with ethical teachings, the author in her opinion rather looks towards constructing a community of students, who will implement his message.[13] Kloppenburg, by contrast, assumes the background of the Letter to be the situation of historical Jewish Diaspora communities, who were facing the problem of being disconnected from the homeland and thus sought instruction from there.[14]

The present paper seeks to throw new light on these issues by focusing on the implied audience of the scriptural interpretations in the Letter. This approach is based on the recognition that a considerable part of the short Letter revolves around exegesis. Explaining biblical passages

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[10] K.-W. Niebuhr, "Der Jakobusbrief im Licht frühjüdischer Diasporabriefe," *NTS* 44 (1998): 420–43; see also D. J. Verseput, "Genre and Story: The Community Setting of the Epistle of James," *CBQ* 62 (2000): 96–110, who interprets the Letter in the context of Jewish Diaspora epistles, arguing that it addressed an assembled Christian congregation plagued by issues typical of voluntary associations in antiquity.

[11] Wischmeyer, "Social and Religious Milieu," 8–10.

[12] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983; 2d ed., 1991; 2006); for the use of Anderson's theories in the field of ancient culture, see, e.g., M. R. Niehoff, "Did the *Timaeus* create a Textual Community?" *GRBS* 47 (2007): 161–91.

[13] Wischmeyer, "Kommunikation," *passim*.

[14] Kloppenborg, "Diaspora Discourse," 267–70.

is clearly an important concern.[15] Moreover, interpreting Scripture was a prominent Jewish activity, central to the religious and cultural identity of ancient Jews. Signs either of community or of emerging boundaries are thus likely to be conspicuous precisely in the area of exegesis. It is therefore appropriate to ask whom the author of the Letter had in mind when explaining Scripture, and what his frame of reference was. Did he engage with contemporary discussions of biblical figures, using arguments and motifs that had been suggested by others? If so, to whose interpretations did he respond, and what was the starting point of his discussion? In particular, did the author address Jewish exegetical traditions, circulating either in the Hellenistic Diaspora or the Land of Israel, or did he rather refer to Christian traditions, i.e., traditions internally circulating among Christian communities, but not attributable to Jewish sources? Did the author of the Letter assume, in other words, that his readers were participating in an internal Christian debate?

At this point I wish to clarify that I generally expect the author of a text to be rather active in striving to shape reality. The relationship between a text and the historical circumstances in which it was written is rather complex and cannot be defined in terms of simple reflection. Rather, the author, who certainly is embedded in the culture and politics of his time, also wishes to make a particular impact on that reality.[16] Thinking about these issues in the context of the Letter of James, I found helpful Brian Stock's notion of a "textual community."[17] Studying the implications of literacy in Medieval Europe, Stock focused on the connection between texts and social formations. The term "textual community" refers to a group that dissents from the mainstream and justifies its particular position by

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[15] Cf. W. Popkes, "James and Scripture: An Exercise in Intertextuality," *NTS* 45 (1999): 213–29, who argues that the author of the Letter did not have direct access to Scripture, but relied instead on secondary sources, especially Pauline traditions. His arguments for this position, however, do not seem to be conclusive. The fact that the author does not identify his sources by name and chapter does not indicate lack of access, as ancient writers generally did not give such precise references. The Letter of James certainly does not belong to the genre of commentary, proceeding verse by verse, but it does incorporate exegesis as an important means of persuading its audience. Moreover, the Letter certainly relates to Pauline arguments and corresponds on some issues to the Letter to the Hebrews, but significantly differs from both by independently adding scriptural details.

[16] See also M. R. Niehoff, "New Garments for Biblical Joseph," in *Biblical Interpretation: History, Context, and Reality* (ed. C. Helmer; SBLSymS 26; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 33–56.

[17] B. Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), esp. 88–151.

recourse to an authoritative text. This text is shared by society at large, but interpreted differently by the dissenters. The dissenting group, led by a figure with direct access to the text, forms their sense of solidarity around their particular reading.

In the context of interpreting the Letter of James, Stock's term requires some adjustment; but it is still useful, because it both highlights the author's active role in constructing a community around a foundational text and stresses his dialogical situation, as he faces contrary interpretations in other contemporary circles. These notions will guide our inquiry even though no quasi-monastic community, such as Stock had in mind, can be identified or assumed in connection with James. Moreover, the model is useful even though it is applied here to a period when no normative or mainstream interpretation is yet visible. Stock invites us to look for other significant interpretations in light of which the author of the Letter of James may have formulated his own exegesis, thus hoping to shape the identity of the community he envisioned.

Abraham and Rahab

Two biblical heroes are prominent in the Letter of James: Abraham and Rahab, who appear side by side as models of works combined with faith. From the point of view of Jewish exegesis, the very combination of these two figures is surprising. While Abraham is recognized as the father of the nation and given much attention, Rahab is a minor figure, briefly mentioned in the book of Joshua, who remains virtually invisible in antiquity. Even Josephus, who mentions her for the first time in a Second Temple period text, when paraphrasing all the biblical stories, does not elevate her above her biblical image (*Ant.* 5.5–15).

Several scholars have filled in the gap by suggesting that Talmudic material is relevant to the interpretation of Rahab in the Letter of James. This step has important methodological implications and deserves serious attention. The Strack–Billerbeck compilation of Jewish sources relevant to the New Testament had an enormous impact on scholarship, encouraging many to regard rabbinic material as a background to early Christian writings.[18] Yet this approach raises a serious problem of dating. Rabbinic sources are dated much later than the New Testament, often centuries

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[18] H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1922–1961).

later—as is the case of the passages from the Babylonian Talmud adduced to clarify the image of Rahab in the Letter of James.[19] Those who nevertheless use rabbinic sources to interpret the New Testament argue that they contain materials that are presented as dating from earlier periods. Such attributions, however, are today recognized as problematic, because they do not provide reliable testimony to the original date and location of a particular saying.[20] We usually cannot know the extent to which earlier traditions were edited before they were incorporated into the final redaction of the rabbinic source. Acknowledging the composite character of rabbinic sources, we can thus hardly assume that all of their contents were available in oral fashion around the turn of the eras. We should thus be cautious and examine each case on its own terms.

What is the weight of comparable sources that *can* be dated—such as Josephus, who was certainly familiar with exegetical traditions from Jerusalem? If he does not indicate any awareness of developments attested much later in the Talmud, can we conclude that they emerged in a later context? Obviously, such a solution has all the disadvantages of an *ex silentio* argument, yet it may provide some complementary indication. Furthermore, in the case of Rahab there is no precise overlap between her image in the rabbinic sources and her image in the New Testament. While in Matt 1:5, she is inserted into the genealogy of Jesus, and in Heb 11:31, she is listed among biblical heroes distinguished by their faith, *Sifre Num.* 78 as well as *b. Meg.* 14b and *Ruth Rab.* 2:1 present her as the mother of a series of prophets, who were at the same time priests.[21] It is difficult to see how New Testament writers could have been familiar with the rabbinic tradition, adapting it to their own ends. Instead, the notion of faith is integral to the Letter to the Hebrews and thus seems to provide a natural and probably original framework for the interpretation of Rahab.

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[19] See, e.g., J. H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James* (ICC 41; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916), 224; A. Hanson, "Seminar Report on Working Group on 'The Use of the Old Testament in the Epistle of James' held during the Seminar on 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New' at Tübingen in 1977 and Châtenay-Malabry in 1978," *NTS* 25 (1978–1979): 526–27, who lists the rabbinic material, but raises the question: "How much of this tradition was known to the author of James, and against whom is he arguing?"

[20] See especially the summary account by J. Neusner, *Building Blocks of Rabbinic Tradition* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2008).

[21] For a highly sophisticated, yet ultimately speculative reconstruction of the presumably Jewish exegesis that enabled the author of Matt 1:5 to include Rahab in the genealogical list, see R. Bauckham, "Tamar's Ancestry and Rahab's Marriage: Two Problems in the Matthean Genealogy," *NovT* 37 (1995): 320–29.

Moreover, emphasis on Rahab as a prostitute resonates with the appeal in the Synoptic Gospels to the poor and outcast. The rabbinic reference to prophets who were also priests could moreover be understood as a polemic against the Christian claim for Rahab as the mother of a (Davidic) genealogical line leading up to Jesus.

All the above questions touch upon one vital issue, namely the originality of early Christian sources. How much originality do we assume or allow on the part of New Testament writers? In the case of the Letter of James this question is of particular relevance, as the Letter contains several expressions that appear here for the first time in the extant sources. Does this mean that the author coined them, as well as the ideas thus expressed? If it is admitted on principle that New Testament sources might have said something new that diverges from ideas previously voiced in Jewish or pagan circles, we must also acknowledge the possibility that the Strack–Billerbeck collection sometimes needs to be read the other way round, namely as a source book for traditions in rabbinic works that can be illuminated by early Christian writings.[22]

Admitting the possibility of original ideas in the New Testament also implies the possibility that these ideas were antagonistic to Judaism. If early Christian writers expressed views distinct from Jewish traditions, they may also have voiced their ambivalence and defined their new identity by negating at least part of the Jewish heritage. In the present scholarly discussion this prospect appears to be a particularly sensitive point, which obviously needs to be treated with appropriate care.

When examining the interpretation of Abraham and Rahab in the Letter of James, it is immediately obvious that the author of the Letter explicitly positions himself vis-à-vis another view of these figures. Regarding both, he emphatically insists that faith alone is not sufficient for salvation. In the context of Abraham he opens and concludes his exposition with the following question and answer: "Do you want to learn . . . that faith without works is idle?" and "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone."[23] Regarding Rahab, he concludes: "For as much as the body is dead without the spirit, thus faith is dead without works."[24] In the

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[22] Such an approach was taken by P. Schäfer, *Jesus im Talmud* (Tübingen: Mohr, 2007; the English original was not available to me).

[23] Jas 2:20: θέλεις δὲ γνῶναι ὅτι ἡ πίστις χωρὶς τῶν ἔργων ἀργή ἐστιν; Jas 2:24: ὁρᾶτε ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως μόνον.

[24] Jas 2:26: ὥσπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα χωρὶς πνεύματος νεκρόν ἐστιν οὕτως καὶ ἡ πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νεκρά ἐστιν.

introduction to the whole passage the author even constructs a fictional Other: "What does it profit, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but no works?" (Jas 2:14). The voice of this constructed Other sketches the horizon of the readers whom the author of the Letter of James anticipates. He expects them to be aware of or even convinced by a claim that faith alone is sufficient. Such an interpretation commanded sufficient authority in the eyes of the author to warrant attention and qualification. Indeed, the author of the Letter indicates that much more than understanding Scripture was at stake, namely religious ethics and salvation.

The author of the Letter presents his own interpretation of Abraham in a rather confrontational manner, asking whether the patriarch was not "justified by works when offering Isaac, his son, on the altar."[25] Again, the context appears to be polemical—the author trying to open the eyes of his audience, who, he suspects, has been influenced by the Other interpretation.[26] It is furthermore significant that the story of the Akedah is not explained in detail, but rather assumed to be known. This confirms our impression that the Letter reflects an ongoing debate on a scriptural passage that was known to the participants. Conforming to Stock's model of a textual community, it is the author's particular interpretation rather than the foundational text, which is stressed once more: "you see that faith worked together with his works and faith is brought to completion by works."[27] Genesis 15:6, where Abraham's faith is mentioned, is thus said to have been fulfilled by Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son.

Friedrich Avemarie has conclusively shown that the author of the Letter of James wrote his interpretation of Abraham with a view to Paul's

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[25] Jas 2:21. I interpret the Akedah to be the "works" that the author has just referred to, admitting that there is a discrepancy in number here, caused probably by carelessness on the part of the writer; cf. R. B. Ward, "The Works of Abraham: James 2:14–26," *HTR* 61 (1968): 283–90, who takes the plural of "works" very seriously, arguing that they refer to Abraham's works of hospitality, which are often praised in rabbinic literature. This solution, however, raises not only chronological problems concerning the use of rabbinic literature as a background to the New Testament, but also renders the syntax of Jas 2:21 very odd, requiring paraphrastic emendation (which Ward indeed provides).

[26] Cf. C. Burchard, *Der Jakobusbrief* (HNT 15.1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 109–32, who identifies that "someone" not as an opponent, but as a recent convert, one who did not yet fully understand James's message and was thus suspected of misunderstanding it as the advocacy of salvation by faith alone. Given the Letter's overall message, it is difficult to see how its author would anticipate such a fundamental misunderstanding of his own words.

[27] Jas 2:22: βλέπεις ὅτι ἡ πίστις συνήργει τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτου καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἔργων ἡ πίστις ἐτελεώθη.

claim that faith alone justifies the Christian.[28] James indeed wished to criticize Paul's views, as expressed in Gal 2:16, Rom 3:28 and 4:1–3, rather than their misinterpretation by early Christian followers, as has often been maintained.[29] The assumption of a tension or even a contradiction between faith and works was thoroughly Pauline, while it cannot be found in contemporary Jewish sources.[30] I would like to take Avemarie's argument one step further and suggest that not only was the starting point of James's discussion thoroughly Christian, but that his answer and message were as well. Jewish exegesis was no longer on the horizon. The author of the Letter of James engaged in an internal Christian discussion without recourse to Jewish perspectives.[31]

If we look at the Greek-speaking Jewish community in Egypt, it is immediately clear that Abraham was far less central than Moses, who figures much more prominently in the writings. Moreover, those Jewish exegetes who did interpret the figure of Abraham tended to be occupied with concerns that differ from those of the Letter. Artapanus, for example, investigated Abraham's contribution to Egyptian culture in the field of astrology (Eusebius, *PE* 9.18.1). During Philo's time, Abraham became rather controversial; some anonymous exegetes accused him of a lack of consideration for his wife, because he twice handed her over to foreign rulers.[32] The binding of Isaac was debated in the context of pagan customs relating to child sacrifice. Some Jews in Alexandria thought that the story of the

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[28] F. Avemarie, "Die Werke des Gesetzes im Spiegel des Jakobusbriefs," *ZTK* 98 (2001): 282–309. Avemarie illustrates the close linguistic similarities between James and Paul, stressing that these cannot be accidental. In addition, he shows how the Letter of James, read thus, in fact undermines the New Perspective on Paul, which suggests that Paul only referred to specific commandments, such as circumcision, rather than the whole of Jewish Law; contra L. T. Johnson, *The Letter of James: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 37A; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 111–14, who calls for a "loosening of the Pauline connection" and warns against the influence of the Tübingen school.

[29] See references in Avemarie, *Werke des Gesetzes, passim*; Popkes, *Brief des Jakobus*, 177; F. Hahn, "Genesis 15:6 im Neuen Testament," in *Probleme Biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H.-W. Wolf; Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 90–107.

[30] See esp. Gal 3:1–14; Rom 8:1–17; see also D. L. Bartlett, "The Epistle of James as a Jewish–Christian Document," in *SBL 1979 Seminar Papers* (ed. P. J. Achtemeier; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 2: 173–76, who admits the Pauline rather than Jewish context of the faith–work antithesis even though he generally argues for a Jewish background of James's exegetical motifs; cf. D. Flusser, "A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message," *HTR* 61 (1968): 107–27, who assumes the early date of rabbinic sayings without, however, addressing the methodological problems involved.

[31] Contra M. Dibelius, *Der Brief des Jakobus* (ed. and suppl. by H. Greeven; 11th ed.; KEK 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1964), 206–14, whose references and arguments strongly influenced subsequent scholarship.

[32] Philo, *QG* 4.60–61, *Abr.* 89.

Akedah conformed to such pagan practices, which were later abolished by
Moses in his legislation against child sacrifice to Moloch.[33]

It is undoubtedly Philo who presents an image of Abraham closest to
that of James. He, too, pays special attention to him and even stresses
his faith. Yet upon careful examination Philo's notion of Abraham's faith
turns out to be rather different from that of James. Genesis 15:6 is not
interpreted in the context of a possible tension with works, but is instead
appreciated in connection with Abraham's legendary discovery of the
monotheistic God. According to Philo, Abraham showed exemplary faith,
because he trusted in something transcendental and unfailing rather
than material goods and fame.[34] Philo's point of reference is the contrast
between Jewish spirituality and pagan materialism.

The difference between James and Philo is confirmed by an examina-
tion of the latter's views on the Akedah. While Philo does associate this
biblical story with Gen 15:6 at one point, he does so in an allegorical con-
text. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son is interpreted as a lesson
in modesty or in "begetting not for yourself" (*Deus* 4). Philo stresses that
Abraham had put his trust in God, the creator of the world, and thus had
sufficient confidence to render back to God "the only trueborn offspring of
the soul, that clearest image of self-learnt wisdom" (ibid). Such an interpre-
tation of the Akedah hardly served as the starting point of James' discus-
sion, nor did it provide material for an answer to Paul's claims about faith.
Most significantly, Philo's repeated emphasis on Abraham's unconditional
obedience to God's commandments is entirely missing in the Letter.[35] It is
thus not surprising that, unlike James, Philo summarizes his biography of
Abraham by stressing the patriarch's faith in the classical Greek sense of
the word, namely, as trusting God. Philo suggests that Abraham's faithful-
ness is rewarded by God's implementation of his promises (*Abr.* 273).

The image of Abraham in the Letter of James does not resonate with
Jewish exegesis from the Land of Israel, either. The central terms here are

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[33] *Abr.* 178–183; for details, see M. R. Niehoff, *Biblical Exegesis and Homeric Scholar-
ship in Alexandria* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2012), 95–111; cf. L. Feldman,
"Philo's Version of the Aqedah," *SPhA* 14 (2002): 67–75, who argues that these critics of the
Akedah were errant Jews as well as non-Jews.

[34] *Abr.* 262–272; *Migr.* 44; *Leg. All.* 3.228; *Her.* 90–95; *Mut.* 177–186; *Virt.* 212–218; *Praem.*
27–30.

[35] See esp. *Abr.* 192, where Philo says that Abraham's "obeying God" (πείθεσθαι θεῷ)
should be respected by every "right-minded person"; regarding Philo's general commit-
ment to halakhah, see M. R. Niehoff, *Philo on Jewish Identity and Culture* (TSAJ 86; Tübin-
gen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 75–110.

faithfulness, affliction, and testing. The *Book of Jubilees*, our earliest witness, combines these motifs, suggesting that Mastema provoked God to test Abraham's faithfulness by the most painful of tests: the demand to sacrifice his beloved son (*Jub.* 17:15–18:16). Similarly, the author of 1 Maccabees uses Abraham as an example of steadfastness, who can encourage his audience to keep the law zealously and give up their lives for the "covenant of your fathers" (1 Macc 2:50–52). In this context the author asks whether Abraham "was not found faithful (εὑρέθη πιστός) in his test and was it not counted to him as righteousness (δικαιοσύνην)? The trial is not specified, but is likely to be the Akedah, which would then once more be connected to notions of testing and faithfulness in times of affliction. Furthermore, Ben Sira stresses Abraham's circumcision as a sign of the covenant as well as of his being "found faithful (εὑρέθη πιστός) in his trial," a faithfulness that is rewarded by divine blessing (Sir 44:20–21). Even Josephus, who offers a highly innovative interpretation of the Akedah, stressing for the first time Isaac's active involvement, praises Abraham's obedience in his trial.[36] In light of these sources from the Land of Israel it is remarkable that the Letter of James makes reference neither to Abraham's trial, nor to his obedience and law observance. His circumcision, for example, is significantly ignored.

The author of the Letter of James emerges as someone who formulates his own interpretation of Abraham, responding to Paul by an independent reading of Scripture. Initially, he reacts to Paul's famous notion of "justification by faith … without works of the law" (Rom 3:28). Using the same verb, δικαιόω, and countering Paul's claims concerning "Abraham our father,"[37] James stresses that the patriarch was indeed justified "by works."[38] It is significant that he does *not* say "works of the law."[39] While Paul faced Jewish claims concerning law observance by Gentile converts, and gave his answers with a view to his Jewish contemporaries, James works in a different environment. He no longer addresses Jewish concerns and certainly does not wish to introduce Jewish notions of law observance into his community.[40] While Paul insisted that Jewish law, especially its

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[36] *Ant.* 1.225, 229, 233.

[37] Rom 4:16; see also Gal 3:7.

[38] ἐξ ἔργων (Jas 2:21), using the same idiosyncratic genitive construction as Paul.

[39] Note, however, that Paul occasionally also speaks of "righteousness by the law" (Phil 3:9).

[40] An automatic identification of James' "works" with Jewish Torah observance, as expressed for example by C. A. Evans, "Comparing Judaisms: Qumranic, Rabbinic, and Jacobean Judaisms Compared," in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and his Mission*

ritual aspects, was no longer relevant for salvation, James stressed that faith alone is not sufficient, but needs to be translated into ethical works recognized in the early Christian communities, such as care for the orphans and widows (Jas 1:27).

In this context it is important to note that the understanding of Abraham in the Letter of James is based on LXX vocabulary. The author recalls the θυσιαστήριον, mentioned in LXX Gen 22:9, and describes Abraham's carrying his son in terms of ἀνενέγκας, as in LXX Gen 22:2. It would thus seem that the author formulated his own reading of the Akedah on the basis of Scripture. Moreover, he concludes his exegesis with the following formulaic reference to Gen 15:6: "and the Scripture was fulfilled, which says..." (Jas 2:23). Similar expressions are extremely common in the Gospel of Matthew and to a lesser extent also in the other synoptics.[41] Recourse to this formula in the Letter of James may indicate the author's proximity to the synoptic tradition. His reaction to Paul may well have implied a wish to return to the sources, i.e., to a Christianity which could be perceived as pre-Pauline and close to the spirit of Scripture. In addition, the author may have reacted to the Letter to the Hebrews, which accepted Paul's theology and described Abraham only in terms of faith (Heb 11:17–19).

A similar strategy is visible in the interpretation of Rahab. James once more starts with Pauline vocabulary, asking whether the prostitute was not justified by works. He then adds his own summary of the biblical story, reminding his readers how she had "received the messengers and sent them out another way."[42] His conclusion contains a particularly significant wordplay: "as much as the body without the spirit is dead, thus faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:26). This sentence is a reversal of Paul's claim that the Jewish law signifies death, as opposed to the "law of the spirit," which promises life and peace (Rom 8:1–6). Advocating an anthropology in which body and soul cooperate, the author of the Letter of James also stresses the unity of faith and works. His response to Paul shows that he felt at liberty to criticize and even to mock Paul's writings, which were evidently the basis of an important inner-Christian debate.

(ed. B. Chilton and J. Neusner; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 161–83, assumes what needs to be proven and will be further discussed in connection with the Decalogue.

[41] See, e.g., Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9; Mark 14:49; Luke 4:21; 24:44.

[42] ὑποδεξαμένη τοὺς ἀγγέλους καὶ ἑτέρᾳ ὁδῷ ἐκβαλοῦσα (Jas 2:25); cf. Josh 2:4: καὶ λαβοῦσα ἡ γυνὴ τοὺς ἄνδρας; and Josh 2:7: ὁδὸν ἐπὶ τοῦ Ιορδάνου.

The Letter, moreover, may have had in view the Letter to the Hebrews, which suggests that Rahab is an emblem of faith.

Jewish dialogue partners who had *not* become part of the Jesus movement are envisaged here neither as opponents nor as potential associates against Pauline theology. In this respect the author of the Letter of James differs significantly from the much later Julian the Apostate, who saw the Jews as companions in the fight against Christianity.[43] The difference is one of belonging: while Julian opposed Christianity as a whole and from the outside, thus inviting other outsiders to join his campaign, the author of the Letter of James is writing from within the Christian community, taking issue with a particular interpretation of Scripture by an immensely influential member and hoping to strengthen an alternative branch of that community.

THE DECALOGUE

The Decalogue provides the author of the Letter of James with another key text for his arguments. Warning against partiality and the rich in general, he admonishes his audience to "fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture: love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18).[44] This royal law, however, is only fulfilled when "the whole law" (ὅλον τὸν νόμον) is kept (Jas 2:10). The author then refers to the five ethical commandments of the Decalogue, insisting that one is commanded both not to commit adultery and not to kill (Jas 2:11). Thus, if one does not commit adultery, but kills, one is guilty of transgressing the law (παραβάτης νόμου). The author concludes by instructing his audience to match their words with deeds, "as those who are to be judged under the law of freedom."[45]

This short passage is loaded with terms and ideas that have provoked particularly diverse interpretations.[46] Scholars have generally tried to understand the author by looking for parallel expressions in early Jewish and/or pagan texts. Since the precise wording "law of freedom" cannot be found elsewhere, each scholar tends to choose his or her own approximation, most opting for a mixture of Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish

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[43] Julian, *Against the Galileans* 356C et *passim*.

[44] νόμον τελεῖτε βασιλικὸν κατὰ τὴν γραφήν (Jas 2:8).

[45] ὡς διὰ νόμου ἐλευθερίας μέλλοντες κρίνεσθαι (Jas 2:12).

[46] See the most recent monograph on the topic with numerous references to the history of scholarship: M. A. Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law in the Letter of James. The Law of Nature, the Law of Moses, and the Law of Freedom* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

elements,[47] while some argue that the notion of law in the Letter must be identified with the Jewish Torah.[48] I would like to suggest instead that the novelty of the expression "law of freedom" must be appreciated by taking Pauline formulations properly into account. The author of the Letter of James responds to Pauline theology and proposes his own views in a new language.[49]

It is initially remarkable that the author of the Letter of James uses the term "law" in a very limited sense, without even addressing the Jewish notion of law as comprising all the divine commandments recorded in Scripture, as well as their interpretation over time.[50] He rather equates "the law" with those parts of the Decalogue which pertain to ethical issues. Observance of the Sabbath, for example, enjoined by the Fifth Commandment (Exod 20:8–11), is significantly ignored. The starting point of the discussion in the Letter is instead Pauline theology. It was Paul who stressed that the fulfillment of the law consists in keeping the ethical commandments of the Decalogue and, in particular, the command of loving one's neighbor (Lev 19:18).[51] In the Letter to the Galatians, Paul insists that "the whole law is fulfilled by one commandment," namely "Love your neighbor as yourself (Lev 19:18)."[52] Using virtually the same expression of "the whole law," the author of the Letter participates in an inner-Christian discussion regarding the centrality of these different religious and ethical imperatives—a discussion which is also visible in the Synoptic Gospels.[53]

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[47] Dibelius, *Brief des Jakobus*, 148–52; Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 135–92, 176–85.

[48] R. Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 142–52; M. Lautenschlager, "Der Gegenstand des Glaubens im Jakobusbrief," *ZTK* 87 (1990): 166–69.

[49] Cf. Popkes, *Brief des Jakobus*, 138–43, who stresses at first that the expression "law of freedom" is without parallel and therefore defies established categories, but then argues that it must have been a misinterpretation of Pauline theology, circulating in early Christian circles and known to the author of the Letter.

[50] See also O. J. F. Seitz, "James and the Law," *SE* 2 (1964): 472–86, who concludes on these grounds that the author of the Letter cannot have been the brother of Jesus.

[51] ὁ γὰρ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἕτερον νόμον πεπλήρωκεν (Rom 13:8); πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἡ ἀγάπη (Rom 13:10). Paul discusses here the ethical commandments of the Decalogue as well as Lev 19:18; James's formulations parallel this Pauline argument more closely than Matt 19:16–22, where the context for the ethical teaching is the question of how to achieve eternal life. In Matthew, this question is answered by reference to the ethical commandments of the Decalogue, Lev 19:18, and finally, by a recommendation to follow Jesus personally.

[52] ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἑνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται (Gal 5:14). Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 165–76, discusses whether the author of the Letter of James accepted Paul's notion of Lev 19:18 as the "whole law," but admits that there is some tension between such an assumption and the following sentence, where the author insists on the fulfillment of other concrete commandments.

[53] See esp. Matt 22:34–38; Luke 10:25–28.

Likewise, Mark 12:28–34 indicates that the ethical and monotheistic commandments of the Decalogue were seen as superseding Jewish ritual.

Participating in this discussion, and no longer facing Jews, who would remind him of their own understanding of Mosaic Law, the author of the Letter proceeds to correct Paul's position. While fulfilling Lev 19:18 is still seen as "good" moral behavior (καλῶς ποιεῖτε), the author questions Paul's additional step of giving absolute preference to this principle (Jas 2:8). In his view, such an approach leaves too much room for inactivity and ambiguity. Loving one's neighbor was not sufficiently specific and thus not sufficiently obligatory. Fulfillment of the Five Commandments can be more objectively checked. The author of the Letter therefore insists that the moral commandments of the Decalogue are central to Christian ethics and need to be carefully observed. As is also made clear in his interpretations of Abraham and Rahab, the author is concerned with concrete moral performance. In the present context he uses juridical vocabulary in order to highlight his message.[54]

In light of this interpretation, I would like to propose a novel reading of the famous expression "law of freedom." Lacking a precise parallel in ancient literature, the expression has in fact been coined by the author of the Letter and is another play on a famous Pauline formulation, Gal 5:1: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."[55] James thus criticizes Paul's promise of absolute freedom, insisting on an ethical law which obligates the believer, even though it is free from Jewish ritual.[56] While Paul thus spoke of a "law of faith," James counters with a "law of freedom." His earlier reference to the "perfect law of freedom"[57] may indicate an implied comparison to Paul; i.e., James is here identifying his own teaching on ethics as superior to Paul's theology of freedom. Significantly, the author of the Letter stresses in that context that one must not only hear the word, but actually perform it (Jas 1:25).

The impression of an inner-Christian discourse around the Five Commandments is confirmed by looking at contemporary Jewish sources. As far as I can see, Philo is the only Jewish writer definitely dated before the

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[54] ἁμαρτίαν ἐργάζεσθε ἐλεγχόμενοι ὑπο τοῦ νόμου ὡς παραβάται ... γέγονεν πάντων ἔνοχος (Jas 2:9–10).

[55] E. Lohse, "Glaube und Werke: Zur Theologie des Jakobusbriefes," *ZNW* 48 (1957): 8, stressed the Christian origin of the term, which he recognized to be absent from Jewish sources, but did not consider James' particular contribution.

[56] For Pauline formulations on freedom, see esp. Gal 3:28, Romans 8.

[57] ὁ δὲ παρακύψας εἰς νόμον τέλειον τὸν τῆς ἐλευθερίας (Jas 1:25).

Letter of James who assigns to the Decalogue a special place within the halakhic system. Therefore he has naturally often been quoted in the context of James. On closer inspection, however, his approach appears rather different from that of James. Initially, Philo interprets the Decalogue as laws given by God Himself and thus providing the headings for the rest of the Mosaic Law (*Dec.* 19). The divine and human realms are thus intricately connected and cannot be separated. Philo devotes considerable attention to the various specific laws, including ritual, organizing them thematically according to the categories of the Decalogue. Moreover, in Philo's view the first five commandments are of superior importance, while the ethical commandments are considered secondary (*Dec.* 50).

Most strikingly, Lev 19:18 is never mentioned throughout Philo's extant works.[58] Furthermore, Philo never speaks about a "law of freedom." To be sure, he does occasionally say that one achieves (mental) freedom by observing the law (*Prob.* 159), but in that context it is not even clear whether he means the Torah. Even if he does, however, Philo distinguishes between freedom and law, considering one as the result of the other.[59] Finally, even when Philo discusses the prohibitions against adultery and murder, he differs from the Letter of James. His discussion of murder is very short—the law is apparently considered self-evident (*Dec.* 132–134)—whereas the issue of adultery is expounded in considerable detail (*Dec.* 121–131). Philo's exegesis reflects his own context, as he is concerned with Greek arguments against adultery for the sake of order and peace in society.[60] No connection is drawn to other commandments of the Decalogue or to the issue of an overriding principle of the Torah.[61]

The absolute preference for the ethical Five Commandments as well as their connection with Lev 19:18 thus emerged in a specifically Christian context. The author of the Letter of James joins this discussion without engaging alternative Jewish positions. He does not counter Pauline theology by reintroducing Mosaic Law or Jewish principles, but rather corrects Paul from within the developing Christian tradition and on the basis of an alternative reading of Scripture. Even Philo, who at first sight appears

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[58] Cf. Ruzer, "James on Faith and Righteousness," in this volume, who argues for the centrality of Lev 19:8 in Palestinian Judaism.

[59] Cf. Dibelius, *Brief des Jakobus*, 148–52; and Jackson-McCabe, *Logos and Law*, 145–52, who adduce this Philonic passage without paying attention to the specific differences between Philo and James.

[60] See my detailed discussion in *Philo on Jewish Identity*, 94–110.

[61] Note that vocabulary, such as "great commandment" (ἐντολὴ μεγάλη), which was used in the Christian discussion (Matt 22:36), is missing in Philo's writings.

close to James, cannot have served as a point of reference. The impression of a "Parting of the Ways" concerning the Decalogue is further confirmed by Josephus. Writing at the end of the first century CE, he, like Philo, considered the Ten Commandments to have been directly delivered by God's mouth and as intricately connected to the rest of Jewish Law (*Ant.* 3.89–94). Consequently, the Talmudic image of Hillel advocating the love command as the greatest principle of the whole Torah is likely to be a late development and possibly a response to Christian teachings.[62]

The Prophets, Job, and Elijah

The Letter of James ends with a section on "patience and prayer," where the prophets, Job, and Elijah are presented as examples to be emulated by the readers. The context is clearly Christian, even eschatological, as the author envisions a time span from now "until the coming of the Lord."[63] If the readers have patience and strengthen their heart, the "coming of the Lord" will draw near (Jas 5:8). In order to enforce his teaching, the author of the Letter turns to biblical models. The prophets and Job exemplify patience, while Elijah also provides a model of prayer.

"The prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord" are mentioned first (Jas 5:11). This reference echoes Christian concepts, the prophets as a group having become a standard identification of those transmitting the message of Jesus and announcing the event of his mission.[64] Furthermore, the association of the prophets with "suffering and patience"[65] appears to be Christian rather than Jewish. Attributing characteristics of Jesus to all the prophets, this motif foreshadows the idea of the killing of the prophets. Philo, for example, never thinks of the prophets in such terms. Furthermore, Job figures as an example of patience (Jas 5:11). Job is mentioned only here in the New Testament writings, while the language of the Letter of James resembles that of the *Testament of Job*.[66] For our purposes it is important to realize that the author of the Letter was keen to support his

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[62] *b. Shab.* 31a; see also A. Kaminka, "Hillel's Life and Work," *JQR* n.s. 30 (1939): 107–22, who argued for the generally late date of the stories about Hillel; for an example of attributing Christian views to an earlier rabbinic teacher, see M. R. Niehoff, "*Creatio ex Nihilo* Theology in *Genesis Rabbah* in Light of Christian Exegesis," *HTR* 99 (2006): 45–55.

[63] ἕως τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ κυρίου (Jas 5:7).

[64] See esp. Acts 10:42–43; Rom 1:1–5.

[65] ὑπόδειγμα τῆς κακοπαθίας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας (Jas 5:10).

[66] See also Popkes, *Brief des Jakobus*, 329–30.

arguments by an additional reference to a biblical figure without going into the details of exegesis. The life of Job was sufficiently known to be invoked. The biblical *text* in its voluminous details was unnecessary for the message which he wished to transmit. Nevertheless, the biblical *allusions* in his Letter were important to the author, because they reinforced the message that his teaching was authentic and true to the sources of the religion.

The image of Elijah is more detailed and livelier (Jas 5:17–18). It has already been noted that this image largely corresponds to the note in Luke 4:25, where Elijah is also said to have opened the sky after three-and-a-half years of drought.[67] This correspondence, however, needs to be appreciated in the larger context of the passage. Initially, it is conspicuous that the author of the Letter sets his own accent by stressing that Elijah was ὁμοιοπαθὴς and προσευχῇ προσηύξατο. These two items are not mentioned by Luke and seem to have derived from an independent reading of Scripture, where the sufferings of Elijah and his appeal to God are recorded (1 Kgs 17–18). Elijah emerges in the Letter of James as a model to be emulated by the readers. His suffering is shown to be similar to that of the audience and his prayer as relevant to theirs. The author encourages his readers to take an active part in the healing of sick members of the community. He advises them to go and call the elders, who will apply oil and pray, trusting that the Lord can forgive sins and raise the fallen (Jas 5:13–15). Furthermore, the readers are called to pray themselves and thus contribute to the healing of others (Jas 5:16). The author is thus characteristically concerned with concrete moral action. Rather than judging others, his readers are to perform good acts, effective for the general welfare.

The invocation of Elijah in the Letter of James also needs to be appreciated in the context of Pauline theology, which we have recognized before as a significant starting point for the discussion. In light of the previous examples it is not surprising to discover that Paul offers a radically different interpretation of Elijah. In his eyes the prophet was a zealous fighter for God, complaining that everybody else had forsaken God and was now bent on killing him as well, but who was reassured by God that seven thousand men had remained loyal (Rom 11:2–4). Paul uses this story to discuss the broader question of the status of the Jews within the Christian community. He insists that the loyal remnant "in this time now" is not

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67 See Popkes, *Brief des Jakobus*, 351–52, and references there.

defined by works (οὐκέτι ἐξ ἔργων), but by grace (χάρις).[68] Israel, he adds, has not achieved what they wanted, but the Christian "elect" did.[69]

It thus emerges that the figure of Elijah was subject to the same controversy, which we have already noted in previous contexts. The author of the Letter of James once more takes issue with Paul's rejection of works in favor of values that are not conducive to concrete ethical behavior. As much as he had objected to both the presentation of Abraham as an emblem of faith and the absolute status of the love command, the author of the Letter also counters Paul's image of Elijah by stressing his human suffering as well as his active empathy and prayer. Elijah should in his view serve as a model for beneficial action rather than as a model for confidence in Christian election.

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PROVERBS 3:34

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Chapter four of the Letter of James contains a quotation of Prov 3:34 (Jas 4:10). This quotation does not appear to play a role in the author's controversy with Paul, who does not even mention this verse.[70] The author of the Letter refers to Prov 3:34 for the same reason for which he subsequently invokes the prophets and Job, namely to support his own teaching by the authority of Scripture. In this case he provides, not a general reference, but a specific quotation. The difference is easily explained: a wisdom saying naturally lends itself to quotation, while Job and the prophets are used as significant biblical figures rather than texts, which are, in any case, too long to be dealt with in such a short letter.

The interpretation of Prov 3:34 in the Letter of James is characteristic of the author's overall concerns and testifies to his innovative reading of the passage. While the verse itself speaks about God's reaction to the haughty, whom he opposes, and the humble, to whom he gives grace, the author of the Letter reads into it a message about good action. He calls his readers to subject themselves to God, while staying away from the Devil.

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[68] Rom 11:5–6.

[69] ἡ δὲ ἐκλογὴ ἐπέτυχεν (Rom 11:7).

[70] Chapter four also contains the well-known crux of an apparent reference to Scripture (ἡ γραφὴ λέγει), which, however, cannot be found in any of the extant biblical or parabiblical writings (Jas 4:5). Scholars have suggested various solutions, including references to reminiscences in Hermetic texts and arguments for simple corruption (see Dibelius, *Brief des Jakobus*, 264–69; Popkes, "James and Scripture," 224–26). I shall not discuss this problem here as no recognizable Scripture is quoted. In the future it may be worth inquiring what the boundaries of Scripture were in the eyes of the author of the Letter.

It is their action which will bring God closer (Jas 4:7–8). They have to humble themselves and repent, turning their smile into grief and their joy into gloominess (Jas 4:9). At the end of the paragraph the interpretation is well summarized by a novel paraphrase of Prov 3:34b: "humble yourselves before the Lord and he will raise you" (Jas 4:10). Characteristically, this formulation echoes Matt 23:12, which addresses the same paradox of self-humiliation leading to elevation by God.

The interpretation of Prov 3:34 in the Letter of James must furthermore be appreciated in comparison to 1 Pet 5:5, where the same verse is incorporated in a similar setting of religious teaching. Already at first sight it is conspicuous that the motifs of the devil, humiliation and elevation are shared by this author, too. This correspondence has led some scholars to suggest that the author of the Letter of James copied the quotation together with the interpretation from 1 Pet 5:5 or a common source.[71] Yet such a conclusion seems unwarranted, because the concerns of 1 Pet 5:5 are too different to have served as a *Vorlage*. This author follows the proverbial text more closely, encouraging his readers to trust in God's providence and care (1 Pet 5:7). He concludes his appeal by stressing that God will indeed restore, strengthen and put in order (ibid. 10). Thus, he appears to take the humble situation of his readers as a given fact and encourages them to persist in their hope and faith in a better future.

Conclusion

This analysis of the scriptural references in the Letter of James has shown that the implied audience was Christian. Jewish perspectives and exegetical traditions are no longer invoked. Jews appear neither as dialogue partners nor as potential allies in the controversy with Paul. This lack of reference is indeed remarkable and reflects the existence of boundaries between these groups at an early stage. My analysis moreover confirms the papyrological discoveries of Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, who has shown that second-century Christian libraries held relatively few materials that can be identified as specifically Jewish.[72] In this respect they differed from

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[71] See Popkes, "James and Scripture," 226–27, and references there.

[72] D. Stökl Ben Ezra, "Weighing the Parts: A Papyrological Perspective on the Parting of the Ways," paper presented at the SBL Annual Meeting in Washington 2006; now published under the same title in *NovT* 51/2 (2009): 168–86. I thank the author for sharing the prepublication draft of the paper.

inner-Jewish sects such as the Qumran community, which collected large amounts of general Jewish writings not connected to its particular ideology. The latter thus showed interest in continuous dialogue with their brothers, even though they considered them to be deeply mistaken in important theological matters. The early Christian libraries, on the other hand, testify to a lack of interest in communication with the Jewish traditions and their representatives.

Writing to a Christian audience, the author of the Letter of James engages in a discussion of ethics in light of Paul's provocative theology. He wishes to reduce its influence by pointing to its misinterpretations of Scripture. His own fresh reading of the Akedah and the Five Commandments was thus contrasted to Paul's. The interpretations of Rahab and Elijah were written in the same spirit. The author defines himself by recourse to correct exegesis as well as to formulations characteristic of the synoptic Gospels. These procedures indicate that his Christian identity was constructed in the space between topical Christian writings, on the one hand, and Scripture, comprising both the LXX and some form of the New Testament, on the other.

JAMES ON FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE CONTEXT OF A BROADER JEWISH EXEGETICAL DISCOURSE

Serge Ruzer

INTRODUCTION

The authorship, addressees, and setting of the New Testament Epistle of James remain disputed. In church tradition, the dominant position is held by the attribution of the letter to James, Jesus' brother (or cousin)—the person mentioned in Matt 13:55–57 and Mark 6:3–4 (absent from the Lukan parallel in 4:16–30); in both Matthew and Mark these occurrences are preceded with an indication of tension within the family.[1]

In recent research, arguments both for and against the traditional attribution have been advanced, and the jury is still out on this point.[2] The setting of the Epistle constitutes a separate topic, distinct from that of any specific link to the historical person of James, or lack thereof. Yet here again the matter is far from settled. While some scholars believe that the letter originated in an early Jewish–Christian milieu in the Land of Israel,[3] others speak in terms of a later Diaspora provenance.[4] The addressees are

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[1] Matt 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; cf. Luke 8:19–21. Cf. Gal 1:19, where James is called the Lord's brother; and Acts 12:2–17; 15; and 21, where he is portrayed as the key figure in the Jerusalem community. See also Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.197–203, who reports on James's execution at the instigation of the high priest in the year 62 (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23.3–4). See R. Bauckham, "For What Offense Was James Put to Death," in *James the Just and Christian Origins* (ed. B. Chilton and C. A. Evans; NovTSup 98; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 199–232; and C. A. Evans, "Jesus and James: Martyrs of the Temple," in Chilton and Evans, *James the Just*, 233–49. Other persons bearing this name are also mentioned in the New Testament, among them one of Jesus' important disciples, James son of Zebedee (brother of John—Matt 10:3).

[2] For a review of scholarly opinions, see M. Myllykoski, "James the Just in History and Tradition: Perspectives of Past and Present Scholarship (Part 1)," *Currents in Biblical Research* 5/1 (2006): 73–122.

[3] See, for example, P. H. Davids, "Palestinian Traditions in the Epistle of James," in Chilton and Evans, *James the Just*, 33–57, who analyzes, inter alia, linguistic evidence and occupational imagery. See also D. L. Bartlett, "The Epistle of James as a Jewish–Christian Document," *Society of Biblical Literature 1979 Seminar Papers* (ed. P. J. Achtemeier; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979), 2: 173–86.

[4] Cited as possible indications are: the late first explicit reference to the letter (by Origen; it is not mentioned by Tertullian and is absent from the Muratorian Fragment); the fact that canonicity remained disputed even in the course of the 4th century (though accepted,

clearly people of the Diaspora,[5] but the makeup of the intended audience remains a debated issue, with suggestions ranging from entirely Gentile Christian, to a mixed community, to one composed only of Jewish Jesus-followers.

It is intriguing that the same data have been interpreted as pointing in opposite directions. The opening line's appeal "to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (Jas 1:1);[6] the total lack of reference to the issue of Gentile membership or of the applicability to them of the ritual demands of the Torah (themes so prominent in Paul's writings and in the foundational report in Acts 15); the lack of any references to the Temple or of any "distinctively Christian" concepts—all these features have been interpreted as either reflecting the earliest stage in the development of Christianity, characterized by a traditionally Jewish pattern of messianic belief (and perhaps politely including Gentile fellow travelers in the community); or, alternatively, as reflecting a much later stage, when the "hot" issues, including those pertaining to the Jewish–Gentile conundrum and that of Jesus' status, have already been settled. The latter stage is seen as characterized by a full-blown "supersessionist" tendency that had by then won the day; so that, for example, the "twelve tribes" appellation might now incontrovertibly signify the Gentile Church.[7]

The main message of the Epistle—namely, that faith should be expressed in deeds—has likewise been interpreted in various ways: either

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with reservations, by Eusebius, it would be later doubted, for example, by Theodore of Mopsuestia); its reasonably good Greek style; the lack of references to the Temple; and indications of a knowledge of Paul's writings from the late 50s. These features, however, are far from providing conclusive proof and are, moreover, open to alternative interpretations. See the discussion in Davids, "Palestinian Traditions"; J. Kloppenborg, "Diaspora Discourse: The Construction of *Ethos* in James," *NTS* 53 (2007): 242–70.

   [5] As parallels in genre (i.e., epistles sent to the Diaspora from the Land of Israel), one may invoke 2 Maccabees, the Letter of Jeremiah and the letter at the end of the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*. See Davids, "Palestinian Traditions."

   [6] Cf. *War Scroll* 1:1–2; Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Rev 7:2–8; 21:12. See also Acts 1–2, which ascribes importance to filling the "number" of twelve apostles, as eschatological representatives of the twelve tribes; and correspondingly, the description of the foundational event of the Jesus movement in Acts 2:5–11 as the eschatological ingathering of the dispersions of Israel. See S. Pines, "Notes on the Twelve Tribes in Qumran, Early Christianity, and Jewish Tradition," in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity* (ed. I. Gruenwald, S. Shaked and G. G. Stroumsa; TSAJ 32; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992), 151–54; cf. J. Taylor, "The List of the Nations in Acts 2:9–11," *RB* 106/3 (1999): 408–20. If the expression "the twelve tribes" generally signals scenarios of eschatological judgment, its use in James is particularly interesting, in view of the very low-key eschatology that characterizes the rest of the Epistle.

   [7] For an overview of existing opinions, see Myllykoski, "James the Just in History and Tradition"; Bartlett, "The Epistle of James."

as a pointed response to Pauline positions and thus as an expression of an intra-Christian dispute[8] or, alternatively, as a development within Jewish thought of themes originating in wisdom literature.[9] According to David Bartlett, a mixture of (general) Jewish and (particular) Jewish–Christian materials may be discerned in the Epistle; in other words, general Jewish patterns are informed and colored here by an intra-Christian polemic.[10] In his recent study, John Kloppenborg went so far as to suggest that the Epistle was addressed to a general Diaspora Jewish community to which Jewish Christians still belonged; he believes that the intention of the author was to strengthen the position of the Christian minority as an integral part of that community—that is, the one sharing its religious concerns and patterns of discourse.[11] Maren Niehoff, who in the present volume advances an intriguing new attempt to assess this issue, sides instead with the perception of the letter as reflecting an intra-Christian *problematique*.[12]

This study is a further attempt to revisit this conundrum via the discussion of some strategies of biblical exegesis characteristic of James—an avenue underrepresented in the existing research. I believe that this exegetical angle may be especially useful for probing the possibility of the

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[8] See Bartlett, "The Epistle of James," 173, 175, 178–79. See also P. J. Hartin, "Call to Be Perfect Through Suffering (James 1,2–4): The Concept of Perfection in the Epistle of James and the Sermon on the Mount," *Biblica* 77/4 (1996): 477–92, who discerns in the Epistle clear signs of literary dependence on the existing written Gospel traditions, e.g., the Sermon on the Mount. But compare R. Bauckham, "James and Jesus," in *The Brother of Jesus: James the Just and His Mission* (ed. B. Chilton and J. Neusner; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 100–37, who sees James's relation to the tradition of the sayings of Jesus in terms of "creative appropriation and re-expression."

[9] Davids, "Palestinian Traditions," shows—in opposition to the suggestion of late dating and intra-Christian discourse—that despite some similarities, the Epistle is not dependent on any written form of the gospel tradition. Moreover, the piety/poverty material in James echoes to some extent themes in Qumran literature and *1 Enoch* (mediated through the Jesus tradition), while material on wisdom, tongue, and speech echoes Proverbs and Ben Sira. See also Hartin, "Call to Be Perfect." It is worthy of note that, unlike similar passages in James (e.g., 1:5), the parallels in the Sermon on the Mount do not attest to any emphasis on wisdom. Wisdom language is replaced there by a call to follow God's example: God is merciful—you should be merciful. The Dead Sea Scrolls bear witness to the notion that the "impossible demands" become feasible thanks to the predestined election of the sons of light and the gift of the Holy Spirit (see, e.g., 1QS 11, 1QH^a 4). We may have here different developments of a shared underlying topic, which together bear witness to that common background.

[10] See Bartlett, "The Epistle of James."

[11] J. Kloppenborg, "Diaspora Discourse."

[12] See M. R. Niehoff, "The Implied Audience of the Letter of James," in this volume. Her article has further references to suggestions recently raised with regard to the setting of the Epistle.

Epistle as a witness to contemporaneous Jewish discourse. I will attempt to determine whether the strategies of interpretation represented in the Epistle reflect exclusively intra-Christian concerns or also broader tendencies of hermeneutics; and, in the latter case, whether they bear witness to Hellenistic, or alternatively to Palestinian Jewish, patterns of exegetical discourse. There is a certain overlap in the data discussed in my investigation and in that of Niehoff, but our conclusions concerning the setting of the Epistle often differ.[13] These differences, however, are secondary to my discussion, because the gist of it lies in demonstrating that sometimes, even when the precise *Sitz im Leben* of a source remains unclear, this source can still be used in reconstructing the larger picture of ancient Jewish Bible exegesis.

As test cases I have chosen two motifs that are featured prominently in James 1 and 2: (1) *Nomos* (Torah) as a "perfect royal law of freedom"; and (2) Abraham as an outstanding example of a righteous man whose *faith* is expressed in the *deed* of the Akedah. I will touch on relevant exegetical patterns attested in Second Temple Jewish writings, but the bulk of the evidence will come from the Palestinian Jewish traditions found in rabbinic sources. The later provenance of these sources constitutes an obvious problem when they are invoked as possible "background" to New Testament materials. In light of this difficulty, it is the opposite track— namely, the study of the Epistle of James as a possible early witness for certain Jewish tendencies further developed in later rabbinic Judaism— that may hold promise.

Torah as the Perfect Royal Law of Freedom

"All the Torah" in the "Love Your Neighbor" Precept

The opening section of James is characterized by highly charged descriptions of God's law as the "perfect law of liberty" (1:25: νόμος τέλειος τῆς ἐλευτερίας; 2:12: νόμου … ἐλευτερίας), and the "royal law" (2:8: νόμος βασιλικός).[14] The latter passage further advises the reader: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor

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[13] I am grateful to Maren Niehoff, my colleague and friend, for the enlightening conversations that provided the impetus for and contributed to our respective studies.

[14] If not otherwise stated, English translations of biblical and New Testament passages are from the Revised Standard Version.

as yourself,' you do well."[15] Naturally, these praises of the law as God's kingly gift and the ultimate expression of human freedom invite comparison with Paul's diatribe against "false brethren . . . who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Jesus Christ" (Gal 2:4), freedom that Paul opposes to the (ritual) demands of the Jewish law.[16] We will return to the question of whether one should necessarily see here a pointed polemic with Pauline-type views; but first, the possible general Jewish setting of James' statements needs to be addressed.

The focus on Lev 19:18 ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself") as the representative pillar of the divine law is well attested in Jewish tradition from Second Temple times on. Thus we read in *Jub.* 36:4–8:

> And among yourselves, my sons, be loving of your brothers as a man loves himself, with each man seeking for his brother what is good for him, and acting together on earth, and loving each other as themselves . . . Remember, my sons, the Lord, the God of Abraham, your father . . . And now I will make you swear by the great oath[17] . . . (that) each will love his brother with compassion.[18]

It has been argued that this focus reflects a core religious metamorphosis characteristic of the thought of the Jewish sages of that period—the appearance of what David Flusser called "a new sensitivity in Judaism."[19] It can be shown that this emphasis on Lev 19:18 was internalized in multiple Jewish milieus, including that of Qumran. Yet in the latter case, the love command received an idiosyncratic interpretation that restricted the loving attitude to the members of the elect community, whereas an attitude of hatred / enmity was prescribed toward the outsiders (the "sons of darkness").[20] One should note that Philo identifies the core principle

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[15] See also Jas 2:1–7, where an interpretation of Lev 19:18 seems to be elaborated.

[16] See Gal 2:15–21. It should be noted that Paul's argument here is addressed to a Gentile audience, a fact that might definitely have influenced his rhetoric. See J. G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp. 77–100.

[17] A clear reference to the ending of Lev 19:18 ("I am the Lord!").

[18] The English translation follows that of O. S. Wintermute in *OTP* 1: 124.

[19] See D. Flusser, "A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message," in idem, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1988), 469–89. It seems significant that in the passage from *Jubilees* the love command is programmatically linked to Abraham, the founding father of Israel as a religious entity.

[20] See S. Ruzer, "From 'Love Your Neighbor' to 'Love your Enemy,'" in idem, *Mapping the New Testament: Early Christian Writings as a Witness for Jewish Biblical Interpretation* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives 13; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 35–70; idem, "The Double Love Precept: Between Pharisees, Jesus, and Qumran Covenanters," in idem, *Mapping the New Testament*, 71–100.

regulating interpersonal human relations not with Lev 19:18 but rather with the second part of the Decalogue; the first part, in contrast, represents the core principle ("head") for the Torah commandments that treat a person's relations with God.[21] The focus on Lev 19:18, then, may have represented a hermeneutical tendency within Palestinian Jewry.

It is in later rabbinic sources, as well as in the Gospels (Matt 22:34–40; cf. Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28), that the clear identification of the command to love one's neighbor as the foundational principle of the entire Torah is found. In a Tannaitic midrash, *Sifra Qedoshim* 2:4 (cf. *Gen. R.* 24), this idea is ascribed to R. Aqiva; whereas, according to the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sabb.* 31a), Hillel had made a similar claim even earlier. It should be emphasized that in these instances Lev 19:18 is not presented as detached from the other Torah regulations; quite the opposite, it is perceived as the Great Rule (הכלל הגדול), from which these regulations are derived. Possible differences in the perception of the range of those "secondary obligations" notwithstanding, the same basic idea may be discerned in the verses immediately following the programmatic statement in Jas 2:8 and, as it seems, elaborating on it (Jas 2:8–11):

> (8) If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. (9) But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. (10) For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. (11) For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law.

In my opinion, the above evidence on the Lev 19:18-centered patterns of exegesis in early Jewish sources indicates that (a) in Jas 1:25, 2:8, νόμος stands for the Torah of Moses; and (b) the saying in Jas 2:8, far from reflecting a peculiar Christian development, is but one more witness to the broader Jewish exegetical tendency starting, as noted, in the time of the Second Temple and continuing well into the rabbinic period.[22] The

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[21] See Philo, *Spec.* 2.63. Cf. G. E. Sterling, "Was There a Common Ethic in Second Temple Judaism?" in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 20–22 May, 2001* (STDJ 51; ed. J. J. Collins, G. E. Sterling and R. A. Clements; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 171–94, where he highlights the centrality of Leviticus 19 in general (but not specifically Lev 19:18!) for a variety of patterns of Jewish ethical instruction attested in both Hellenistic Diaspora sources and the Qumran scrolls.

[22] But cf. J. H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1916/1961), 198, according to whom νόμος here means "the law of God as known to the reader through the Christian interpretation."

alternative conclusion—much less probable in light of the Second Temple period evidence—would be that that the notion of Lev 19:18 as the sum total of the Torah was first developed in the early Christian context and later reinvented or picked up by some rabbinic authorities, who ascribed it to Hillel and Aqiva.[23]

The same argument for a general Jewish context may be made with regard to Gal 5:14 (cf. Rom 13:8–10): "For the whole Torah (law) is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" It should be noted that no polemic can be discerned between Jas 2:8 and the ideas expressed in these Pauline passages. Moreover, neither in James nor in Paul is the appeal to this seemingly widely accepted exegetical pattern made for the sake of a polemic with the "formative" Jewish tradition. It is, rather, the expression of an intrinsic link to that tradition; once established, this link is further used to promote the author's particular agenda, which in Paul's case is a Christ-centered one.

Since, as noted, the explicit emphasis on Lev 19:18 as the core principle of the Torah is also attested in the Gospels (emphatically so in Matthew), one may alternatively claim that the formulation in Jas 2:8—and then also in the Pauline letters—is primarily derived from the Jesus tradition. Yet the following points argue against such a claim:

(1) Neither James nor Paul presents the tradition as going back to Jesus; and at least Paul is known to have been sensitive to this issue, and keen on differentiating between revealed truths, truths transmitted by a tradition, and truths attained through his own contemplation.[24]

(2) It has been rightly observed that in addition to Lev 19:18, references to Deut 6:4–5 may also be discerned in James (Jas 2:5, 19; 4:12).[25] Yet the passage from Deuteronomy constitutes arguably one of the core references in the Jewish religious discourse; moreover, as I have shown elsewhere on the basis of a Qumranic parallel, the exegetical coupling of those two love commands also had wide currency in late Second Temple Judaism—a tendency of which the Synoptic pericope mentioned above (Matt 22:34–40; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28) is but one example.[26] Thus such a coupling is not in itself sufficient to establish a specific link between James and the

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[23] This is the conclusion to which Niehoff comes, see "Implied Audience," above, p. 73.

[24] See, for example, 1 Corinthians 7; Galatians 1.

[25] For discussion, see D. H. Edgar, "The Use of the Love-Command and the *Shemaʿ* in the Epistle of James," *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 23 (2003): 9–22.

[26] Thus, according to my reading, a similar coupling is also attested in the *Community Rule* 1. See discussion in Ruzer, "The Double Love Precept," 90–94.

Synoptic material, with its explicit combination of Lev 19:18 and Deut 6:5 as the twin core principles of the Torah—all the more so as the saying in James (and the same applies to Gal 5:14 and Rom 13:8–10) lacks this truly characteristic feature of the Jesus tradition. I suggest, therefore, that what we are witnessing here is, rather, a linkage with the general topic of Jewish exegetical discourse outlined above.[27] One should also pay attention to the fact that the Gospel tradition itself presents Jesus' ruling on the double love precept as coinciding with general (Pharisaic) opinion.[28] Moreover, Matthew's statement to the effect that the whole of the Torah and all the prophets are dependent on the core principles of Lev 19:18 and Deut 6:5 seems to be part of his general tendency to present Jesus' teaching as being in accordance with the authoritative (Pharisaic) patterns of Jewish religious discourse.[29] But it should be stressed again that this clear two-pronged exegetical pattern is conspicuously absent in James.

The Perfect Royal Torah

Having established that in James the νόμος stands for the Torah of Moses, epitomized—in accordance with a contemporary Jewish tradition—in the love-your-neighbor command, let us turn to the description of this command as the "perfect royal law of freedom/liberty" (Jas 1:25; 2:8). It should be noted at the outset that neither "perfect" (τέλειος) nor "royal" (βασιλικός) is to be found in Paul's descriptions of the law. As a matter of fact, "royal" is totally absent from both the Gospels and the vocabulary of the authentic Pauline letters, whereas "perfect" does appear in the epistles but in a different context. Thus, the will of God in Rom 12:2, and the future prophetic revelation in 1 Cor 13:10, are both called perfect. Alternatively, in 1 Cor 2:6 and 14:20 "perfect" designates believers of mature religious

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[27] But see T. W. Leahy ("The Epistle of James," in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* [ed. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, and R. E. Murphy; Herndon, Va.: Chapman, 1997], 912), who insists that James is here "alluding to the command of love of neighbor (Lev 19:18) cited in Jesus' preaching of the kingdom (Matt 22:39). By fulfilling the command of love of neighbor one fulfills the whole law. This was made explicit in Rom 13:8–10; Gal 5:14." Cf. Edgar ("The Use of the Love-Command," 11–12, 16–20), who believes that the reference to both Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18 in James indicates specific proximity to the Synoptic tradition.

[28] See Ruzer, "The Double Love Precept," 75.

[29] On the problematic closeness of Matthew's community to the Pharisees, see, for example, A. J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian–Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *To Advance the* Gospel (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 83, where he suggests, with regard to another Matthean pericope (5:31–32), that "Matthew . . . has modified it to make it better suit his Jewish–Christian concerns, casting it in terms of [the] Hillel–Shammai dispute."

stature who carry out God's will.[30] It is in this latter sense that τέλειος is invoked in the Gospel tradition—namely, in Matthew (5:48; 19:21); a similar, even if not identical, notion is also attested at Qumran (1QS 1:8; 3:9; 5:24; 11:2).[31] There is no explicit link between any of these usages of τέλειος and that attested in Jas 1:25, and thus no particular reason to see in the wording of the James passage an indication of an intra-Christian discourse—polemical or otherwise.

An investigation of James' possible points of reference in a broader Jewish tradition is therefore justified. In James, "perfect" and "royal/kingly" seem to be eternal attributes of the Torah; the author of the Epistle makes no attempt whatsoever to link these terms to a an eschatological, Messiah-centered understanding of the divine law. The best analogy to the use of "perfect" in James, in fact, is Ps 19:8, which describes the Torah as "perfect" (תמימה) and, in its perfection, as "reviving the soul" (משיבת נפש).[32] This characterization of the Torah stands in contradistinction to its dramatically new meaning/interpretation for the end of the ages, attested not only in Paul (e.g., in 2 Cor 3) but also in such Qumran texts as *1QPesher Habakkuk* 2 and 7, and *Damascus Document* 6 (4Q266 ii–iii; 4Q267 2; 4Q269 iv; 4Q270 ii).[33]

In the Hebrew Bible, God is perceived as the Eternal King of the Universe; such expressions as "King of the world/eternity" (מלך העולם) or "King of the kings" (מלך [מלכי] המלכים), routinely used in Jewish liturgy from early times, testify to the centrality of such a perception.[34] It can thus be suggested that the predominance of this pattern of thought makes the use of "royal" language with regard to God's Torah completely logical. Or, as proposed by Leahy: "Since the Mosaic law comes from God, the

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[30] Cf. Eph 4:13; Phil 3:15.

[31] See also 1QS 2:1–4; 9:2–19; 10:21–23; 1Q28a 1:17; 1Q28b 1:2.

[32] This verse, as well as its later midrashic elaborations, could be a starting point for further investigation of this term in James; but such an investigation is beyond the scope of the present study.

[33] See the discussion in S. Ruzer, "The New Covenant, the Reinterpretation of Scripture, and Collective Messiahship," in idem, *Mapping the New Testament*, 215–38, esp. 220–29. Cf. the "conservative" stance, inclusive of the traditional understanding of the Torah, ascribed to James, the leader of the Jerusalem community in Acts 15, 21.

[34] For the former idea, see, for example, Exod 15:18 and *Mekhilta de-R. Ishmael* ad loc. (ed. H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin; Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1928–1931), 150–51. For rabbinic evidence on liturgical usage of the expression "מלך העולם," see *Soferim* 13:7–8; 14:1–2, 7; 20:1; *b. Shabb.* 137b; *b. Meg.* 21b; *b. Menaḥ.* 42b. For early evidence for the use of the latter expression, see *m. Avot* 3:1; 4:22; *t. Sanh.* 8:9.

universal king, it is rightly called royal."[35] But should this usage be seen as
originating with the author of the Epistle? The appearance of this appella-
tion in James is clearly tailored to providing ammunition against lapses—
whether connected to Pauline-type ideas or not—in fulfilling certain
Torah commandments. This is the author's peculiar polemical agenda;
the Epistle, however, gives no indication that the "royal" designation is
derived from the author's own innovative thinking: it is used in an offhand
manner, without any further attempt at explanation or clarification. This
in itself may indicate that the author is referring to an existing exegeti-
cal tradition, a tradition in which the kingly character of the Torah has
already been made explicit and elaborated upon. Is there corroborating
external evidence for such a tradition?

    As noted, God is routinely called "king" in biblical and postbiblical Jew-
ish sources. Yet, in addition to this general tendency, a relatively late trac-
tate, *Soferim*, perceives God as king specifically in connection with the
giving of the Torah to Israel.[36] Even if the appearance of the motif here
is clearly linked to the tractate's main issue—that is, the rules for writing
a Torah scroll—it seems to reflect an older motif of rabbinic elaboration.
This very motif is invoked, albeit in an indirect fashion, in *m. Avot* 3:5. The
use of the term "yoke" presents the acceptance of the Torah's demands in
terms of accepting the Torah's kingdom, which is counterposed to the rule
of the worldly kingdom/authorities:[37]

> R. Neḥunia b. Hakannah said: whoever takes upon himself the yoke of the
> Torah (עול התורה), the yoke of the [imperial, secular] kingdom (עול מלכות)
> is removed from him, as well as the yoke of everyday concerns/earning a
> living (עול דרך ארץ). But whoever breaks off from himself the yoke of the
> Torah, the yoke of the [imperial, secular] kingdom is placed upon him, as
> well as the yoke of everyday concerns.[38]

The issue is further addressed in *m. Ber.* 2:2, where the recitation of the
Shema ("Hear, O Israel") prayer is discussed:

> R. Joshua b. Korḥah said: why was the section of "Hear" (Deut 6:4–9 start-
> ing with "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one") placed (in

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[35] See Leahy, "The Epistle of James," 912. For a completely different appraisal, see
B. Reicke (*The Epistles of James, Peter, and Jude* [AB 37; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964],
29), who interprets "kingly" as indicating that the law is the law of Christ (*sic*!), who is
"superior to the Roman emperor."

[36] *Soferim* 13:6–7. The composition is usually dated to the period of the *geonim*.

[37] Cf. Rom 13:1–7.

[38] English translations of rabbinic material are mine own unless otherwise specified.

recitation) before that of "And if you will obey my commandments" (Deut 11:13–17)? So that one should first accept upon himself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven (עול מלכות שמים) and then take upon himself the yoke of the commandments (עול מצות).

Using the term "kingdom of heaven," a characteristically rabbinic substitute for the "kingdom of God"—a tendency of which the Matthean usage is usually seen as an early proto-rabbinic example[39]—the Mishnah claims that the acceptance of / belief in God as the only true king should undergird (precede) Torah observance. Finally, one additional Tannaitic source not only combines the motifs found in the above passages from *m. Avot* and *m. Berakhot* but also links them to the core principle of the religiously sanctioned behavior outlined in Lev 19:18:

> "If they were wise, they would understand this, [they would discern their latter end!]" (Deut 32:29) If Israel kept the words of the Torah given to them, no people or kingdom would rule over them. . . . If they only paid attention to what their father Jacob told them: Take upon you [the yoke of] the Kingdom of heaven and emulate one another in the fear of God and practice kindness to one another.[40]

Two observations are pertinent here: (1) In the rabbinic discussions the kingly status of the Torah is intrinsically connected to the notion of the kingdom of God/heaven, understood as the "existential space" of a person who has accepted God as his only ruler; the demands of God's Torah are therefore absolutely obligatory.[41] (2) It is not only Lev 19:18 but also, and maybe even more prominently, Deut 6:4 (faith in one God) that provide the exegetical foundation for the elaboration of the topic.

In fact, the link between God's dominion ("Hear, O Israel") and the obligation to fulfill the commandments is already hinted at in the biblical passage immediately preceding Deut 6:4, which presents the necessary connection between "hearing" and "doing": "Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them; that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey" (Deut 6:3, cf. Exod 24:7). The idea

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[39] See D. Bivin, "Jesus and the Oral Torah: The Unutterable Name of God," *Jerusalem Perspective* 5 (1988): 1–2; R. Lindsey, "The Kingdom of God: God's Power among Believers," *Jerusalem Perspective* 24 (1990): 6.

[40] *Sifre Deut.*, 323.

[41] For an illuminating comparison with Jesus' notion of the kingdom, see D. Flusser, "The Kingdom of Heaven," in idem, *Jesus* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1997/2001), 104–12.

is further developed, albeit in a slightly different form, in early rabbinic sources.[42]

Addressing what he perceives as lapses in the observance of important Torah precepts derived from Lev 19:18, James seems to be fully aware of the exegetical connection between the notion of the kingly Torah and the "Hear, O Israel" proclamation in Deut 6:4, which he strives to properly reestablish. This is indicated by the fact that his reasoning is put forward in the same terms of the crucial link between "hearing" and "doing" or, alternatively, between the faith in one God and following his precepts:[43]

> (1:22) But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. . . . (2:18) But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. (19) You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe— and shudder. (20) Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? (Jas 1:22, 2:18–20)

The lapses the Epistle is explicitly reacting to are those of negligence— under the pretence of faith in God's help—in keeping one's commitment to the well-being of one's fellow believer (Jas 2:14–17). Generally speaking, the author's criticism might have had something to do with Pauline-type ideas undermining, as it were, the emphasis on concrete religious obligations derived from the Torah; but there are no specific indications of that. And, of course, one would not find in Paul's writings anything like encouragement of the abovementioned negligence.

Whatever the particular setting of the discourse, James's strategy is to emphasize the link between one's professed belief in one God and one's readiness to fulfill the Torah's precepts; and in this, as we have seen, he anticipates the topical patterns of later rabbinic discussions. It is highly unlikely—as unlikely as in the case of his presentation of Lev 19:18 as the sum total of the Torah—that James was the first to discuss the topic, with later sages following his lead (or reinventing it independently). In light of the absence of the "royal" appellation for the Torah in the Gospel tradition—given all its extensive use of the kingdom of God/of heaven language—it is also not likely that James here addresses intra-Christian concerns. It seems much more plausible that the Epistle responds to,

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[42] See, for example, *m. Avot* 1:17.

[43] Unlike Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11 and Heb 10:38, the author of James does not employ the verse from Hab 2:4 ("He who through faith is righteous will live" or "The righteous will live thanks to his faith"). See discussion below, pp. 99–100.

and thus bears witness to, an existing exegetical pattern, of which more fully developed offshoots are found later in rabbinic literature. One may suggest that the topical affinity between James's noteworthy use of the "royal"/"kingly" appellation with regard to the Torah and the notion of accepting the "yoke" of God's kingdom and that of the commandments, reflected in rabbinic traditions, turns the Epistle into an early witness for this exegetical pattern.

Admittedly, there are in James similarities to the Jesus tradition reflected in the Sermon on the Mount, even if the "royal Torah" motif is not among them. The insistence that "hearing" is not enough, that there is a need to fulfill God's will, characteristic of Matt 7:21–24, is usually mentioned in this context. It has also been observed that the Shema retains its centrality for Matthew, as it does for James.[44] However, this is not enough to establish a general connection between the Sermon and James, let alone literary dependence. It should be emphasized that the exegetical frameworks differ substantially—the notion of Jesus as a messianic intermediary revealing the ultimate interpretation of God's Torah, central to Matthew 5–7, is completely absent from James's argumentation. There is thus no particular reason to see James as proceeding—as Matthew seems to have done—vis-à-vis an "original" version of the Sermon.[45] It is more probable that in James (and to a certain extent in Matthew also) we have a reference to a common topic of early exegetical discourse, promoting the proto-rabbinic insistence on the importance of practical—not hypocritical or "external"—expression of one's faith.[46]

Torah as the Law of Freedom

The presentation of the Torah as the law of freedom is arguably the most conspicuous motif in the first part of the Epistle (Jas 1:25, 2:12). The notion

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[44] See B. Gerhardsson, *The Shema in the New Testament* (Lund: Novapress, 1996).

[45] As against the evaluation suggested in P. Sigal, "The Halakhah of James," in *Intergerini Parietis Septum (Eph. 2:14): Essays Presented to Markus Barth on his Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. D. Y. Hadidian; PTMS 33; Pittsburgh, Pa.: Pickwick, 1981), 338–39.

[46] The intrinsic link between faith in one God and the commandment to love God "with all one's heart, with all one's soul and with all one's might" is explicitly established in the Shema (Deut 6:4–5); this link was not overlooked by rabbinic tradition. See, e.g., *m. Ber.* 9:5, where the link is developed in the direction of trials and even martyrdom: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. With all your heart—with both of your inclinations, with the good inclination and with the evil inclination. With all your soul—even if he should take your soul (life). With all your might—with all your wealth. Another reading, with all your might—with every measure that he has measured for you, be exceedingly grateful to him."

of freedom (ἐλευθερία, *libertas*) was an important one in the Greco–Roman
world, and the Jewish Hellenistic philosopher Philo wrote an entire trea-
tise expounding that *Every Good Man Is Free*.[47] However, clear evidence
for perceiving the Torah as the law of freedom is lacking in Philo, whereas
it is indicated in some rabbinic sources—the earliest documented occur-
rences being those in the Mishnaic tractate *Avot*. In *m. Avot* 3:5, quoted
above, R. Neḥunia b. Hakannah claims that a person who is ready to
accept the yoke of the Torah is *freed* from enslavement both to political
authorities and to the necessities of a mundane existence.[48]

   This passage can be seen as one of the key corroborations of the Jew-
ish tradition's internalization of the concept of freedom, as reconstructed
by Shlomo Pines.[49] According to his analysis, the notion of freedom as
a supreme religious value was foreign to ancient biblical tradition, and
it took hold in Jewish thought only later—namely, under the influence
of Greco–Roman culture. Jews, however, lacked both real-life experience
of (political) freedom and earlier religious reflection on such experience.
In consequence, the cultural emphasis on freedom as a fundamental and
highly cherished human value was transformed into the aspiration for lib-
eration. So, in *m. Avot*'s terms, emancipation from enslavement is clearly
presented as an objective to strive for, though the Mishnah presupposes
that even now there may be individuals who, having liberated themselves
from earthly yokes, are, so to speak, living in the kingdom of God.[50] This
same motif is partially invoked again in *Num. Rab.* 19:26, this time with
explicit reference to the freedom acquired via the Torah:

> And another reason why it (the Torah) was given in the wilderness is this:
> As the wilderness is neither sown nor tilled, so if one accepts the yoke of the
> Torah (עול התורה) he is relieved of the yoke of everyday concerns/earning a
> living; and as the wilderness does not yield any taxes from crops, so (Torah)
> scholars are free men in this world (כך בני תורה בני חורין).

Another rabbinic tradition, found in the last chapter of tractate *Avot* (con-
sidered to be a later addition), strives to provide this idea with a proper
midrashic backing (*m. Avot* 6:2):

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[47] Philo, *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (*Philo* [tr. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker;
10 vols.; LCL; London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929–1962],
9:11–111).

[48] *M. Avot* 3:5. See the discussion on p. 88 above.

[49] See S. Pines, "על גלגולים של המונח חירות [On the Metamorphoses of the Notion of
Freedom]," *Iyyun* 33 (1984): 247–65.

[50] See discussion in Flusser, *Jesus*, 106–7, 110.

Baraitha: R. Joshua b. Levi said: Every day a *bath qol* (heavenly voice) goes from Mount Horeb, and thus proclaims: "Woe unto men on account of [their] contempt towards the Torah, for whoever occupies himself not with the [study] of Torah is called '[the] rebuked [one]'" . . . and it says, "and the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables" (Exod 32:16). Read not *haruth* (חָרוּת, which means "graven") but *heruth* (חֵרוּת, which means "freedom"). For there is no free man for you, but he that occupies himself with the study of the Torah; and whoever regularly occupies himself with the study of the Torah, lo, he is exalted.[51]

One may say that a somewhat desperate, though undoubtedly resourceful, attempt to "uncover" freedom in the Decalogue core of the Torah aptly illustrates two important remarks made by Pines concerning (1) the desire of late antique Jewish tradition to "domesticate" the notion of freedom, and (2) the absence of clear precedents in the biblical sources. The issue of the exact nature of the freedom given by the Torah (freedom from what or whom?) addressed in the Mishnah is revisited—with a twist—in an early Amoraic midrash (*Lev. Rab.* 18:3):

R. Yochanan said in the name of R. Eliezer the Galilean: When Israel stood at Mount Sinai and said, "All that the Lord had spoken will we do and obey" (Exod 24:7), the Holy One, blessed be He, called the angel of death and said to him: "Even though I made you a universal ruler over earthly creatures, you have nothing to do with this nation. Why?—Because they are My children"—as it is written, "You are the children of the Lord, your God" (Deut 14:1). . . . The same is [indicated in] the verse, "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven (*haruth*) upon the tables" (Exod 32:16). Read not *haruth* (graven) but *heruth* (freedom). R. Judah and R. Nehemiah and the rabbis [differed on the point]. R. Judah said: freedom from the angel of death; R. Nehemiah said: freedom from [hostile] governments; the rabbis said: freedom from sufferings.

Thus, in addition to the routine "hostile authorities," liberation from suffering and ultimately death is also posited here. The passage from *Leviticus Rabbah*, then, marks a collation of motifs attested elsewhere in rabbinic literature; exegetically reading "freedom" into the description of the Decalogue covenant found in Exod 32:16 and elaborating on the nature of the emancipation achieved through succumbing to the rule of the Torah, which in turn is presented as the ultimate liberator. The trajectory leading from *m. Avot* 3:5 to *Lev. Rab.* 18:3 becomes even more explicit if one

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[51] Cf. *Kallah Rabbati* 5:3.

supposes that both suffering and death could have been perceived by the propagators of the tradition as core aspects of mundane existence.[52]

Unlike later rabbinic sources, James presents no explicit midrashic elaboration of the Torah of freedom motif; this idea, presupposing the high value placed on freedom, is invoked here as an existing and established concept in no need of polemical defense. The situation thus differs considerably from Paul's rhetoric in Gal 2:4. Paul's attitude toward the νόμος is notoriously complicated and cannot be adequately discussed here. Suffice it to say that his evaluations of the Torah of Moses—either positive or negative—seem to undergo change, depending on the nature of the intended audience.[53] The specific meanings ascribed to νόμος may also vary correspondingly: in addition to (and in differentiation from) the Torah of Moses, in Paul's writings νόμος may also stand for a limited set of ritual observances distinguishing Jews from non-Jews.

Seemingly, it is in this latter sense that νόμος is counterposed to freedom in Galatians 2. The apostle insists that the Gentile fellow-travelers of the Jesus movement are free from the "works of the law," most pointedly from the need to undergo circumcision. Whatever place and importance should be ascribed to the passage within the overall picture of Paul's religious outlook, in terms of his rhetorical strategy here, freedom is intrinsically linked to overcoming submission to the law. It is this thought pattern, combined with the above evidence from *m. Avot*, that informed Pines's psychologically tinged explanation of the apostle's stance. According to Pines, in fact Paul was a party to a general Jewish tendency to emphasize the need for liberation from the various mundane-existence-related "yokes" by means of total submission to the rule of Torah. Only, he did not stop there; he took the task of self-liberation one step further—namely, he called for liberation from enslavement to those (ritual) Torah regulations that were conditioned by the worldly setting.[54]

In light of such an understanding of Paul's thinking here, it is only natural that James's definition of the Torah as the law of freedom has been

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[52] See discussion on *m. Avot* 3:5 above. Cf. Rom 5:14; 8:21–22.

[53] See Gager, *Reinventing Paul*.

[54] See Pines, "על גלגולים [Metamorphoses]." For the association between the obligation to obey the Torah's ritual regulations and the constraints of mundane existence, see Philo, *Migr.* 89–93. Philo's operative conclusions, however, differ from those of Paul. For a recent discussion of Paul's attitude toward the Torah's "external" regulations, see S. Ruzer, "Paul's Stance on the Torah Revisited: Gentile Addressees and the Jewish Setting," in *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (ed. T. G. Casey and J. Taylor; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 75–97.

interpreted as the polemical reverse of Paul's stance. There are, however, strong arguments against such an interpretation: (1) as noted, the Torah of freedom theme is invoked in James as an existing and established one in no need of polemical defense; (2) the commandments that James insists it is necessary to fulfill under the law of freedom have nothing to do with the ritual observance that according to Paul one should be liberated from in order to move from law to freedom.[55]

   These arguments are admittedly not decisive. In principle, it is possible that the Epistle is reacting to a somewhat different variation of the motif attested in Galatians—a variation expressing either Paul's own thought or that of certain "Paulinists."[56] This possibility seems unlikely to me, but it cannot be excluded. In any case, the fact that the Torah-as-liberator/ Torah of freedom motif reappears in later rabbinic sources requires explanation. Although the commandments representing the divine law in these sources may differ from those in James, both bear witness to the basic "Torah of freedom" pattern. One possible interpretation would be that, even if James did intend to address some intra-Christian tendency he found reproachable, his strategy relied on existing exegetical patterns of broader Jewish circulation. The Epistle would then be our earliest witness for a motif otherwise attested only from the third century CE (in the Mishnah). Another possibility would be that both James and later the rabbis were responding here to Pauline-type ideas coming from within the Christian movement. This solution presupposes the rejection of Pines's thesis that the early Jewish "liberation theology" responded to ideas widespread in Greco–Roman culture; and proposes, instead, that it was predicated completely on the Christian challenge.[57] This is an intriguing suggestion but, again, in my opinion not very probable. Yet even if such a possibility is considered, the Epistle of James retains its importance as the first

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[55] This last feature has prompted some interpreters to suggest that James in his counterattack completely misunderstood Paul. See M. Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James* (ed. H. Koester; trans. M. A. Williams; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 79–80; F. Hahn, "Genesis 15:6 im Neuen Testament," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie: Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H. W. Wolff; Munich: Kaiser, 1971), 97; Bartlett, "The Epistle of James," 178.

[56] See Bartlett, ibid. and n. 12 there.

[57] An illuminating example of the presentation of some rabbinic developments as conditioned by Christian challenges may be found in I. Yuval, "Easter and Passover as Early Jewish–Christian Dialogue," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times* (eds. P. E. Bradshaw and L. A. Hoffman; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 98–124.

witness for a *long Jewish exegetical trajectory*, albeit in this case one engen-
dered by Paul.

ABRAHAM AS MODEL OF THE OBSERVANT BELIEVER

In his argument favoring deeds as necessary for the validation of faith, the
author of James invokes the example of Abraham, linking Gen 15:6 to the
offering of Isaac in Genesis 22:[58]

> (21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered[59] his
> son Isaac upon the altar? (22) You see that faith was active along with his
> works, and faith was completed by works, (23) and the scripture was fulfilled
> which says, "Abraham believed God, and it [his deed] was reckoned to him
> as righteousness" (Gen 15:6); and he was called the friend of God. (24) You
> see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. (Jas 2:21–24)

This invocation of Abraham has often been interpreted as meant to oppose
Pauline ideas expressed, inter alia, in Rom 4:2–12 (cf. Gal 3:6):[60]

> (4:2) For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast
> about, but not before God. (3) For what does the scripture say? "Abraham
> believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." . . . (6) So also
> David pronounces a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righ-
> teousness apart from works . . . . (9) Is this blessing pronounced only upon
> the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? We say that faith was
> reckoned to Abraham as righteousness. (10) How then was it reckoned to
> him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but
> before he was circumcised. (11) He received circumcision as a sign or seal of
> the righteousness which he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised.
> The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being
> circumcised and who thus have righteousness reckoned to them, (12) and
> likewise the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but
> also follow the example of the faith which our father Abraham had before
> he was circumcised.

To my mind, however, some internal features of the Jas 2:21–24 argu-
ment indicate that the author of the Epistle was not at all "locked into"

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[58] In Jas 2:25–26, Rahab is mentioned as an additional example of faith expressed in
deeds. For a discussion, see Bartlett, "The Epistle of James," 176–78.

[59] The word used here (ἀνενέγκας) has prompted some interpreters to suggest that the
author of the Epistle might have been aware of the exegetical tradition claiming that Abra-
ham did actually offer Isaac as a sacrificial lamb.

[60] See, for example, Bartlett, "The Epistle of James," 175, and Niehoff, "Implied Audi-
ence," pp. 64–67.

the specifics of Paul's polemic as reflected in Romans and Galatians. The whole issue of Gentile members of the Jesus movement and Paul's argument against their obligation to undergo circumcision—the central theme of the Pauline passages in question—appears nowhere in James. The example of Abraham's deed-centered righteousness is employed here to promote the same basic demands of the Torah which are derived from the love-your-neighbor precept discussed above—nothing like the ritual demands of Judaism that Paul did not want Gentile believers to embrace. Correspondingly, circumcision does not feature in the description of Abraham's righteous behavior ("deeds"), being substituted—as the "seal of righteousness"—by the offering of Isaac. In other words, it is not the Genesis 15–Genesis 17 polemical Pauline trajectory (faith / circumcision) that is elaborated here but rather that of Genesis 15–Genesis 22 (faith / Akedah).

These internal indications weaken the probability that James's statement on Abraham is a polemical anti-Pauline move, but they do not completely annul the validity of such an evaluation. As in the cases discussed above, it is possible in principle that James dealt here—albeit in a different setting—with some distant "aftershocks" of Paul's influence. Yet again, the fact that James, unlike Paul, applies the reasoning from Abraham's example neither to Christology nor to the Gentile conundrum, but rather to a general topic of Jewish exegetic discourse—the core principles of the Torah and the specific precepts of behavior derived from them—needs to be accounted for. It is thus imperative to check the Epistle's possible points of reference in that discourse.[61] In other words, even without reaching a definite conclusion on the question of whether or not the author was acquainted with and troubled by certain elements of Pauline thought, one may still examine the Epistle's value as a witness to existing and developing broader patterns of Jewish exegesis.

Second Temple and early rabbinic sources testify to a clearly apologetic trend that aims to present Abraham, the father of the Israelite nation, as one who had fulfilled Torah obligations long before they were revealed to the people of Israel on Sinai. Ben Sira 44:19–21 provides a characteristic example:[62]

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[61] For an analogous approach to some Pauline traditions, see discussion in M. Kister, "Romans 5:12–21 against the Background of Torah-Theology and Hebrew Usage," *HTR* 100/4 (2007): 391–424.

[62] Cf. *m. Qid.* 4:14.

Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations, and no one has been found like him in glory; (20) he kept the law of the Most High, and was taken into covenant with him; he established the covenant in his flesh, and when he was tested he was found faithful. (21) Therefore the Lord assured him by an oath that the nations would be blessed through his posterity; that he would multiply him like the dust of the earth, and exalt his posterity like the stars, and cause them to inherit from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The passage combines two important claims regarding Abraham: (1) he kept the Lord's Torah (with reference to Gen 26:5),[63] and (2) he was found faithful[64] when he withstood God's test. In *Jubilees*, characteristically, Abraham is portrayed as arranging his rites of thanksgiving along the lines of the sacrificial Torah ordinances and thus inaugurating the Feast of Tabernacles (*Jub.* 16:20–27);[65] moreover, even the Akedah of the Genesis narrative is transformed here into the foundational event of the observance of the Passover festival (*Jub.* 17:15, 18:3).[66] In *Jub.* 17:15–18, Abraham

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[63] "Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

[64] Abraham is described as "faithful" (נאמן) already in Neh 9:8. His faith, highlighted in Gen 15:6, becomes a focus in Philo, *Leg. All.* 3.228 (cf. *Mut. Nom.* 177); *Jub.* 23:10; *b. Meg.* 11a. According to *Mek. R. Ishmael Be-shallaḥ* 3 and 6, it is by virtue of Abraham's faith that he inherited both this world and the world to come and that God parted the sea for his descendants: בזכות אברהם אביהם אני קורע להם את הים . . . וכן אתה מוצא שלא ירש אברהם אבינו העולם הזה והעולם הבא אלא בזכות אמנה שהאמין בה׳ שנ׳ והאמין בה׳ ויחשבה לו צדקה (Gen 15:6).

[65] "And he built there an altar to the Lord who had delivered him, and who was making him rejoice in the land of his sojourning, and he celebrated a festival of joy in this month seven days, near the altar which he had built at the Well of the Oath. And he built booths for himself and for his servants on this festival, and he was the first to celebrate the feast of tabernacles on the earth. And during these seven days he brought each day to the altar a burnt offering to the Lord, two oxen, two rams, seven sheep, one he-goat, for a sin offering, that he might atone thereby for himself and for his seed. And, as a thank-offering, seven rams, seven kids, seven sheep, and seven he-goats, and their fruit offerings and their drink offerings; and he burnt all the fat thereof on the altar, a chosen offering unto the Lord for a sweet smelling savour. And morning and evening he burnt fragrant substances, frankincense and galbanum, and stackte, and nard, and myrrh, and spice, and costum; all these seven he offered, crushed, mixed together in equal parts (and) pure. And he celebrated this feast during seven days, rejoicing with all his heart and with all his soul, he and all those who were in his house. . . . And he blessed his Creator. . . . And he blessed and rejoiced, and he called the name of this festival the festival of the Lord, a joy acceptable to the Most High God."

[66] "And it came to pass in the seventh week, in the first year thereof, *in the first month in this jubilee, on the twelfth of this month.* . . . And he went to the place *on the third day*, and he saw the place afar off."

is also described as faithful when tested.[67] The appellation "faithful"—seemingly an interpretation of Abraham as a man of faith, as stated in Gen 15:6—turns Abraham into a forerunner of Moses, the recipient of the Torah, whom God called "נאמן, faithful."[68] Deeds are presented in Ben Sira as the true expression/seal of faith, and the "test" clearly refers to the story of the offering of Isaac, which opens in the Bible with the key phrase, "After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here am I.'" (Gen 22:1).[69]

One may note parenthetically that the Epistle (unlike Rom 1:17, Gal 3:11 and Heb 10:38) does not employ the verse from Hab 2:4 (צדיק באמונתו יחיה), which can be rendered in English as either, "He who through faith is righteous will live," or "The righteous will live through (thanks to) his faith." In Qumran, the former interpretation is clearly preferred:

> (7:14) See, it is conceited and does not give way (15) [. . . his soul within him]. *Blank* Its interpretation: they will double upon them (16) [. . . and] find [no] mercy at being judged. [. . .] (17) [. . . (Hab 2:4b) *But he who through faith is righteous will live.* (8:1) Its interpretation concerns all observing the Law in the House of Judah, whom (2) God will free from punishment on account of their deeds and of their faithfulness (3) to the Teacher of Righteousness. (1QpHab 7:14–8:3)[70]

Faith is thus presented as the underlying principle of Torah observance.[71] As a matter of fact, apart from the specific issue of ritual precepts, the same is true with regard to early Christian usage. In addition to the New Testament instances mentioned above, 1 Clement 31:2 also points to such an interpretation: "Why was our father Abraham blessed? Was it

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[67] Cf. *Jub.* 16:18; see also 1 Macc 2:52; *4QPseudo-Jubilees*[b] [4Q226] 7:1; Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.223 and 233–234. See Bartlett, "The Epistle of James," 174–75. I am also indebted here to Joshua Tilton; see J. N. Tilton, "The Approval of Abraham in Early Jewish and Christian Sources," *Jerusalem Perspective* 2007 (March): http://www.jerusalemperspective.com/default.aspx?tabid=27&articleid=1931.

[68] Num 12:7. Moses is the only person to whom the Pentateuch applies the term.

[69] Cf. Philo, *Abr.* 192, who, while likewise emphasizing Abraham's faithfulness to the commandments, interprets the Akedah in a strictly allegorical way.

[70] Cf. 1QH[a] 8:24–26: "(24) And you, you are [a lenient] and compassionate [God,] slow to anger, full of favor and of truth ,who forgives sin [ ] (25) and has pity on the [evil of those who love you] and keep your precepts, those who turn to you with faith (באמונה) and a perfect heart [ ] (26) to serve you [and to do what] is good in your eyes." The English translation of Qumranic material in this paper follows W. G. E. Watson in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (ed. F. García Martínez; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

[71] Note that 1QH[a] 8:24–26 (see previous note), stresses the same idea without reference to the verse from Habakkuk; and cf. *b. Mak.* 24a.

not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith?" Alternatively, *Mekilta de R. Ishmael* attests to a combination of the notion that if a person, out of faith, fulfills even a single commandment, he is worthy to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,[72] with a complementary motif: as a reward for his unwavering faith in God's salvation in this world of darkness, he will inherit both this world and the world to come. Abraham is singled out in the *Mekilta* as exemplifying the latter kind of faith, with Gen 15:6 quoted as the prooftext.[73] It turns out that the faith mentioned in Hab 2:4 is generally perceived in our sources as either belief in salvation or as the right inner stance underlying the fulfillment of commandments. Of course, the two notions are not necessarily unrelated.

To return to the patterns emphasized in Ben Sira, Abraham's trial/temptation is midrashically expanded in the Mishnah into the motif of ten trials, where the offering of Isaac seemingly provides the culmination.[74] On the other hand, *Jub.* 17:15–18 already attests to the explicit exegetical link between Gen 15:6 (Abraham's faith) and Genesis 22 (his trials and afflictions):

> And it came to pass in the seventh week, in its first year, in the first month in that jubilee, on the twelfth of that month, that words came in heaven concerning Abraham that he was faithful in everything that was told him and he loved the Lord and was faithful in all affliction(s). And Prince Mastema came and he said before God, "Behold, Abraham loves Isaac his son. And he is more pleased with him that everything. Tell him to offer him (as) a burnt-offering upon the altar. And you will see whether he will do this thing. And you will know whether he is faithful in everything in which you test him." And the Lord was aware that Abraham was faithful in all his afflictions. . . . And in everything in which he tested him, he was found faithful. And his soul was not impatient. And he was not slow to act because he was faithful and a lover of the Lord.[75]

Similarly, *Jubilees* attests to the early presence of a motif (also found in Philo)[76] highlighting Abraham as the one who established faith in the one God in Israel:

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[72] See *Mek. de-R. Ishmael Be-shallaḥ* 6.

[73] Ibid.; cf. *Mek. de-R. Shimon b. Yoḥai* 14.

[74] See *m. Avot* 5:3.

[75] English quote is according to R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

[76] For Philo's position, see Niehoff, "The Implied Audience," n. **33** and the discussion there.

> And it came to pass in the sixth week, in the seventh year, that Abram spoke to Terah his father, saying, "O father!" And he said, "Behold, here I am, my son." And he said: "What help or advantage do we have from these idols before which you worship and bow down? Because there is not any spirit in them, for they are mute, and they are the misleading of the heart. Do not worship them. Worship the God of heaven, who sends down rain and dew upon the earth, and who makes everything upon the earth, and created everything by his word, and all life is in his presence. Why do you worship those who have no spirit in them? Because they are works of the hands, you are carrying them upon your shoulders, and there is no help from them for you, except great shame for those who made them and the misleading of the heart for those who worship them. Do not worship them." (*Jub.* 12:1–5)

Reinvoking this motif, a Targumic tradition on Gen 49:1–2 that seems to go back to pre-Christian times intrinsically links that faith with deeds, as proclaimed in Deut 6:4–5. Portraying Abraham as the true founder of "monotheistic belief" (in connection with Genesis 15?), the Targum also claims that this belief was later successfully transmitted from generation to generation to all of Jacob's sons—notwithstanding intermittent failures, such as Ishmael and Esau:

> After the twelve tribes of Jacob had gathered together and surrounded the bed of gold on which our father Jacob were lying, they were hoping that he would reveal to them the order of the blessings, but it was hidden from him. Our father Jacob answered and said to them: "From Abraham, my father's father, was born the blemished Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah. And from Isaac, my father, was born the blemished Esau, my brother. And I fear lest there should be among you one whose heart is divided against his brothers to go and worship before foreign idols." The twelve sons of Jacob answered together and said: "Hear us, O Israel, our father; the Lord our God is one Lord." Jacob answered [and blessed them, each according to his good works] and said: "Blessed be his name; may the glory of his kingdom be for ever and ever."[77]

Abraham as the Beloved of God (φίλος ϑεοῦ) and the Akedah

While we have seen that already in *Jubilees* Abraham was presented as the founder of the monotheistic faith, we have noted that in the early Targumic tradition this long-standing motif is further elaborated, with Deut 6:4–5 explicitly singled out as the expression of that faith. Since

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[77] *Tg. Neof.* to Gen 49:1–2; cf. *Exod. Rab.* 23:5. See discussion in G. Di Luccio, "An Examination of the Synoptic Problem in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew in Light of the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006), 25–30.

the passage from Deuteronomy establishes an intrinsic link between the
faith in one God and the commandment to love him "with all one's heart,
with all one's soul and with all one's might," the portrayal of Abraham
as the one who truly loves God is only natural. This portrayal is found
in *Jubilees* 17 (quoted above) and is widely attested in rabbinic tradition,
inter alia, explicitly in connection to Abraham's trials, most prominently
the Akedah. Thus already in the Mishnah we read: "With ten temptations
was Abraham our father tempted, and he stood steadfast in them all, to
show how great was the love of Abraham our father."[78] It is thus no won-
der that scholars have perceived the application of the appellation "the
friend of God/one who loves God" (φίλος θεοῦ) to Abraham in Jas 2:23 as
being "within tradition."[79] The traditional connection of trials to faith and
to love is likewise highlighted in Jas 1:2–8, 12.

In later rabbinic sources, a variation of the same pattern is found, where
Abraham is defined as typifying a "Pharisee of love." Thus in *y. Soṭah* 5:5
[20c] we read:[80]

> One verse of Scripture says, "And you shall love the Lord your God" (Deut
> 6:5). And another verse of Scripture says, "You shall fear the Lord your God;
> you shall serve him" (Deut 6:13). . . . "A Pharisee-out-of-fear," like Job. "A
> Pharisee-out-of-love," like Abraham. And the only one of them all who is
> truly beloved is the Pharisee-out-of-love, like Abraham. Abraham made the
> impulse to do evil into good. What is the Scriptural basis for that statement?
> "And thou didst find his heart faithful before thee" (Neh 9:8). . . . R. Aqiba
> was on trial before Tonosteropos [Turnus Rufus] the Wicked. The time for
> reciting the Shema came. He began to recite it and smiled. [The wicked
> one] said to him, "Old man, old man! You are either a wizard or you have
> contempt for pain [that you smile]." He said to him . . . "For my whole life
> I have been reciting this verse: "And you shall love the Lord your God with
> all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut 6:5). I loved
> God with all my heart, and I loved him with all my might. But *with all my
> soul* until now was not demanded of me. And now that the time has come
> for me to love him with all my soul, as the time for reciting the Shema has
> arrived, I smile that the occasion has come to carry out the verse at that very
> moment at which I recite the Scripture."

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[78] *M. Avot* 5:3; trans. H. Danby (*The Mishnah* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933]).
The command to love God in Deut 6:5 is interpreted in *m. Ber.* 9:5 as intrinsically con-
nected to the readiness to stand steadfast in trials, albeit without mentioning Abraham.
See pp. 89–90 and n. 46 above.

[79] See Sigal, "The Halakhah of James," 347–48, who quotes Philo (*Abr.* 31 [170] and 45
[262]), *Jub.* 19:9, etc., as precedents.

[80] Cf. *y. Ber.* 9:5 [14b]; *b. Soṭah* 22b.

According to this tradition, Abraham is the prototype of a "Pharisee-of-love." For him, the fulfillment of the commandments is associated with the right disposition of the heart and complete trust in God—even in the face of imminent martyrdom. The parallel to R. Aqiva's "loving suffering" indicates that the fundamental connection to Abraham's tests and trials, most prominently the Akedah, is also made here, as in the Mishnaic passage quoted earlier.

It may be observed that the Epistle of James, occupying with regard to its dating a position midway between Second Temple and rabbinic sources, collates most of the Abraham-centered motifs found before and/or after its time in the broader Jewish tradition. The only substantial component of the above thematic elements that is absent from the Epistle (and indeed from the whole early spectrum of surviving Jewish writings), is the "Pharisee-of-love" motif. The Epistle thus becomes an important witness for the history of this cluster of exegetical patterns.

Conclusion

The analysis of the Epistle of James suggested in this paper exemplifies the insights that can be gleaned from viewing its exegetical strategies within the context of contemporaneous Jewish concerns. In fact, although the question of the Epistle's setting, including the possible context of an anti-Pauline sentiment within the Jesus movement, remains undecided, this reframing has compelled a reevaluation of the letter and its objectives. The passages discussed here lack unambiguous indications of the above sentiment, and I am inclined to see them as primarily addressing exegetical patterns of broader Jewish circulation. However, even if the solution of intra-Christian polemic is preferred, it appears that James might have "grafted" existing motifs—while reworking them—into his general exegetical design, as conditioned by the particular polemical situation. If these motifs can be isolated, they will provide evidence for certain general trajectories in the development of Jewish exegesis. Such input should be especially anticipated when the New Testament traditions in question are devoid of a christological agenda.[81]

Two exegetical motifs, conspicuous in the first two chapters of the Epistle, were chosen as test cases: (1) Torah as the "perfect royal law of

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[81] But see Niehoff, "The Implied Audience of the Letter of James," in this volume, for a different take on the lack of a christological agenda.

freedom," and (2) Abraham as an outstanding example of a righteous man whose faith is expressed in the *deed* of the Akedah. In both cases, James' reasoning seems detached from christological or explicitly eschatological concerns; and as noted, neither can any clearly polemical link to Paul's ideas be discerned here. I have discussed relevant exegetical patterns from Second Temple Jewish writings, as well as traditions attested in rabbinic, mainly Palestinian, sources. With regard to the "royal" designation of the Torah and the perception of the Torah as the true liberator, I have pointed out a topical proximity to certain tendencies in rabbinic thought, which suggests that the Epistle may be an early witness to an exegetical trajectory already existing in its day but otherwise attested only from the time of the Mishnah.

In its portrayal of Abraham, the Epistle collates most of the motifs used by a variety of texts, of both Second Temple and rabbinic provenance, to cast the patriarch as the prototype of the truly just man, whose faith in and love of the One God find their expression in the ultimate deed—his readiness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. On the other hand, the Epistle does not introduce here any peculiar Jesus-centered sub-motifs unattested in these other sources. Together with the Targum, the Epistle of James provides important evidence for an early exegetical linkage between Abraham's belief as expressed in Genesis 15:6 and the expression of God's unity in Deuteronomy 6:4.

The impressive "piling on" of various motifs may be seen as characteristic of the Epistle's composition. It should be emphasized, however, that in James the "collage" of exegetical motifs is mobilized to promote the fulfillment of commandments derived from Lev 19:18—with no eschatological/messianic reevaluation of their meaning. Even if the author of the Epistle did react to some distant offshoots of Pauline ideas, in his response he seems to have relied completely on existing exegetical patterns of broader Jewish circulation and may thus be seen as a key witness to their early history.

PART TWO

COMPARATIVE STUDIES

YOU WILL HAVE TREASURE IN HEAVEN[1]

Gary A. Anderson

As most students of Second Temple Judaism realize, the practice of almsgiving became an exceedingly important part of religious practice in this period. In the book of Tobit, almsgiving has a status equivalent to that of sacrifice. In what Tobit thinks is his deathbed speech to his son, he commends almsgiving as "an excellent offering (*dōron*) in the presence of the Most High" (4:11). Later in the book, Raphael declares that almsgiving has the power to "purge away sins" (12:9). One might be tempted to attribute this sort of rhetoric to the book of Tobit's Diaspora setting; in a land bereft of a Temple, one has to make due with what it available. But Ben Sira dispels this errant notion. For in Ben Sira 35:2 we read: "He who returns a kindness offers fine flour, and he who gives alms sacrifices a thank-offering." In an earlier essay I argued that almsgiving, like sacrifice, involved an act of exchange with the deity.[2] In giving alms to the poor person, one was really making a gift to God. This idea is already present in Prov 19:17, "He who is generous to the downtrodden makes a loan to the Lord; he will repay him his due"; but it appears most graphically illustrated in *Leviticus Rabbah* 34:7:[3]

> Rabbi Ze'ira observed: Even the ordinary conversation of the people of the Land of Israel is a matter of Torah. How might this be? A [poor] person on occasion will say to his neighbor: "*zakkî bî*," or *izdakkî bî*; by which he means: "acquire a merit [in heaven] for yourself through me."

This is a remarkable text for a couple of reasons. First of all, we see that giving alms is thought to be tantamount to depositing money directly in a heavenly treasury. This would mirror the act of sacrifice—just as the altar was conceived of as a means of conveying a gift to heaven so the hand of the poor person is a conduit for gifts destined for God. Mere mammon

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becomes a heavenly merit just as an animal is transformed into a pleasant savory aroma that can both please and appease the Creator. But secondly, the saying is significant because it shows how deeply into the popular imagination this notion of heavenly merits had penetrated. This is not simply a learned trope that circulated among the sages; it was the idiom of casual conversation on the streets of fourth-century Israel. And no doubt this colloquial expression—precisely because it was an accepted commonplace—must have been much older than its occurrence in this particular text.

If we can grant that the giving of alms is something like a bank deposit to an account in heaven, then one might wonder how to maximize one's capital. One option is to follow the example of Tobit and make regular contributions so that a generous nest egg might accumulate. For if one's treasure is a hedge against an uncertain future, then there would be very good reasons to keep your bottom line growing. And there is another advantage to regular donations to this account: the more regularly one contributes, the easier and more natural each donation will become. In this way one will be able to fulfill the commandment: "Do not let your eye *begrudge* the gift when you make it" (Tobit 4:7; cf. Deut 15:7b–8, 10a). It may be that St. Paul recalled this advice when he wrote, in his famous address on love, "If I give away all my possessions . . . but do not have love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor 13:3). But another option for the obligation to give alms—especially if almsgiving is considered a form of sacrifice—is to offer to the poor all that one has. In almsgiving that involves a heroic form of sacrifice, everything that one has is returned to God through the medium of the needy person.

In this paper I will consider how Jews and Christians in the late Second Temple period and just beyond thought about the questions that followed from the rising importance of almsgiving in the two respective religions. As we will see, there are considerable similarities between Judaism and Christianity on this topic, as well as some significant differences. However, even within the differences—which at first seem substantial—there are some surprising lines of agreement.

Prudential Almsgiving

As any wise investment officer would advise, one must make prudent investment choices. After all, if almsgiving is to make a difference, it must

be done responsibly. On the one hand, this requires careful scrutiny of the recipients. "To all those who practice righteousness," Tobit declares, "gives alms from your possessions" (4:6–7). On the other hand, it is also important to give in proportion to one's means: "If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have" (4:8). Should one give too much there would be the danger of cutting into the principal. If that is done too often, one will eventually become destitute and in need of alms oneself. It is this sort of prudential judgment that led the rabbis to codify the principle that one should give no more than one-fifth of one's principle at first, and subsequently only one-fifth of the interest earned on that principle.[4] Such stewardship nearly guarantees that one can keep giving alms year in and year out without becoming destitute oneself.

ALMSGIVING AND SACRIFICE

Though almsgiving requires a certain fiscal responsibility, this was not the only way to conceive of the matter. Because almsgiving was a way of depositing money directly into a heavenly treasury, it also intersected with another means of shipping goods directly to God, and that was sacrifice.[5] One of the major purposes of the altar in ancient Israel was to convey the sacrifices made by an individual to God in Heaven. For this reason the altar was thought to be the most holy of structures (*qodesh-qodashim*; cf. Exod 40:10), a degree of holiness it shared with the inner sanctum of the Temple, where God was thought to dwell. A particularly important biblical verse for the development of this theme was Prov 19:17, "He who is *generous* to the downtrodden *(honen dal) makes a loan to the*

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[4] See the Jerusalem Talmud (1:1, 15b) on *m. Peah* 1:1 and any of the traditional commentaries on the Mishnah. Clement of Alexandria (late second century CE), in his work, "Can the Rich Man be Saved?" also recognizes the need for prudence in regard to how much money ordinary lay people would be expected to part with. But also note that Cyprian (third century CE, from North Africa), in his treatise on almsgiving, believes that God is sufficiently generous that one can be assured that, however much one might wish to give, one will be sustained and rewarded in return (see Cyprian, chapters 8–13 of "Works and Almsgiving," in *St. Cyprian: Treatises* (FC 36; trans. by R. Deferrari; New York: Catholic University of America Press, 1958). As I shall discuss at the end of this essay, early Christianity proved a more hospitable environment for lavish acts of self-impoverishment.

[5] The books of Ben Sira and Tobit are quite clear on this fact (see discussion below), and thus they anticipate the Talmud (see *b. Sukkah* 49b, "almsgiving is better than sacrifice").

Lord; he will repay him his due."[6] This surprising text suggests that when one deposits coins in the hand of a poor person they are simultaneously transferred to God in heaven.

The Christian theologian Irenaeus of Lyons (second century CE) saw in Prov 19:17 a dramatic act of loving condescension on the part of God. Though God does not need our sacrifices or our money, he uses the altar and the waiting hand of the poor person as the means by which he may be approached.[7]

> Now we make offerings to Him [in the liturgy], not as though He stood in need of it. . . . And even [though] God does not need our possessions, . . . we need to offer something to God; as Solomon says: "He who is generous to the downtrodden, makes a loan to the Lord" (Prov 19:17). For God, who stands in need of nothing, takes our good works to Himself for this purpose, that He may grant us a recompense of His own good things, as our Lord says: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me; sick, and ye visited Me; in prison, and ye came to Me" (Matt 25:34–36).
>
> As, therefore, He does not stand in need of these [services], yet does desire that we should render them for our own benefit, lest we be unfruitful; so did the Word give to the people that very precept as to the making of oblations, although He stood in no need of them, that they might learn to serve God: thus is it, therefore, also His will that we, too, should offer a gift at the altar, frequently and without intermission.[8]

In this text, Irenaeus links together (1) sacrificial oblation; (2) almsgiving as a loan to God (Prov 19:17); and (3) the depiction of the last judgment in Matt 25:31–46.[9] According to Matthew, one will be judged on the basis

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[6] An exceedingly important text for the early Church, from the Syriac East to the Latin West. A reference to that verse appears in the *Sibylline Oracles* (though it is hard to know whether this represents a Second Temple Jewish usage or a later Christian addition): "Whoever gives alms knows that he is lending to God. Mercy [perhaps better: "charity"] saves from death when judgment comes." The citation is from *OTP* 1:347.

[7] St. Ephrem takes a comparable position on the role of almsgiving in the Divine Economy. See my discussion of his treatment in "Redeem Your Sins."

[8] *Haer.* 4.18; translation is taken from *ANF* 1:486.

[9] The linkage of Prov 19:17 and Matt 25:31–46 becomes standard for almost all commentators after Irenaeus. See, for example, St. John Chrysostom, *On Repentance and Almsgiving* (trans. G. G. Christo; FC 96; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1998), *Homily* 7.24, p. 105; St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Select Orations* (trans. M. Vinson; FC 107; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), *Oration* 14, pp. 68–70; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis, Books One to Three* (trans. J. Ferguson; FC 85; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), Book 3.6, p. 290; St. Ambrose, *S. Ambrosii, De Tobia: A Commentary, with an Introduction and Translation* (ed. L. M. Zucker; Patristic Studies 35; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1933), 71–73.

of one's generosity to Christ, who is present in the poor.[10] Irenaeus uses Prov 19:17 to fill out the picture drawn in Matthew 25. In giving alms to the poor one makes a loan to the God-man, Jesus Christ.[11] But it is important to note that Irenaeus does not think of this "loan" as a financial matter but as a liturgical act. Putting money in the hands of a poor person is like placing an offering on the altar. Just as God did not need the sacrifice of animals in the Temple but desired that people give them to him for their own benefit, so God does not need alms, but requires them in order that human beings might have some concrete means of displaying reverence.

But if the giving of alms was akin to making a sacrificial donation, then one must wonder whether Tobit's advice about prudent stewardship is the only way to calculate the level of one's contribution. For some sacrificial laws there is a clearly constructed gradient as to what one must give, and the crucial variable is the wealth of the donor.[12] Some must offer an expensive animal, others a pair of birds, and still others can make due with just grain. But in nonobligatory sacrificial contexts, such as sacrifices that are vowed or freely given, the door is open for giving much more. In this vein, one is reminded of the prophet Micah's sliding scale of values

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[10] As Urbach already noted ("Religious and Sociological Tendencies Regarding the Rabbinic Understanding of Almsgiving," in *The World of the Sages: Collected Studies* [Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2002], 20 [in Hebrew]), this tradition is very close to a tradition found in the *Midrash on Psalms*. He writes: "There is a great similarity between the teaching of the church in the Apostolic era and the first few centuries afterwards and that of the rabbis. There can be no doubt that the church was influenced by Jewish thinking. Jesus says: 'Come, those blessed by my father and inherit the kingdom prepared for you. For I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a visitor and you took me in, naked and you covered me, sick and you visited me, and in prison and you came to me.' This entire list of charitable deeds that the church endeavored to uphold reminds one of an anonymous midrash: '"Open for me the gates of charity" [ṣedeq] (Ps 118:19). In the world to come, one will be asked: "What was your work?" If he answers, "I fed the hungry," then they will say, "This is the gate of the Lord (118:20)—Let the feeder of the hungry enter by it." If he answers, "I gave drink to the thirsty," then they will say: "This is the gate of the Lord—Let the giver of drink to the thirsty enter by it." If he answers, "I clothed the naked," then they will say, "This is the gate of the Lord—Let the clother of the naked enter by it." And so forth' [*Midr. Ps.* on Ps 118:19]" (translation my own). As Urbach noted, this list of righteous deeds not only overlaps with those of Matthew 25 but derives ultimately from a list in Isa 58:6–7.

[11] As Rudolf Bultmann had noted (*History of the Synoptic Tradition* [New York: Harper and Row, 1963], 124) there are good grounds to see this entire tradition as originating in a Jewish context. The crucial change in the Gospel tradition, he observes, was that "the name of God was replaced by the title Son of Man." If such a Jewish tradition (alms given to the poor were in fact given to God) stood behind Matthew 25 then it would be difficult not to see this chapter as representing a rather high Christology, for the figure of Jesus is positioned precisely where the figure of God once stood.

[12] So the graded sin or purification offering in Leviticus 5.

regarding sacrifice. He begins his oracle on this issue with a rhetorical
question:

> With what shall I approach the Lord,
> Do homage to God on high?

And to answer this question he provides three options:

> Shall I approach him with burnt offerings,
> With calves a year old?
> Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,
> With myriads of streams of oil?
> Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
> The fruit of my body for my sins?" (6:6–7)

It is fine and good, Micah reasons, to offer a few animals as a burnt offer-
ing; even better would be thousands of rams, but the supreme sacrifice
would be a firstborn son. As Abraham knew so well, that would be the
most difficult thing to part with. No doubt for this very reason, some rab-
binic texts could see the sacrifice of Isaac as the founding moment of the
daily liturgy of the Temple.[13]

   A similar logic held true for the giving of alms. If almsgiving was analo-
gous to an offering on the altar then even a modest donation could have
its effect. Yet among the truly devout there would certainly be some who
would wish to go beyond the bare minimum.

The Rich Young Man and Jesus

There is no better example of this principle than the story of the rich
young man found in the Synoptic Gospels.[14] I would like to discuss the
version of the story found in the Gospel of Mark (10:17–31; cf Matt 19:16–30,
Luke 18:18–30). But before looking at the story, it is important to consider

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[13] Note that one of the mosaics found on a synagogue floor in Sepphoris has the story of
Aaron's first offering of the Tamid or daily offering (Leviticus 9) in its top register and the
sacrifice of Isaac at the bottom (See the discussion in Ze'ev Weiss and Ehud Netzer, *Prom-
ise and Redemption: A Synagogue Mosaic from Sepphoris* [Jerusalem: The Israel Museum,
1996], 14–31). This should be compared to the midrash (*Lev. Rab.* 2:11) which says that
every time Israel offers the Tamid, God directs his attention to the binding of Isaac (Weiss
and Netzer discuss this midrash on p. 38). On this reading, it is the sacrifice of Isaac that
grounds the Temple cult.

[14] He is only called the rich young man in the Gospel of Matthew, in Mark he is simply
a rich man. But given how popular this title is for the story, I will continue to use it for
the Markan version as well.

its literary placement. The discourse occurs at the very center of the Gospel (8:27–10:52), a section that deals with Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem where he will spend his last week. As such, it marks the crucial transition from Jesus' early ministry in the Galilee (1:1–8:26) to his last week in Jerusalem (11:1–16:8). This critical portion of the book is marked by three separate predictions of the passion, one near the beginning (8:31–33) one in the middle (9:30–32) and one at the end (10:32–34).

In all three of these predictions the disciples react in utter shock at what Jesus declares about the way his life will end. After the first prediction, Peter takes Jesus aside and tries to correct him. For this he is severely rebuked ("Get behind me, Satan!"). After the next two predictions, the disciples are still puzzled but wisely keep silence ("But they did not understand what he was saying and *were afraid to ask him*" [9:32].) The disciples clearly presumed that the Messiah of Israel would never have to suffer such a death. The cost of being the beloved son of God was to come as a complete surprise to them.[15] But there is an additional irony here. Jesus adds that what is true for him will also hold true for those who wish to be his disciples: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:34–35). Following Jesus means following him on the way of the cross.

Sandwiched between the second and third predictions is Jesus' encounter with the young man; indeed it occurs immediately before the third and final prediction. As the great patristic commentator Origen (third century CE) already saw, this literary juxtaposition was hardly accidental.[16] The giving up of all one's wealth was construed to be one way of losing one's life on behalf of the Gospel. Just as the inner core of disciples found the crucifixion to be shocking, so the young man finds the giving up of all his wealth to be a sacrifice beyond calculation.

The story opens when a young man runs up to Jesus, kneels before him, and asks him what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus redirects the man's attention to the Ten Commandments that Israel had heard back at Mt. Sinai:

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[15] On the close nexus between the beloved son and a sacrificial death in the Bible see J. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

[16] Cf. Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 8.8, in *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (trans. R. Heine; FC 71; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 144–45.

> 19. "You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.'" 20. He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." 21. Jesus looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22. When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. (Mark 10:19–22)[17]

Though the interaction with this man now comes to an end, the overall narrative does not. For the disciples are understandably shocked at the implications of what Jesus has said. If this is what is required, they reason, then what hope does anyone have? Jesus seems to be demanding the ultimate sacrifice of everyone. In response to their anxious query Jesus says,

> 27. "For mortals it is impossible [to do this], but not for God; for God all things are possible." 28. Peter began to say to him, "Look we have left everything and followed you." 29. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30. who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. (Mark 10:27–30)

There are three things in this story that demand our attention:

(1) First is the selection that Jesus makes from what is often known as the "second table" of the Ten Commandments.[18] The list begins with the sixth commandment ("you shall not murder") continues in serial order to the tenth ("you shall not defraud") but then it doubles back at the end and appends the fifth commandment ("honor father and mother").[19] One obvious feature of these particular commandments is that they pertain to interpersonal matters rather than the relationship of human beings to God. The emphasis is decidedly horizontal rather than vertical.

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[17] All translations of the New Testament are taken from the NSRV unless otherwise noted.

[18] See Philo, *De Dec.* 121: "'the second set' of commandments refers to 'the actions prohibited by our duty to fellow-men' whereas the other 'set of five . . . is more concerned with the divine'" (as cited in D. C. Allison and W. D. Davies, *The Gospel According to Matthew* [3 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh, 1997], 3:43 n. 32.)

[19] As Joel Markus has shown (*Mark 8–16* [AB 27a; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009]) there is ample legal evidence in rabbinic sources that indicate that the command "not to covet one's neighbors goods," was frequently understand as "do not defraud."

(2) Second is the young man's declaration that he has kept those six commandments since his youth. Does the young man believe that he has fulfilled these obligations? If so, how should one interpret the reply of Jesus that he lacks one thing? Why does Jesus add the *new condition* that he must give all that he has to the poor?[20]

(3) The third and final point to observe is the motivation that Jesus provides to the young man. He is not asked simply to part with his goods; rather he is encouraged to acquire "a treasury in heaven." What is striking about this treasury is that it is not presented as an alternative to enjoying the goods of this world. Jesus does not say "Suffer without these goods for now and revel in the wealth that will await you in the world to come." Instead he makes the startling claim that one can enjoy the fruits of one's labors both now and in the hereafter. The economy of the Kingdom of Heaven does not appear to be a zero-sum affair. Jesus closes this literary unit by providing the disciples with an "insider tip" on how the heavenly stock exchange works. The way to make a fortune in this market is to sacrifice *all* that one has. Although the initial risk is considerable, the reward is beyond imagining ("you will receive a hundredfold *now* in this age . . . and *in the age to come*, eternal life"). The Kingdom of Heaven runs by its own unique set of rules; what is given benefits both donor and recipient. And here again we see a confluence between almsgiving and sacrifice. For as

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[20] One way to explain this conundrum is to presume that the man was not completely honest with Jesus about his integrity in keeping the law. Many New Testament commentators have been suspicious of his claim. The eminent British scholar of a generation back, C. E. B. Cranfield, wrote (*The Gospel According to Mark* [The Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959], 329): "the man's naïve reply makes it clear that he has not understood the Commandments nor ever really taken them seriously. But he was no more mistaken about the law's real seriousness than were his Jewish contemporaries generally." It is clear that Cranfield has not come upon this position innocently. His skepticism about the man's honesty is a result of a specifically Pauline construal of the law. In Paul's mind, it was one thing to know what the law required and another thing to do it. "For we know that the law is spiritual," Paul avers, "but I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate . . . For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Rom 7:14–20). If we begin with the presumption of Paul that keeping the law is an impossibility, then there is really no option but to doubt the veracity of the young man. But surely J. A. Fitzmyer gets it right when he says (in regard to Luke's version of the tale), "Jesus has not denied that the magistrate has actually observed the commandments; he takes the man's answer for what it is and tries to draw him on still further" (*The Gospel According to Luke X–XXIV* [AB 28a; New York: Doubleday, 1985], 1197).

I have argued elsewhere, the logic that governs donations to the Temple is, "I have given so little, and you have requited me so bountifully."[21]

In sum we have three themes to explore: the selection of commandments and their horizontal rather than vertical orientation; the reason for the additional command that Jesus gives; and the status of the treasure that Jesus promises. All three of these issues can be illuminated by a close reading of some rabbinic texts.

Mishnah Peah: There is no Limit to Alms

In *Tractate Peah* of the Mishnah, we find a discussion of the various biblical laws that have to do with donations to the poor.[22] The tractate is titled *Peah* because one way of making a donation to the poor in biblical times was to leave a corner, i.e., *peah*, unharvested: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges (*peah*) of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest" (Lev 19:9). But the opening section of the tractate is very unusual, for it does not open with a consideration of *peah* per se as we might expect. Rather its interest is in a formal feature that is shared by five commandments: "These are matters that have no specified measure: *peah*, first fruits, the festival offering, charitable deeds, and Torah study."[23]

The order of the commandments that have "no specified measure" is not random. I would outline them as follows:

α.   Peah—donation for the poor
    β. First fruits—Temple
    β'. Festival offering—Temple
α'. Charitable actions—donations for the poor
γ.   Torah study.

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[21] See my article, "Sacrifices and Offerings," *ABD* 5:87–86. I am dependent on the anthropologist, Valerio Valeri (*Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985]) for this particular gloss of the phrase "*do ut des.*"

[22] The texts that form the backbone of this document are Lev 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut 14:27–29 (the "poor man's tithe," which take the place of the second tithe in the third and sixth years of the seven year cycle); 24:19–22.

[23] On the form of this mishnah and its relationship to the Dead Sea Scrolls, see A. Shemesh, "The History of the Creation of Measurements: Between Qumran and the Mishnah," in *Rabbinic Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Eight International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 7–9 January, 2003* (ed. S. D. Fraade, A. Shemesh, and R. A. Clements; STDJ 62; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 147–73. He argues that among the sect at Qumran the items listed in this first mishnah originally had measures attached to them.

The first and fourth items, which are provisions for the poor, constitute something of an outer frame for the inner two commandments which concern the Temple. The only item that does not fit is Torah study, and that may be one of the reasons why the mishnah describes it as "equal in value to all the rest."[24] It stands as a sort of counterbalance to the first four.

The fact that gifts to the poor (*peah*, charity) provide an outer frame for two types of donations to the Temple (first fruits, festival offering) recalls the valuation of alms in Ben Sira. In Ben Sira 35:2, almsgiving is explicitly compared to a thank-offering. In 7:29–32, the sage urges his reader to honor priests and God through donations to the Temple, and to honor the poor with alms, so that "your blessing may be complete." For Ben Sira, giving to God, priest, and the poor are homologous activities. In the book of Tobit the evidence is more subtle. The work opens with a reference to Tobit's many acts of charity that he has performed over the course of his life (1:4). And as soon as Tobit arrives in Mesopotamia, we see him acting on this principle (1:16). Sandwiched in between is an account of Tobit's religious fervor while he resides in the land of Israel. There he is distinguished by his alacrity and zeal in bringing sacrifices to the Temple (1:5–9). The point seems to be that almsgiving in the Diaspora replaces revenue for the Temple in Israel. And just as his acts of charity are done against the backdrop of a less than obedient set of Jewish peers (his neighbors mock him for tending to Israel's dead [2:9]; and eventually his wife does as well [2:14]), so a similar dynamic is assumed for his devotion to the Temple in the Land of Israel ("I *alone* went often to Jerusalem for the festivals . . ." [1:6]). The point seems clear: what the sacrifices signified in the Land of Israel has now been assumed by almsgiving and other acts of charity.[25]

In sum, then, we can say that for Ben Sira, Tobit, and *m. Peah*, gifts to the poor and sacrifice are understood as commensurate with one another.

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[24] The full form of the opening mishnah in tractate *Peah* is: "These are matters that have no specified amount: *peah*, first fruits, the festival offering, charitable deeds, and Torah study. Regarding the following matters, a man may enjoy their fruit in this world and his principle will remain for him in the next: honoring father and mother, charitable deeds, establishing peace between a man and his friend; and Torah study is equal to all of them."

[25] Urbach ("Religious and Sociological Tendencies," p. 10) argues that part of the reason that poverty was so extreme in the land of Israel in the early second century CE was that the Temple infrastructure had disappeared and another had not yet arisen to replace it. A similar sort of poverty must have been the case in the Diaspora in Tobit's day. If so, the transfer of money destined for Jerusalem (including the tithe for the poor) to the giving of alms would have been quite logical and natural.

It is for this reason that the mishnah has *peah* and charity serve as an outside frame around two types of Temple donations. Even while the Temple was still standing, the giving of alms was considered a legitimate way of serving God.

There is yet an additional feature of this mishnah which we must attend to. The opening line of the tractate states that these commandments are distinguished by the fact that even the slightest level of observance will suffice to fulfill one's obligation for them. But why was this so noteworthy that the Mishnah would make it the subject of this tractate's opening sentence? Saul Lieberman glossed this line as, "the more one does, the more commandments one would be credited with having fulfilled."[26] In other words, for these commandments there is the possibility of making an exceptional display of one's piety, what Catholics would call works of supererogation. The more one does of any of them, the more merits (*zekuyot*) one accrues. Chanoch Albeck says nearly the same with his annotation, "the more one does, the more praiseworthy he becomes."[27] The feature that distinguishes these commandments is the fact that *they provide an individual with the opportunity to demonstrate a very deep devotion to God*. If we take the sacrificial paradigm seriously, then the truly devout Jew will not be interested in making a minimal donation to charity. He may wish to imitate the sacrificial donation of Abraham and give away all that he holds dear. If there is no limit to almsgiving, and every coin I give adds to my merit, why not go all the way and donate everything to the poor?

It should be noted, however, that all commentators—whether traditional or modern—close the door immediately on such a notion. One may take the mishnah at face value only for charity that is interpersonal, such as burying the dead, tending the sick, or visiting those in prison. But when it comes to parting with money, strict limits are put in place. One must act prudently so as not to become destitute oneself.

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[26] *The Tosefta* (Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary Press, 1992), 41 (in Hebrew; my translation). This quotation is taken from a footnote to the very first line of the mishnah.

[27] *Shishah Sidre Mishnah. Seder Zera'im* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1959), 41 (in Hebrew; my translation).

JERUSALEM TALMUD: A LIMIT TO THE GIVING OF ALMS?

Commentators on this mishnah derive these prudential concerns from the Jerusalem Talmud. Yet, as we shall see, the Talmudic discussion also reveals that some Jews took this mishnah straight-up and did not qualify its simple sense. In regard to the mishnah's opening line that deeds of charity are subject to no limit, the Talmud says (*y. Peah 2b*):

> A. This concerns actions done with one's body (such as visiting the sick or burying the dead). With respect to the use of money (i.e., giving alms) there are limits.
> B. This view accords with what R. Shimon b. Laqish said in the name of R. Yehudah b. Ḥanina: "At Usha they ruled that one may separate one-fifth of his possessions for almsgiving (*mitzvot*). . . .[28]
> C. R. Gamliel b. Ininya inquired of R. Mana: "If one separates a fifth for every year, then after five years he will lose everything!" R. Mana answered: "At first one uses the principle but afterwards just the interest that accrues."[29]

The initial comment in unit A sets up a distinction between general acts of charity (*gemilut ḥasadim*) and almsgiving proper (*tzedakah*). For the former there are no limits; one may visit the sick from dawn to dusk or as long as one wants. But the same is not true for monetary donations to the poor. These are subject to strict limitations. In the mind of R. Shimon (unit B), the rabbinic law court at Usha (mid-second century) was worried that individuals might read this mishnah as an invitation to give away all their goods, and so imposed the strict limit of a one-time gift of twenty percent, followed by much smaller gifts of what had accrued as interest. No doubt this ruling would be an effective deterrent to overambitious generosity. Like the manager of any charitable endowment, R. Shimon knows that it is very dangerous to spend down the principal recklessly—eventually you will have nothing for yourself *or* others.

The ruling of the rabbinic court at Usha would seem to have solved the puzzle once and for all. Any possibility of heroic almsgiving has been ruled out *tout court*. Yet the next two units of the Talmudic *sugya* immediately qualify what had seemed to be a hard and fast conclusion.

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[28] I have edited out a short aside about how little one might give and have it still count as fulfilling one's obligation.

[29] There follows a long aside about how much one might spend on other commandments.

D. It happened one day that R. Yeshebab (80–120 CE) decided to distribute all of his possessions to the poor. R. Gamliel sent a message to him: "Hasn't it been said: 'One-fifth of one's possessions can be given for alms?'" But did not R. Gamliel precede the council at Usha? R. Jose b. R. Bun in the name of R. Levi said: "Such was the law that was once in their possession. But they forgot it and when a second generation arose, they framed the matter in accord with the opinion of the earlier generation."[30]

In this story we learn that R. Yeshebab one day up and decided to give away all his goods. R. Gamliel was shocked to hear this and immediately sent a message of rebuke. But the Talmudic editor expresses puzzlement: how could R. Gamliel have known of this ruling given the fact that he lived prior to the council at Usha? R. Jose explains that the law itself had predated Usha but had been forgotten. The ruling at Usha was simply the restoration of a lost legal tradition. It is hard to know whether this is historically true or just a means of accounting for the objection of R. Gamliel. But the answer to that question need not detain us. For whatever the reason, we can see from R. Yeshebab's actions that some Jews living in Palestine in the late first and early second century took the simple sense of our mishnah as a mandate for giving away all their goods.[31] And the later ruling about giving no more than 20 per cent clearly reflects the danger the rabbis felt that more would be inclined to do the same.

But the story does not end here. Having accounted for R. Yeshebab's aberrant behavior, the Talmud turns to consider another lawbreaker— but this time without any sort of qualification whatsoever. Rather, his deeds win him the highest praise.

E. Munbaz the king (of Adiabene) one day decided to distribute all of his possessions to the poor. Some friends sent word to him and said: "Your fathers added to their wealth and that of their fathers but you have distributed what was yours and your fathers." He said to them: "So much the more [that it be this way]. My fathers stored up [wealth] on earth and I stored up [wealth] in heaven. For scripture says: 'Truth springs up from the earth, but almsgiving peers down from heaven' (Ps 85:12). My fathers stored up [wealth] in treasuries that produce no fruit, I stored [alms] in treasuries that produce fruit. For scripture says: 'Almsgiving and justice are the very foundation of his throne' (Ps 89:15). My fathers gathered money but I gathered souls. For scripture says: 'The fruit of a charitable

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[30] There follows another long aside on the status of a law that is so diligently pursued.
[31] I am not presuming that the entire tractate of *Peah* was authoritative in the second century—that would be highly unlikely—but rather that some form of its opening teaching ("these are the things that have no measure…") was already in circulation.

man is a tree of life; the wise man acquires souls' (Prov 11:30). My fathers gathered for others, but I gathered for myself. For scripture says, 'Almsgiving shall belong to you [before the Lord your God]' (Deut 24:13). My fathers gathered in this world, but I gather for the world to come. For scripture says: 'Almsgiving delivers one from death' (Prov. 10:2). Death here refers not to mortal death but death in the world to come."

Not only is Munbaz's behavior subject to no rebuke whatsoever but as soon as the story is over, the Talmud takes this occasion as the place to summarize its position and to speak to the importance of almsgiving in general.[32]

> F. [And so one may conclude:] Almsgiving and acts of loving kindness are equal to all of the commandments in the Torah. But almsgiving is customarily done to the living while acts of loving kindness are customary for both the living and the dead. But almsgiving is customary for the poor while acts of loving kindness are customary for both the poor and the rich. But almsgiving is customarily done with money while acts of loving kindness are customarily done with both one's money and body.

It is surely striking that Munbaz's generosity provides the occasion for announcing that almsgiving and acts of loving kindness are equal to all the commandments.[33] Indeed, if we read unit F as a commentary on E, we will find that absolutely nothing has been said to qualify the radical act of generosity that Munbaz has displayed. There is no hint here of any of the concerns with which this literary unit of the Talmud opened (Unit A). The Talmud comes not to disparage this virtuous king but to praise him.

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[32] In parallel rabbinic traditions (*t. Peah* 4:19 and *b. Baba Bathra* 10a) the king's generosity is occasioned by a famine. Some commentators explain the presence of this unit in the Jerusalem Talmud on the grounds that his actions were necessitated by these extreme social conditions, in which case the Talmudic dictum about giving only 20 per cent might be bracketed. But it is surely significant that this version eliminates this narrative detail. And presumably the Jerusalem Talmud knew of the fuller version of the story because of its familiarity with the Tosefta.

[33] One may object that the *sugya* concludes on the halakhic note with which it began, that is, a distinction between charitable activity in general and the giving of alms in particular. But one should observe two things. First, the distinctions made in this unit are purely formal in nature, that is, charity is better because it is more inclusive, not because it preserves capital. This formal criterion is quite different than the pragmatic issue that opened this Talmudic unit (see Unit A). Indeed, according to the final unit (F), charity includes almsgiving ("acts of loving kindness are customarily done with *both* one's money and body").

Almsgiving as *the* Commandment

It should be added that the Talmud's declaration that almsgiving is equal to all the other commandments in the Torah is a motif that is widespread throughout rabbinic literature. Indeed, this claim is part and parcel of contemporary Hebrew and Aramaic idiom. Saul Lieberman, the leading Talmudist of the twentieth century, pointed out that the Hebrew and Aramaic term for commandment, *mitzvah*, can often mean simply almsgiving.[34] What does it mean to keep *the* commandment—give alms![35] Indeed, in Aramaic, the phrase *bar mitsvetâ* does not mean "a son of the commandment" or "a commandment keeper" but rather, "a generous person," that is, one who is in the habit of giving alms. This is nicely exemplified in *Leviticus Rabbah* (3:1):

> Better is he who goes and works and gives charity of that which is his own, than he who goes and robs and takes by violence and gives charity of that belonging to others. . . . it is his desire to be called a man of charity (*bar mitzvetâ*).

It is striking that the usage of "commandment" as a cipher for almsgiving is also attested outside the rabbinic corpus. There is a tradition in the *Testament of Asher* (2:8) that is a very close parallel to our text from *Leviticus Rabbah* and shows us that the tradition could go back to the Second Temple period itself: "And by the power of his wealth he ruins many; and out of [the wealth he secured through] his excessive wickedness, he gives alms." The last phrase of this text reads literally in Greek, "he does the commandments." But this would make little sense. Lieberman is surely right when he observes that the term "commandment" in the *Testament of Asher* must be a cipher for the giving of alms.[36]

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[34] Lieberman, "Two Lexicographical Notes," *JBL* 65 (1946): 67–72, esp. 69–72.

[35] This is an excellent argument for seeing the Tosefta's belief that almsgiving is equal to all the commandments as older than the Mishnah's counterclaim for the Torah. Nowhere, as far as I am aware, is Torah study described as *the* commandment. Rabbinic semantics confirms the picture we have seen in Tobit, Ben Sira, and the Gospels.

[36] See Lieberman, "Two Lexicographical Notes," 69–72. Surprisingly, Lieberman's suggestion was not known by H. C. Kee in his translation for *OTP*; see 1:817. The result is an unintelligible translation: "Someone else commits adultery and is sexually promiscuous, yet is abstemious in his eating. While fasting, he is committing evil deeds. Through the power of his wealth he ravages many, and yet in spite of his excessive evil, he performs the commandments." Since we are dealing with a list of self-contradictory behaviors, Lieberman's suggestion remains much more sensible: He cheats and steals and then uses what he has gained to give alms. For the Greek text, see M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Critical Edition of the Greek Text* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 137. It should be noted

Even the book of Tobit is worth rereading with this concept in mind, for it can hardly be accidental that when Tobit provides his son with what he thinks will be his last instruction in Torah, he puts special emphasis on the value of almsgiving (4:5–11). And later in the tale, when Raphael gives his own instruction to Tobit, he summarizes the Torah in the command to give alms (12:8–10). At the end of the book, Tobit closes his deathbed address with the command to give alms (14:8–11). For the book of Tobit, almsgiving is *the* commandment.

To Charity Belongs both Principal and Interest

I would like to say one more thing before closing this section on *Peah*. *M. Peah* 1:1 not only claims that alms can be given without measure, but goes on to say that to the category of charitable giving belong both "principal and interest." The text in question reads: "Regarding the following matters, a man may enjoy their fruit in this world and his principle will remain for him in the next: honoring father and mother, charitable deeds, establishing peace between a man and his friend, Torah study is equal to all of them." Strikingly the parallel text in the Tosefta gives us a similar picture for the way in which certain sins are evaluated: "For the following matters, payment is extracted from a person in this world, while the principle remains for him in the next: idolatry, incest, murder, and for gossip which is worse than all of them put together."[37] In order to appreciate the nature of this claim we need to know something about the principle of a zero-sum economy that stands behind certain rabbinic texts.

In his recent work on the subject of meritorious deeds in rabbinic thought, Eliezer Diamond has shown that any number of rabbinic figures are quite reluctant to enjoy the fruits of their merits in this world for fear that they will forfeit those merits in the world to come.[38] And so he understands the following story from the Babylonian Talmud.

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that de Jonge has provided very good evidence that the *Testaments* in their final form were not Jewish but Christian. Lieberman's argument, however, suggests that this particular tradition must go back to a Jewish source.

[37] *T. Peah* 1:2.

[38] E. Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Especially valuable is his second chapter, titled, "'The Principle Remains for the Next World': Delayed Gratification and Avoidance of Pleasure in Rabbinic Thought," which concerns *m. Peah* 1:1.

> R. Yannai would check [a ferry to ensure that it was seaworthy] before cross-
> ing [in it]. R. Yannai [acted] in accordance with his own reasoning, for he
> said: "One should never put oneself in a dangerous situation, saying that a
> miracle will be performed for him, lest the miracle not be performed. And
> if the miracle is performed, they will deduct it from his merits [i.e., they
> will lessen his reward in this world or in the next]." R. Hanan said: "What
> is the scriptural source for the above? [The patriarch Jacob's declaration:]
> 'I am unworthy of all the kindness that you have so steadfastly shown your
> servant' (Gen 32:11)." (*b. Shabbat* 32a)[39]

The testimony of Jacob that Yannai cites comes just as he is about to ford
the Jabbok river and return home to the land of Canaan (Gen 32:23–33).
(And so the aptness of Yannai's citation of this particular biblical text:
Jacob is about to become a ferryman, too.) When Jacob was in Aram,
he was destitute and dependent solely on the good graces of his God.
Jacob had spent the last twenty years of his life in the service of Laban
his father-in-law. Though Laban had tried to swindle him on a several
occasions, God continually came to Jacob's assistance. Yet when Jacob
arrives back in the land of Canaan, his fortune takes a decided turn for
the worse. His daughter is taken forcibly by the Shechemites (Genesis 34);
and while Jacob dawdles, his sons intervene violently to rescue her. Then
his beloved son Joseph is sold into slavery in Egypt, and, as Jacob believes,
is lost forever (Genesis 37). Only many years later do his fortunes reverse.
The midrash has observed this pattern in Jacob's life and interprets Jacob's
remarks about his fears of reentering the land of Canaan accordingly.
Rather than taking the Bible according to its simple sense, "I am unworthy
of (literally, 'too small for') the many kindnesses you have shown me," it
understands the verse more literally: "I am too small—i.e., my merits have
been decreased too much—due to your many kindnesses."

   As Diamond observes, it is precisely the worries of R. Yannai that need
to be set over against *m. Peah*.[40] For the acts of (1) honoring one's father;
(2) acting charitably; (3) bringing peace to disputants; and (4) studying
Torah, one need not worry about benefiting from them in the present age.
Such benefits are only payment on the interest; the principal, on the other
hand, will retain its full value in the world to come.

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[39] The translation is taken from Diamond, *Holy Men*, 70, with some slight alterations.
Perhaps this motif could be compared to the story of the rich man and Lazarus in the
Gospel of Luke (16:19–31).
   [40] Diamond, *Holy Men*, 70.

This provides a perfect contrast to the four heinous sins listed in *Tosefta Peah*: (1) idolatry; (2) improper sexual relations; (3) murder; and (4) gossip.[41] For those sins God will demand repayment both in this world *and* in the world to come. The contrast to the treatment of the four special actions in *m. Peah* could not be more complete. In the case of these four crimes, the currency that one raises by suffering in this world will not be deducted from what one owes. The entire principal will be transferred to the world to come, where payment in the form of suffering will be demanded again.

The striking feature for our purposes is the way in which almsgiving is treated as a *sui generis* item in the normal economy of sins (debits) and virtues (credits). The credit that it creates behaves in a quite unexpected way. Though it has been securely deposited in a heavenly bank, it will nevertheless continue to provide benefits in this world without harming the principal.

Though his imagery is slightly different, Ephrem also marveled at the way in which the display of charity stood outside the framework of normal spiritual commerce. In commenting on the charity shown by an early Syriac saint, Abraham Kidunaya, he wrote,

> Your alms and prayers are like loans; in every location they enrich those who take them, while to you belongs the capital and interest. What you offer as a loan returns to you.
>
> The alms of the giver are like a loan that the Just give. For it is in the full possession of both the borrower and the lender. For it returns to him with interest. (*Hymns on Abraham Kidunaya* 1:7–8)[42]

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[41] See the article of M. Hirshman, "Learning as Speech: *Tosefta Peah* in Light of Plotinus and Origen," in *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought* (ed. H. Kreisel; 2 vols.; Beersheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2006), 1:49–64. The contrast between items three and four in each list should be clear: peace between neighbors balances murder, and the study of Torah (the "pure speech" of God; so Hirshman, 52) is contrasted with evil speech. Acts of charity (item two) might not seem to be the obvious counterpart to illicit relations; but one should note that in rabbinic thought, just as almsgiving is "the" commandment, so adultery is "the" transgression. (I was alerted to this latter point by Shlomo Naeh [oral communication]; it is confirmed by the article of M. Grossman, "Le-mashma'utam shel ha-bituyyim 'averah u-devar 'averah bi-leshon hakamim," *Sinai* 100 [1987]: 260–72). On the opposition of honoring parents to idolatry, see the comments of Hirshman (51–52): "[One must recall] that in late antiquity religion was first and foremost *ta patria*, those things practiced by your parent, [and thus] idolatry seems to be not only a rebuff to the one God but also an abandonment of the ways of the parents."

[42] The text is from E. Beck, *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers. Hymnen auf Abraham Kidunaya und Julianos Saba* (CSCO 322–23; Louvain: Imprimerie Orientalische, 1955).

Ephrem uses the same economic idiom we find in rabbinic literature, but for him the giving of alms breaks the conventional rules of a zero-sum economy in a different way. Normally what one exchanges in a sale is conceived of as a loss of goods for the seller and a gain of goods for the buyer. But in the case of almsgiving, Ephrem argues, both sides stand to gain. Both the borrower and the lender are in possession of the goods that have been exchanged. But even more striking is the way in which the donor stands to gain more than the receiver. As Ephrem understands the matter, the giver of alms retains both the principal and the interest. So if one has a hundred dollars at one's disposal and gives it to a needy person, that person is now richer by a hundred dollars—but the donor is richer by a hundred dollars plus the interest that will accrue. The more rational economic decision is to be profligate in one's generosity. In any event, it is striking that both Ephrem and the rabbis, who are beholden to thinking of sin as a debt and virtue as a credit, take special care to outline the unique characteristics of the giving of alms in identical financial terms.

The Gospel of Mark in Light of Tractate *Peah*

We have noted that *Peah* makes several points about charitable giving. First of all, giving alms to the poor is comparable to making a sacrifice in the Temple; both are conveyed directly to God. Secondly, almsgiving has a special position among the commandments, in that it is not hedged in by any sort of limitation. Unlike the obligation to say the Shema two times a day one can give as much money to the poor as one sees fit. As a result, the amount of money that one gives can become an index of one's underlying devotion. Finally, almsgiving has a unique "ontological" status in the economy of heaven. Unlike other credits that one can earn for virtuous behavior, almsgiving retains both principle and interest. By this the Mishnah means that almsgiving is not subject to the limitations that are part and parcel of a zero-sum economy. With this in mind, let us return to the three questions posed by the story of the rich young man.

(1) First of all, we noted that the majority of New Testament scholars have viewed the commandments that Jesus lists, as well as almsgiving itself, as being *on a horizontal rather than a vertical plane*. They concern what takes place between human beings rather than between human beings and God. But, as we have seen, such a characterization does not fit the way almsgiving was viewed in contemporary Jewish material. To give alms to a poor person was just like bringing a gift to the Temple. Just as

the altar was a direct conduit to heaven for the sacrificial donations, so was the poor person who receives another's coins. I would suggest that Jesus' injunction to give alms was meant to turn the young man's earthly focus heavenward, *through* the agency of the poor. This would be in keeping with the contextual placement of this story amid the three predictions of the passion. Just as the crucifixion would constitute the supreme sacrifice that Jesus would make on behalf of his allegiance to his divine Father, so the distribution of all of one's goods to the poor would serve the same function for Jesus' followers.[43]

(2) Our second question concerned why Jesus felt the need to add another commandment to the six he drew from the ten commandments in order to see whether the young man was truly worthy of the Kingdom of God. To answer this question we must recall the opening line of *m. Peah*, which we can paraphrase: "These are the commandments that have no fixed level of observance." If one of the distinctive features of the giving of alms is that one can distinguish oneself by one's generosity, then it should not be surprising that Jesus would advise a prospective disciple to do just that. As the text recounts, the young man was able to keep the "second table" of the Ten Commandments with seemingly little effort. After all it is not that difficult to abstain from murder, adultery, theft, and fraud. *What Jesus was looking for was an additional command that would allow the man's true love for God to surface*. The fact that almsgiving was viewed both as *the* commandment and as the commandment that allowed one to demonstrate one's true ardor for God would make it

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[43] It is also striking that a goodly number of exegetes view the command to give alms as subordinate in importance to the act of following Jesus. V. Taylor (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* [London: Macmillan, 1952], 429) speaks for the majority when he writes, "In saying to the man, 'One thing thou lackest,' Jesus does not mean that there is *just one act to perform* in order that he may inherit eternal life, for after the command to sell all that he has He adds 'come and follow me.' It is this 'following' which leads to life; the renunciation of riches and gifts to the poor are actions which in his case following entails." Taylor is clearly uncomfortable with the notion that one would be rewarded for a specific *deed*— that would appear too Pharisaic—rather the command to follow indicates that the most important thing is *faith*. Yet Taylor undermines this declaration in part when he later cites with approval the observation that "Jesus Himself appears to have chosen a life of poverty; He wanders to and fro without a settled home (1:39, Lk 9:58), His disciples are hungry (2:23, 8:14), women provide for His needs (Lk 8:3) and His disciples can say, 'behold we have left everything and have followed you' (10:28)" (Taylor, 429). But there is nothing intrinsic to the Christian tradition that demands such a low appraisal of the deed itself. Indeed, it seems quite obvious in this story that the entire possibility of following Jesus turns on the desire to perform the deed. Faith and works are inseparable in this story.

a natural fit.[44] Precisely because there is no minimal or maximal level to this commandment; the more one gives the more merit one will receive (to recall Lieberman and Albeck).

(3) And finally, the third query we raised about the teaching of Jesus on alms pertained to his promise that what was given to the poor would be returned to the donor a hundredfold in this world and still more in the next. This fits hand-in-glove with the tradition we have followed, beginning with *m. Peah*, concerning the "economy" of almsgiving. Indeed, the single feature of charitable activity that the Tosefta wishes to highlight is the way in which it stands in a singular position over against all the other commandments in the Torah. Though every act of Torah obedience will yield a merit (*zekut*), the uniqueness of almsgiving is that it does *not* participate in a zero-sum economy; what one gives one does not lose. It provides both principle and interest to the donor (a point not lost on the rabbis or Ephrem).

HEROIC ALMSGIVING IN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

As we have seen, the simple sense of the opening sentence of the Mishnah informs us that five commandments share a common feature: they have no specified measure. One can give as little or much as one wants and still fulfill the basic obligation. By framing the matter this way, the Mishnah throws open the possibility that certain persons may wish to distinguish themselves by a prodigious generosity. Indeed the simple sense of *m. Peah* 1:1 could and did lead straight to the conclusion that we find in the teaching of Jesus concerning the rich young man. And an appeal to the Gospel is of value to the scholar of rabbinic Judaism for it illumines how this mishnah might have been understood in first-century Palestine. No doubt it was precisely this fact that led the framers of the halakhah to hedge in the simple sense of this mishnah as best they could.

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[44] There is no need to turn to Paul and try to explain the man's claim that he kept the five commandments enumerated by Jesus as disingenuous, the way Cranfield did (see n. 20 above). On the specifically Protestant sources of Cranfield's position, see the excellent exposition of U. Luz, *Matthew 8–20* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001) 521–22. As E. P. Sanders has noted, Jesus may have opposed certain legalistic excesses within the rabbinic movement, but in general he "objects to the Pharisees because they are not righteous enough" (*Jesus and Judaism*, 277). Strikingly, in this narrative about the rich man, Jesus is demanding a strict adherence to the same logic present in the Mishnah.

Yet the history of the Jewish people in the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods complicates the picture considerably. As Ephraim Urbach has noted, the ruling at Usha setting limits to almsgiving—in spite of the importance it had for the editors of the Talmud—"did not prevent individuals from parting with a large percentage of their property."[45] Why, then, was the council so dedicated to putting a stop to a practice which seems to have been rather popular? Urbach suggests that one reason may be that by the second century the practice of heroic almsgiving had become so popular among Christians that its Jewish origins were no longer so obvious. On this reading, the rabbis issued their ruling in order to make clear the boundary line between church and synagogue. Such a supposition would be supported by a recent essay of Daniel Schwartz, who shows how the Christian adaptation of certain legal positions that were once held by a particular circle of Jews often led to their rejection by later rabbinic figures.[46]

Be that as it may, it would seem to me that another explanation is equally plausible. It is striking that the New Testament story about the rich young man deals with a group of single men. Neither Jesus, the young man, nor any of the disciples are compromised by competing obligations to support a wife and children. They appear to have left *everything* to follow Jesus.[47] In the early church, the practice of heroic almsgiving was most common among those who were single. Because of this, giving away all one's property did not have negative consequences on family life. But rabbinic Judaism had no place for such a lifestyle. Indeed in some texts, the choice to live a celibate existence was conceived to be analogous to murder, for one was willfully preventing new life from appearing in the world.[48]

Eliezer Diamond has recently argued that rabbinic stories about heroic almsgiving frequently involve tensions that appear within the family. One

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[45] Urbach, "Religious and Sociological Tendencies," 15.

[46] D. R. Schwartz, "From Priests at their Right to Christians at their Left? On the Interpretation and Development of a Mishnaic Story (*m. Rosh HaShanah* 2:8–9)," *Tarbiz* 74 (2005): 21–42 (in Hebrew).

[47] Of course some of the apostles (perhaps even the majority?) were married. Nevertheless it is striking that the narratives about them in the Gospels take no interest in that fact—they are portrayed as having left everything. In the post-Apostolic period this renunciation of marriage would become a desirable option for many.

[48] Compare *t. Yebamot* 8:7, wherein we read that Ben Azzai declared that anyone who refrained from procreation was like a murderer, for he had impaired [God's] likeness. On the tension between devotion to Torah and devotion to family in rabbinic culture see D. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 134–126.

such example concerns a second-century *hasid* or holy man by the name of Eleazar of Birta.[49]

> When the charity wardens saw Eleazar of Birta they would hide from him, because whatever he had he would give to them. One day he went to the market place to acquire a dowry for his daughter. The charity wardens saw him and hid from him. He ran after them and said to them, "I abjure you, [to tell me] with what are you concerned at present?"
>
> They answered, "We are collecting money for the marriage of two orphans to each other."
>
> He replied, "By the Temple service, they come before my daughter." He took all that he had and gave it to them. One zuz remained; with it he bought some wheat, returned home and threw it in the storage room.
>
> His wife came home and asked her daughter, "What did your father bring you?"
>
> The daughter replied, "Whatever he brought he threw in the storeroom." She went to open the door of the storeroom and found that it was full of wheat, that the wheat was pouring out of the door's hinge-socket and that the volume of the wheat made it impossible to open the door.
>
> His daughter went to the study-house and said to her father, "See what the One who loves you has done for you!"
>
> He replied, "By the Temple service, the wheat is consecrated in relation to you; you may benefit from the wheat no more than one of the poor in the Israel."

This story is illuminating on several grounds. It is obvious that Eleazar has a reputation for outlandish giving and as a result, the charity wardens are quite reluctant to take his money. They believe that his funds would be of more use to his family. When Eleazar sets out to purchase a dowry for his daughter he learns of even greater need. Accordingly, he gives nearly everything he has to this cause. When he returns home and tosses into the storehouse the small amount of wheat he had purchased with the little money that remained, the hand of heaven intervenes and exchanges it for a room that literally bursts open with grain. What better illustration could one find that almsgiving has both principal and interest? By giving away his money to the poor, he taps into a heavenly power that knows no bounds. God, it seems, has chosen to ignore the ruling at Usha. And had the story ended with the observation of the daughter, "See what the One who loves you has done for you," the reader could only stand in

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[49] I have followed closely the translation of Diamond, but have changed a number of details. The text is from *b. Ta'anit* 24a.

awe of this prodigious deed. Eleazar, to quote Jesus, had been repaid a hundredfold in this world and had stored up principle in the world to come to boot.

But the ending of our tale takes the reader by surprise and casts a dark pall over the story. Rather than sharing with his own daughter the proceeds of God's largesse, he declares that all the grain is hereby consecrated, by which we can presume that he has vowed it all to the poor. As Diamond notes, the only other time in the Talmud when a father forbids his property from a child is when the child is considered unworthy. This story obviously does not want to make that point, but the Talmudic parallel does underscore the dramatic and drastic nature of Eleazar's actions. By acting in this way, Diamond argues, R. Eleazar "refuses to allow her to be the beneficiary of her relationship with him. She is not the daughter of Eleazar of Birta who has been blessed by God with great wealth; she is simply one of the poor in Israel."[50]

Conclusions

This rabbinic tale should allow us to read the story of the rich young man in a new light. When Jesus was making his way through the Galilee, he had in his company a band of followers who had left their families to follow him. The radical demands of the kingdom for this inner circle precluded, at least for a time, any involvement with family. When the Christian movement expanded in the second and third centuries, this form of heroic almsgiving was assumed to be the privileged domain of the holy men and women who were also leaving family behind in pursuit of the Kingdom of God. Christianity was able to preserve the sort of heroic almsgiving that we find in the Gospel of Mark because it developed a social context that was appropriate to the demands of such heroism. Later, however, the Reformation would make the interpretation of this story a very complicated task, comparable in many respects to the Talmud's reception of *m. Peah*. For a similar point was at issue: should the church give special honor to those who give away all they have? And should the church extol the life of celibacy where such heroic giving was most naturally located? Like the Talmud, the Reformers expended considerable efforts to hem in the natural implication of this teaching. Rabbinic Judaism, for its part, did

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[50] Diamond, "Hunger Artists and Householders," *USQR* 49 (1994): 33.

not encourage the renunciation of marriage and thus it could not find a
natural home for heroic forms of almsgiving. Yet it is a testimony to the
power of the simple sense of our Mishnah that the Talmud contains sev-
eral tales of rabbinic figures who continued to follow its inner logic and
give away all that they possessed.

ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVES IN RABBINIC LITERATURE, PHILO, AND ORIGEN: SOME CASE STUDIES*

Menahem Kister

Preliminary remarks: The present article deals with rabbinic traditions, as well as some passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls, in which biblical narratives are given a nonliteral, symbolic interpretation[1] of a sort rather rare in (but not absent from) rabbinic literature, and more akin to what might be labeled allegorical interpretation. These rabbinic traditions will be studied against the foil of Philo, Origen, and later patristic writers who use allegory and typology as hermeneutical techniques. Much scholarly discussion has been devoted to the border between typological and allegorical interpretation— or figurative/figural interpretations, as others would prefer to call them.[2]

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* Translations of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament in this paper utilize the RSV, with occasional modifications. Translations of Philo follow F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, *Philo in Ten Volumes* (LCL; London: Heinemann, 1929–1962). Translations of rabbinic works are my own, based on the texts of the following editions:

Tosefta: S. Lieberman, *The Tosefta* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America Press, 1955–1988).

Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (MekhRI): H. S. Horovitz and I. A. Rabin, *Mechilta D'Rabbi Ismael* (Frankfurt a. M.: Kauffmann, 1928–1931); M. Kahana, *The Two Mekhiltot on the Amalek Portion* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1999).

Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shim'on ben Yochai (MekhRSh): J. N. Epstein and E. Z. Melamed, *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Šim'on b. Jochai* (Jerusalem: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1955); Kahana, *Mekhiltot*.

Sifre Numbers (Sifre Num.): H. S. Horovitz, *Sifre on Numbers and Sifre Zuta* (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1917).

Sifre Deuteronomy (Sifre Deut.): L. Finkelstein, *Sifre on Deuteronomy* (Berlin: Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaft des Judentums, 1939).

Genesis Rabbah (Gen. Rab.): J. Theodor and C. Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba* (Berlin: Poppeloyer, 1912–1929.

Leviticus Rabbah (Lev. Rab.): M. Margulies, *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah* (Jerusalem: The Louis M. and Minnie Epstein Fund of the American Academy for Jewish Research, 1953–1960).

Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana: B. Mandelbaum, *Pesikta de Rav Kahana* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America Press, 1987); translations follow W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein, *Pesikta de-Rab Kahana* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975).

[1] The interesting problem of the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs is not discussed in the present article.

[2] For a survey of the literature concerning this problem see P. W. Martens, "Revisiting the Allegory/Typology Distinction: The Case of Origen," *JECS* 16 (2008): 283–317. I take "typology" to be a species of "allegory," as suggested in this article (following previous scholars). The nomenclature "figurative" and "figural" was suggested by J. D. Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading and the Fashioning of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002). For a thorough study of the Latin term *figura* through the ages, see E. Auerbach,

Because the starting point of my study is the rabbinic corpus, I do not enter here into this definitional debate: definitions and terminology for these methods of interpretation in Hellenistic and patristic writings scarcely affect the study of similar (but not identical) methods in rabbinic and prerabbinic tradition, which, unlike Philo and the church fathers, are not directly related to Greek terminology and interpretative techniques.

INTRODUCTION

In his description of the Sabbath practices of the Essenes, Philo writes: "Then one takes the books and reads aloud, and another of especial proficiency comes forward and explains what is not understood. For most of their philosophical study is through symbols (διὰ συμβόλων), and in this they emulate the traditions of the past."[3] Evidently Philo considers the Essenes' method of biblical exegesis to be similar to his own allegorical interpretation. We do not know what from among the Essenes' teachings was accessible to Philo,[4] nor is this what matters most; a more fundamental question is what, if any, allegorical interpretation of biblical passages, and especially of biblical narratives, was being done in Palestine in Philo's time and in the first centuries of the Common Era? The question has occupied scholarship for more than a hundred years,[5] and more research is still needed. Most of the Jews in Palestine did not have Philo's knowledge

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"Figura," in idem, *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (Theory and History of Literature 9; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 11–60. I thank Dr. David Satran and Dr. Ruth Clements for drawing my attention to scholarly discussions of this complex problem in the study of early Christian literature. In the study of midrash it is not uncommon to refer to "allegorical interpretation" (I. Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah* [3d ed.; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1970], 149–61 [in Hebrew]); Y. Fraenkel, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah ve-ha-midrash* [Giv'atayim: Yad Latalmud and Masada, 1991], 197–232 [in Hebrew]). The term "typology" should be used carefully when applied to rabbinic literature. The midrashic hermeneutic rule מעשה אבות סימן לבנים draws an *analogy* between two sets of events (somewhat reminiscent of the analogy to Jannes and Jambres in 2 Tim 3:8, to which compare CD 5:17–19); it does not suggest, however, the novel reading of the biblical narrative which is so characteristic of Christian typology.

[3] Philo, *Every Good Man is Free*, 82.

[4] "One is tempted to see in this alleged allegorization of the Essenes the survival into Philo's days of the allegory or near-allegory which we have found in the *Habakkuk Commentary* and the *Damascus Covenant*, and indeed Dupont-Sommer affirms confidently that this hypothesis is true. Philo's reference, however, is vague enough for us to need caution in agreeing with this view" (R. P. C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* [London: SCM Press, 1959], 45).

[5] A pioneering study was that of J. Z. Lauterbach, "The Ancient Jewish Allegorists in Talmud and Midrash," JQR n.s. 1 (1910/11): 291–333, which is an admixture of interesting observations and far-fetched interpretations (for a critique see D. Boyarin, "On the Identification

of Hellenistic literature, his philosophical sensitivities, his acquaintance with Hellenistic apologetic concerning myths, or his familiarity with the explanation of problematic Homeric passages by means of allegorical interpretation. And yet, some allegorical interpretation is attested in Jewish Palestine.

Philo's allegorical procedure was not the only method used in his time. Paul uses a different method of allegorical reading when he says that "our fathers . . . were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food, and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ."[6] Israel's journey in the desert, the water they drank, and the manna they ate are interpreted spiritually. Such a reading, so remote from the literal meaning, puts the biblical narratives in an entirely new perspective. Much of the present article will deal with the "supernatural drink" and the "supernatural food" of the Israelites in the wilderness in ancient Jewish texts, mostly in traditions reflected in rabbinic literature.

As is often stated, *allegoria* is essentially an extended metaphor. Some allegorical interpretations could indeed emerge from biblical metaphors,[7] extended in postbiblical literature to interpret concrete details in biblical narrative. "Water," "spring," "well," as metaphors for instruction, wisdom, or God himself may be inferred from biblical poetry.[8] The metaphorical (allegorical) interpretation of these items in the exegesis of biblical narratives is inspired (at least partly) by the interpretation of metaphorical language in the poetic sections of the Bible;[9] it is the interpretation of

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of the *Dorshei Reshumot*: A Lexicographical Study," *Be'er-Sheva* 3 [1988]: 23–35 [in Hebrew]). Other studies of the subject will be mentioned in the course of discussion.

[6] 1 Cor 10:1–4. For another passage in Paul in which he uses what he calls "allegory," see below, n. 29.

[7] Compare Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah*, 149–61; many of his assertions concerning the comparison between Hellenistic allegorical interpretation and the allegorical interpretation of rabbinic literature seem to me simplistic. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 11–64, strictly distinguishes between "Palestinian allegorical tradition" and "Hellenistic allegory." He concludes: "It would even be an exaggeration to say that the two traditions met in the work of the Jewish writers of Alexandria" (64).

[8] E.g., Deut 32:2; Prov 13:14; Jer 17:13; Ps 36:10.

[9] The rabbis justify interpreting "hill" in the biblical narrative as standing for "the merits of the Fathers and the Mothers" by appealing to the symbolic interpretation of "hill" as meaning "merit of the Mothers" in a poetic passage, Num 23:9 (*MekhRI Amalek* 1 [Horovitz–Rabin, 179; Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 162]; see also *Sifre Deut.* 353 [ed. Finkelstein, 414]). It is likely that the wording of poetic biblical passages was interpreted symbolically, and that this method was later transferred also to the interpretation of biblical narratives.

"well" or "water" in biblical *narratives* as meaning wisdom or Torah that creates an entirely new reading of these narratives.[10] Similarly, "circumcision of the heart" as a metaphor for spiritual purity is a notion found in the Hebrew Bible;[11] but the Christian application of this metaphor to the commandment of circumcision (in order to displace circumcision of the foreskin) is certainly revolutionary.

It is less common for biblical narratives and unusual for legal texts to be subjected to allegorical interpretation in rabbinic literature. This method of interpretation is also rarely documented in the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, as far as it is known to us. Applying allegorical interpretations to biblical commandments and narratives could potentially have far-reaching consequences: while most commandments refer to physical acts, an allegorical interpretation *may* potentially lead one to conclude that a given commandment is only a means for conveying a more profound, spiritual lesson. This explosive potential of allegorical interpretation of legal texts became manifest only in certain circles.[12] Similarly, the allegorical interpretation of narrative *may* potentially undermine its historical meaning; for many authors, however, allegory (as well as typology) was an *additional* method of reading the Bible, and the potential tension with the plain meaning of the text was not realized.[13]

The rabbis are very rarely explicit about the relation between allegory—or image—and event. A rare case in which the tension between the two is expressed in rabbinic literature is the following:

A similar phenomenon may be discerned at Qumran: verses of a legal nature in Leviticus 25 are interpreted symbolically in *11QMelchizedek*, using the *pesher* method, because phrases similar to those of Leviticus 25 occur in a biblical prophecy (Isa 61:1–3); see M. Kister, "A Common Heritage: Biblical Interpretation at Qumran and Its Implications," in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. M. E. Stone and E. Chazon; STDJ 28; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 101–11, esp. 111. In that article I tried to assemble the few cases in Qumran that might be labeled "allegorical interpretation" (109–11).

[10] J. Bonsirven, "Exégèse allégorique chez les rabbins tannaïtes," *RSR* 23 (1933): 513–41, esp. 515.

[11] E.g., Deut 30:6; Jer 4:4; 9:25; Ezek 44:7.

[12] In Jewish circles we have only the testimony of Philo concerning the "extreme allegorists" (*Migration of Abraham*, 89–92). Many Christian authors use this method, however, from the early second century on (note, e.g., the *Epistle of Barnabas*).

[13] Cf., e.g., Lauterbach, "Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 330; Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, 259–88; D. Boyarin, "Analogy vs. Anomaly in Midrashic Hermenutic: Tractates *Vayyasaʿ* and *Amalek* in the *Mekilta*," *JAOS* 106 (1986): 659–66, esp. 661 n. 13, 663 n. 25; H. de Lubac, "Typology and Allegorization," in idem, *Theological Fragments* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), 129–64, esp. 145; Dawson, *Christian Figural Reading*, 83–137.

[Rabbi Isaac said in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan:] "Jacob our patriarch has not died." He [R. Naḥman] objected: Was it then for naught that he was bewailed and embalmed and buried? Rabbi Isaac replied: I expound a biblical verse, for it is said, "Therefore do not be afraid, O Jacob, My servant, says the Lord; nor be dismayed, O Israel, for lo, I will save you from afar and your seed from the land of their captivity" (Jer 30:10); this verse likens him [Jacob] to his seed [Israel]—as his seed is alive so he, too, is alive.[14]

Rabbi Yoḥanan's saying, "Jacob our patriarch has not died," seems at first sight a playful and provocative statement,[15] erroneously taken as factual[16] by Rav Naḥman.[17] Intriguingly, however, a similar argument occurs in Origen's homily, where it is based on the words of God to Jacob: "Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation; I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again (ἐγὼ ἀναβιβάσω σε εἰς τέλος; אעלך גם עלה); and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes" (Gen 46:3–4). Origen's argument[18] is that the promise, "I will bring you up

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[14] B. Ta'anit 5b. The midrash is based on the wording, "save you . . . and your seed." It is inferred that not only Jacob's seed, but also Jacob himself, will be saved in the future.

[15] See, for instance, I. Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah*, 192; J. Heinemann, *Aggadot ve-Toldotehen* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 164 (in Hebrew). As noted by these scholars, Pseudo-Rashi ad loc. gave a docetic interpretation to the burial rites of Jacob, assuming that indeed he had not died. Fraenkel comments on this passage: "not always can we know with certainty whether the authors of *derashot* clearly distinguished between reality and rhetorical hyperbole, because their conception of reality no doubt differed from ours" (Fraenkel, *Darkhe ha-Aggadah ve-ha-midrash*, 289).

[16] As has been noted (see *Tosafot* ad loc.) this statement emerges from the wording of Gen 49:33, where the words, "and he died" are absent, in contrast to the similar formulae describing the deaths of Abraham and Isaac (Gen 25:8, 35:29). This verse does not occur in the midrashim. If this is the case, there is a detail in the biblical narrative itself from which one might infer that Jacob had not died. One wonders, then, whether Rabbi Yoḥanan's statement is merely playful. See C. Milikowsky, "The Aggadic Midrash: Reality or Metaphor?" *Mahanayim* 7 (1994): 34–37. Note also Jacob's superhuman dimensions according to some traditions (especially the fragment of the so-called *Prayer of Joseph*, where Jacob is depicted as an archangel; see M. Kister, "Observations on Aspects of Exegesis, Tradition, and Theology in Midrash, Pseudepigrapha, and Other Jewish Writings," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* [ed. J. C. Reeves; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994], 19–20, 32–34).

[17] Interestingly, according to a classical Palestinian midrash, Rav Naḥman says that Jer 30:10 "refers to Jacob" (*Lev. Rab.* 29:2 [ed. Margulies, 669])—probably to Jacob's fears related to his dream (Gen 28:12–17), rather than to his death. It is impossible to guess how these two traditions are related to each other; but reading the two of them together shows that no hermeneutical gulf existed between Rabbi Isaac and Rav Naḥman, as we might have supposed had we read only the story in the Babylonian Talmud.

[18] *Hom. Gen.* 15.5–7 in *Origenes Werke 6: Homilien zur Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung, Vol. 1* (ed. W. A. Baehrens; GCS 29; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920), 132–35; trans. R. E. Heine, *Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* (FC 71; Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 210–13.

<at the end>,"[19] cannot be interpreted as referring to Jacob's body, which was brought up for burial in Hebron,[20] for "God is the not the God of the dead, but of the living." Because of this "absurdity"[21] at the literal level of meaning, these verses must be interpreted as an allegory, says Origen.[22] He suggests three allegorical interpretations that have some affinities with Philo's allegorical interpretation[23] but not with rabbinic midrash; however, he then goes on to quote an additional interpretation from "one of our predecessors" on the words "and Joseph's hand will close your eyes" (Gen 46:4b): "Jeroboam . . ., who was from the tribe of Joseph, . . . blinded and closed the eyes of Israel. . . . 'What is the impiety of Jacob? Is it not Samaria?' (Mic 1:5)." According to this interpretation "Jacob" in Gen 46:4 signifies both the biblical hero and the people of Israel,[24] precisely as he does in Rabbi Yoḥanan's statement. In view of these similarities, it is also striking that, although Origen and Rabbi Yoḥanan are interpreting different verses (Gen 46:3 and Jer 30:10 respectively), these verses share the same opening words, "Do not be afraid."[25] We should keep in mind that Rabbi Yoḥanan and Origen were of the same generation and that

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[19] The reading is according to LXX, which is in turn a free translation of MT אעלך גם עלה. The duplication of the same verb in MT requires exegesis (e.g., hypothetically, "in this world and in the world to come"; "Jacob and Israel"; see also *y. Soṭah* 1:10 [17c], where the verse is interpreted as meaning that the bodies of the twelve Patriarchs were brought from Egypt).

[20] This is how this verse was interpreted in the passage from the Palestinian Talmud referred to in n. 19.

[21] See below, n. 27.

[22] Compare a Tannaitic interpretation on the verse "and as they moved from the east they found a plain in the land of Shinar" (Gen 11:2): Rabbi Elʿazar ben Shimʿon (second century CE) says that the words "they moved from the east (מקדם)" mean "they moved [i.e., detached themselves] from the Ancient One of the World [מקדמון שלעולם; i.e., God]" (*Gen. Rab.* 38:7 [ed. Theodor–Albeck, 356]). Origen has a similar interpretation: according to him, "they moved from the east (τῶν ἀνατολῶν)" means that they (i.e., the wicked) move themselves away from the effulgence of Eternal Light (φῶς ἀϊδίου; *Contra Celsum* 5.30). While Origen gives an allegorical interpretation to the whole narrative concerning the tower of Babel, the rabbi does not necessarily do so. Be that as it may, the reason given by the *redactor* of *Genesis Rabbah* (ibid.) for this interpretation is that the people could not both travel from the east and settle in the east (for Shinar is in the east). At least according to the redactor, the "absurdity" of the literal reading indicates that the verse should be interpreted allegorically; cf. below, n. 27 (Note that Lot's journey "from the east" is interpreted elsewhere in *Genesis Rabbah* [41:7, p. 394] in the same vein.).

[23] Philo, *The Posterity of Cain*, 31.

[24] It is difficult to know whether in its original context this interpretation of Gen 46:4b referred to the absurdity of bringing Jacob up from Egypt as an pointer to an allegorical reading of "Jacob," as in Origen's own interpretation of Gen 46:3–4a.

[25] The content of the two verses is remarkably similar as well: in both God promises to be with Jacob or Israel and to return them from their exile to their own land.

their sayings might reflect a shared discourse of scriptural interpretation.[26] The great similarity between the Christian and the Jewish interpretation stresses what is lacking in the latter: while Origen justifies the shift to allegory by the "absurdity" in the literal sense of Gen 46:3–4,[27] the rabbinic text fails to answer Rav Naḥman's question concerning Jacob's burial rites—nor does it clearly differentiate between event and allegory. The tension between allegory and event is explicitly expressed, but not explicitly resolved, and the hermeneutical principles of Rabbi Isaac and Rabbi Yoḥanan (or the tradition they reflect) remain obscure.

This example illustrates how a comparison of rabbinic allegorical interpretations with those of Philo, Paul, and the Church Fathers can be instructive for elucidating both rabbinic and nonrabbinic texts, and perhaps also—ultimately—for delineating the contours of rabbinic exegetical methods. In many cases it is difficult to prove that Philo made use of Palestinian allegorical interpretations, or that Christian exegetical passages of this type are definitely dependent on Jewish interpretations.[28] It needs to be explicitly stated that possible channels of borrowing between Philo and Hebrew exegesis, as well as between the rabbis and the Church Fathers, are not easy to specify; in most cases the borrowing was of an oral tradition or came through some unknown (and hypothetical) mediating source. Philo probably did not know Hebrew, and neither did the Church Fathers, almost without exception. Even when the genetic relationships might be disputed, the comparison between the interpretative methods of the rabbis, Philo and the Church Fathers is illuminating. Yet it seems to me that at least some of the similarities that will be discussed in the present article are not the result of mere coincidence.

Philo's allegorical interpretations are usually of a psychological-spiritual nature. Such interpretations are seen very rarely, if at all, among the non-Hellenistic extant works of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the

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[26] E. E. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish–Christian Disputation," in *Studies in Aggadah and Folk Literature* (ed. J. Heinemann and D. Noy; ScrHier 22; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1971), 247–75; R. Kimelman, "Rabbi Yoḥanan and Origen on the Song of Songs: A Third Century Jewish–Christian Disputation," *HTR* 73 (1980): 567–95. Concerning the possibility of ongoing interchange between Origen and Rabbi Isaac, see below, n. 147; compare also below, p. 142.

[27] For Origen, absurdities and impossibilities function as hermeneutical markers that indicate that a given text has meaning only on the allegorical (figural) level; See Hanson's discussion of "historicity" (*Allegory and Event*, 264–65).

[28] The possibility that rabbinic interpretations are dependent on Philo or the Church Fathers should also be taken into consideration.

Second Temple period. In rabbinic literature this type of allegory is rare, but by no means absent; the rabbis are more interested in God's action in history, including its eschatological climax.[29] Christian writers are interested more than anything else in Christology. As we shall see, a similar base reading of the biblical text may yield a wide variety of exegetical results. A good illustration of this phenomenon may be seen in the different forms of the tradition concerning the erotic symbolism of the two Cherubim that face each other in the Tabernacle.[30] For Philo, the Cherubim symbolize the Powers of God, viz., goodness and sovereignty, united with each other, which, "gazing at each other in unbroken contemplation, may acquire a mutual yearning, even that winged and heavenly love (ἔρος)";[31] for the rabbis (according to an aggadah known to us from the Babylonian Talmud), the Cherubim symbolize the erotic union between God and Israel,

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[29] An outstanding example of explicit typological interpretation is *4 Ezra* 6:8: "For Esau is the end of this age, and Jacob is the beginning of the age that follows. For the end of man is his heel, and the beginning of man is his hand." Cf. *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Gen 25:26 (M. Margulies, *Midrash Ha-Gadol on the Pentateuch: Genesis* [Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1947], 441; see M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990], 160–61). While Stone is definitely right in stating that this passage "is an eschatological interpretation of the biblical text," I would also designate it as a typological interpretation, derived by means of an exegetical method similar to Paul's "allegory" of Abraham's two sons (Gal 4:22–31). It should be noted that the interpretation of "heel" as "end" is based on the meaning of the word עָקֵב as "end, eschatological end," as in Mishnaic Hebrew (M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* [New York: Putnam, 1903], 1104; see *Targum Onqelos* to Gen 3:15); this interpretation gives the biblical passage a temporal eschatological significance. Another, more doubtful example of such a typological interpretation may be seen in a small fragment from Qumran that deals with the story of the flood (4Q254a 3 4). It reads: [העו]רב ויצא יצוא וישוב להודיע לדורות [הא]חרונים "'the ra]ven, and it went forth and returned' (Gen 8:7) to make known to the l[atter] generations . . ." (G. J. Brooke, "254a. 4QCommentary on Genesis D," in *Qumran Cave 4.XVII: Parabiblical Texts, Part 3* [ed. G. J. Brooke et al.; DJD 22; Oxford: Clarendon, 1996], 235–36). If the reconstruction "l[atter] generations" is correct, it is plausible that the term stands typologically for the last generations before the *eschaton* (CD 1:12). Is the raven sent by Noah (Gen 8:7) a symbol of wickedness in this text (in contradistinction to the dove, Gen 8:8)? This is no more than a mere guess. According to Philo the raven is "a symbol of evil, for it brings *night and darkness* upon the soul" (Philo, *QG*, 2.35, 36–39). In *Gen. Rab.* 33:5, interestingly, the verse "and he sent the raven" (Gen 8:7) and the verse "he sent *darkness*" (Ps 105:28) are juxtaposed. The latter verse refers to the plague of darkness in Egypt. However, the verses are not further explained in *Genesis Rabbah*, and we are left with very little data for guessing the implied interpretation of the midrashic text.

[30] To be sure, this is a symbolic rather than an allegorical interpretation of a biblical narrative. I discuss it here because it briefly and neatly illustrates, in my opinion, the relationship between Philo, Jewish–Christian material, and rabbinic literature as well as the problem of whether early traditional material may be attested in Amoraic (and post-Amoraic) compilations. It enables us to see one tradition and its varying forms, shaped in accordance with the various cultural conceptions and interests of the exegetes.

[31] Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 20, 28.

expressed in sexual terms: the Cherubim are united together like a man and woman in sexual intercourse;[32] for Elchasaite contemporaries of the rabbis the Cherubim apparently symbolize the Logos and the Spirit (similar to Philo's "powers of God"), which are said to be male and female.[33] The erotic interpretation of the Cherubim underlies these different readings,[34] which embed the basic symbolic interpretation in very different religious and cultural contexts. For instance, unlike the rabbis, Philo could neither accept the notion of a female image in the Holy of Holies nor associate sexuality with the eroticism of the Cherubim.

Even the earlier rabbinic compilations are, of course, considerably later than Philo and the writings of the Second Temple period. It should be emphasized that, notwithstanding significant changes in style, tone,

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[32] *B. Yoma* 54a: "Rav Qetina said: Whenever Israel came up to the Festival . . . the Cherubim were shown to them, intermingled with one another (מעורים זה בזה), and Israel were addressed, 'Look, you are beloved to God as the love between man and woman.' . . . Resh Laqish said: When the Gentiles entered the Temple they saw the Cherubim intermingled with one another, they took them out to the market and said, 'those Israelites . . . occupy themselves with these things,' as it is said, 'all those who honored her, despised her, for they saw her nakedness (ערותה).'" Note the version of this aggadah in the Palestinian midrashim: "When . . . the Ammonites and the Moabites came into the Holy of Holies, they took the figure of the Cherubim . . . and went around in the streets of Jerusalem, exulting, 'Have not the Israelites been saying that they do not worship idols? but look, here is the proof that they do worship them.'" (*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana* 19:1 [ed. Mandelbaum, 301; trans. Braude–Kapstein, 323]; *Lam. Rab. Petiḥta* 9); this aggadah does not mention in any way eroticism and sexuality. Looking at the other interpretations of the Cherubim discussed here it seems to me likely that the erotic motif is ancient, at least as old as the first century CE. The Holy of Holies, where the Cherubim are placed, is represented as an erotic place elsewhere in rabbinic literature, not necessarily explicitly mentioning the Cherubim. The ark is God's "bed," described in Song 3:9–10 (*b. Baba Batra* 14a), and the poles (1 Kgs 8:8) are compared to a woman's breasts, citing Song 1:13 (*t. Kippurim* 2:15); see T. Kadari, "'Within It Was Decked with Love': The Torah as the Bride in Tannaitic Exegesis of the Song of Songs," *Tarbiz* 71 (2002): 391–404 (in Hebrew); I am not convinced, however, that in the passages discussed by Kadari the erotic relations are necessarily between God and the Torah, as she suggests. Note also *b. Sanhedrin* 7a, where (in an Amoraic utterance) the Mercy Seat (*kapporet*) is described as the wedding bed of God and Israel.

[33] G. G. Stroumsa, "Le couple de l'Ange et de l'Esprit; traditions juives et chrétiennes," *RB* 88 (1981): 42–61. As shown by Stroumsa, Elchasaites referred to the Son of God and the Holy Spirit as male and female angels, while other Christian passages identified the Son and the Spirit with the Cherubim. Stroumsa draws the plausible conclusion that the diverse passages reflect one tradition.

[34] The similarity between Philo and the Babylonian Talmud has been noted by E. R. Goodenough (*Jewish Symbols in the Greco Roman Period* [New York: Pantheon, 1953–1968], 4:131–32), overlooking the dissimilarity between the two. Idel made use of Goodenough's discussion, drawing, however, different conclusions; he has also brought into the discussion Stroumsa's findings (M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* [New Haven, Yale University Press, 1988], 132–33; his main interest is the medieval speculations concerning the Cherubim). Both Goodenough and Idel cite Philo's *QE* 2.66, but the explicit reference to ἔρος is in *On the Cherubim* 20.

context, and content, aggadic statements in rabbinic literature should be regarded principally as *traditions*, and the sages to whom these utterances are attributed as *tradents* of ancient material. Studies that consider rabbinic literature together with writings of the Second Temple period (such as Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Philo, Josephus, Gospels) validate time and again this assertion.[35]

Traditions, however, often have their own dynamics. This may be illustrated by the interpretations given to the words "and his [=Moses'] sister stood at a distance, to know what would be done to him" (Exod 2:4). According to an interpretation shared by the Palestinian[36] and Babylonian Talmuds,[37] everything in this verse refers to the Holy Spirit (PT) or the *Shekhinah* (divine Presence) (BT). The "sister" watching the infant Moses in this verse is the aspect of the Divinity called *Shekhinah*. Prooftexts are adduced in order to demonstrate that every detail in this verse refer to the Divinity; the prooftext for "sister" is the verse "say to wisdom, 'You are my sister'" (Prov 7:4). The inner logic for bringing this prooftext must be that "Wisdom" is somehow identical with the Holy Spirit or *Shekhinah*. In the two *Mekhiltot*, however, the "sister" is Moses' sister, Miriam. The words "stood at a distance" are interpreted as referring to Miriam's prophecy; the term "Holy Spirit" is understood to mean prophecy.[38] By the inherent dynamic of the tradition, "the Holy Spirit" in the Tannaitic midrash was read also into the word "sister," and the meaning of the term "the Holy Spirit" shifted in the Palestinian Talmud from prophecy to Divinity; in the Babylonian Talmud it was replaced by the word *Shekhinah*, a synonym of "Holy Spirit" when the latter is interpreted as referring to Divinity. Apparently the allegorical interpretation is merely a secondary, Amoraic interpretation of a nonallegorical Tannaitic midrash. This indicates, however, that the allegorical reading was a possibility, and that the early tradition could be interpreted through its lens;[39] this process could have been either intentional or unintentional.

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[35] See, e.g., J. L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); M. Kister, "Aggadot and Midrashic Methods in the Literature of the Second Temple Period and in Rabbinic Literature," in *Higayon L'Yonah: New Aspects in the Study of Midrash, Aggadah and Piyyut in Honor of Professor Yonah Fraenkel* (ed. J. Levinson, J. Elbaum and G. Hasan-Rokem; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2006/7), 231–59 (in Hebrew).

[36] *Y. Soṭah* 1:9 (17b), in the name of the *amora* Rabbi Isaac, Rabbi Yoḥanan's student.

[37] *B. Soṭah* 11a, in the name of the amora Rabbi Yoḥanan.

[38] *MekhRI Shirah* 10 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 151]; *MekhRSh* to Exod 15:20 [ed. Epstein–Melamed, 100].

[39] See also above, pp. 137–39 and esp. n. 26, concerning the allegorical interpretation expressed by Rabbi Isaac in the name of Rabbi Yoḥanan.

Thus, we do find that allegorical interpretation was used in classical rabbinic literature. In the following sections we will see that it was downplayed by the rabbis, and that some traditions underwent concretization. Concretization of metaphor is attested long before the rabbis, and is not necessarily tendentious. The plain sense of the words והיה לאות על ידך ולטוטפת בין עיניך "and it shall be a sign on your hand, and *totafot* between your eyes" (Exod 13:9), is apparently metaphorical (Prov 6:21, 7:3; Song 8:6), but at an early date in the Second Temple period the verse was interpreted as an instruction referring to phylacteries (*tefillin*); in other words, the placing of the sign had become physical rather than metaphorical.[40] On the other hand, as we shall see below (section IV), polemic with Christianity sometimes played a role in mitigating against the use of allegorical interpretation[41] and towards the concretization of biblical metaphors. Both trends, metaphorical interpretation of the concrete and concretization of metaphors, existed in antiquity.[42]

I do not wish to end with a clear-cut and facile thesis. Tracing the traditions and gaining some understanding of the complexity of the process of transmission and the various factors involved (exegesis, transformations of traditions, interior motivations, polemic with other groups), as well as of the limits posed by the nature and extents of rabbinic literature, seems to me a more modest and reachable goal, and perhaps a sufficient reward.

Each section of the present article deals with a separate biblical passage and its interpretation, and is meant to stand as an independent unit. Taken together, however, these case studies are intended to suggest some broader observations concerning the dynamics of allegorization and concretization in postbiblical writings.

The first section deals with the interpretation of the well in the wilderness, and especially the Song of the Well (Num 21:17–18) in its biblical context. This is one of the few passages for which we have an allegorical interpretation in Hebrew from the Second Temple period, in which the well stands for the Torah. This interpretation may be compared to allegorical interpretations by Philo and Paul. Was this exegetical line pursued

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[40] J. Tigay, s.v. תפילין, *Encyclopedia Biblica* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1982), 8:890–91.

[41] As briefly suggested by Lauterbach, "Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 330.

[42] The rarity of allegorical interpretation in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha as well as in the Dead Sea Scrolls might indicate that polemic with Christianity is only one factor determining the use of allegory in the formation of rabbinic exegetical tradition.

in rabbinic literature? The answer is that although the well in the wilderness is never explicitly interpreted as a symbol in this literature, there are remnants of such an interpretation in midrashic literature, and possibly in the Palestinian Targumim. Apparently, only in midrashic works composed in the Middle Ages does the wording of the Palestinian Targumim lend itself to explicit allegorical interpretation.

The second section continues to deal with water symbolism, this time of the water of Marah (Exod 15:22–26). In this case, midrashic literature and ancient *piyyutim* preserve explicit allegorical interpretations of the sweetening of the water of Marah. A comparison between these midrashim and the allegorical interpretations of Philo, Origen and Ephrem seems helpful for the elucidation of both the Jewish and the Christian corpora. In some earlier Jewish works (*Biblical Antiquities*) one may find remnants of the allegorical tradition that underwent concretization.

The third section deals with God's other gift in the desert, namely the manna. Throughout rabbinic literature, the manna is unanimously understood as a miraculous but real, edible food (the Appendix to this paper refutes claims that some midrashic and Targumic passages assume an allegorical understanding of the manna). Philo, John, and Origen, however, identify the manna with the word of God. It can be demonstrated that this was also the view of some traditions embedded in rabbinic literature. In their present context in rabbinic literature the traditions' allegorical element was lost (or, more plausibly, intentionally removed); that is, these traditions underwent concretization. In the second part of this section, I contend that Philo's allegorical description of the manna as two cakes, one of honey and one of oil, is of great significance for understanding the origin of an aggadah concerning the similar miraculous but real cakes with which God nourished the infants of the Hebrews in Egypt. In his homily on the manna (and frequently elsewhere) Origen blames the Jews for their literal interpretation; was the insistence on literal interpretation, at least partly, a reaction to Christian allegorical interpretations?

The fourth section tries to demonstrate that in some cases such might indeed have been the case. The Christian allegorical interpretation of Abraham's circumcision took issue with the literal Jewish understanding of the term "circumcision." While the Christian argument was that this term is also used metaphorically in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish aggadic teachings insisted that the interpretation of the word "circumcision" must be physical; i.e., the cutting of a bodily member. The attitude of these pronouncements is probably a reaction to Christian arguments. This

notwithstanding, the anti-Christian component is not necessarily the dominant one in the general attitude towards concretization in Jewish literature.

The fifth section discusses what seems to me to be a concretization of Exod 15:1. There is a remnant in the midrash, I think, of an interpretation of "the horse and the rider" in this verse as body and soul; but according to the midrashic text of the *Mekhiltot* (and their parallels), no such interpretation is suggested for the biblical verse. In the second part of this section it is argued that the laconic rabbinic tradition concerning body and soul might be better conceived when read in light of the treatise on resurrection ascribed to Justin Martyr.

The object of my discussion in the present article is biblical exegesis in antiquity, focusing on classical rabbinic interpretation. Several instances in the present article demonstrate how easy it was to use and adapt assertions and traditions simply by integrating them into a new context. I discuss medieval passages when, according to my judgment, they seem to continue the ancient traditions and contribute to the elucidation of the ancient material by throwing light on the exegetical dynamics of antiquity.

I. THE WELL IN THE WILDERNESS

Numbers 21:16–20 reads:

> (16) And from there they continued to Be'er, that is, the well of which the Lord said to Moses: "Gather the people together, and I will give them water." (17) Then Israel sang this song: "Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!—(18) the well which the princes (שרים) dug, which the nobles of the people delved, with the scepter (and) with their staffs (במחקק במשענותם)." And from the wilderness (they went on to) Mattanah (וממדבר מתנה), (19) and from Mattanah (to) Naḥali'el (וממתנה נחליאל) and from Naḥali'el (to) Bamoth, (20) and from Bamoth (to) the valley . . .

According to the plain sense of the biblical text, the poem begins in v. 17 and ends with the words "with their staffs" in v. 18. The words "from the wilderness (they went on to) Mattanah" to the end of the passage (vv. 18b–20) are a prose list of stations on Israel's journey.[43] The rabbinic sages, however, unanimously interpreted the list as referring to the

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[43] The reading of the Septugint: "from the well" instead of "from the wilderness" suits the prose list of stations even better.

wandering of the well, as it accompanied the camp of Israel:[44] "The well that was with Israel in the wilderness was similar to a rock[45] . . . ascending with them to the mountains and descending with them to the valleys."[46] This reading of the passage, and the tradition that a miraculous well accompanied the people in their travels, was known already to Paul, who gave it an allegorical sense: "And all drank from the same spiritual drink, for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4).[47] In this verse, the aggadah concerning a physical well that accompanied Israel's travel in the desert is merged with an allegorical understanding of the well.

Allegorical interpretations of the well are documented not only in Philo, as might be expected, but also in the *Damascus Covenant* (CD), long before Philo and Paul. Philo writes:

(1) Moses compares wisdom to a well, for wisdom lies deep below the surface, and gives off a sweet stream of true nobility for thirsty souls.[48]

(2) By the "well" I mean knowledge, which for long has been hidden, but in time is sought for (ἀναζητηθείσης) and finally found, knowledge whose nature is so deep, knowledge which ever serves to water the fields of reason.[49]

Two passages in CD are relevant for the allegorical interpretation of our passage,[50] one explicit and one implicit.

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[44] This tradition is found also in *Biblical Antiquities* 11:15: "And the water of Marah became sweet. It followed them in the wilderness forty years, and went up to the mountain with them and went down into the plains."

[45] The rock might be an allusion to Ps 105:41 (see below, n. 52) and Num 20:10–11.

[46] *T. Sukkah* 3:11 [ed. Lieberman, 268–69].

[47] For the cultural setting of this passage, see B. Schaller, "1 Cor 10, 1–10 (13) und die jüdischen Voraussetzung der Schriftauslegung des Paulus," in idem, *Fundamenta Judaica: Studien zum antiken Judentum und zum Neuen Testament* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 167–90. On the relationship of the Pauline passage to the midrashic tradition, and on the motivation for the emergence of the tradition, see recently B. N. Fisk, "Pseudo-Philo, Paul, and Israel's Rolling Stone: Early Points along an Exegetical Trajectory," in *Israel in the Wilderness: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (ed. K. E. Pomykala; Themes in Biblical Narrative 10; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 117–36.

[48] Philo, *On Drunkenness*, 112.

[49] Philo, *On Dreams* 2.271.

[50] Hanson (*Allegory and Event*, 22) says about these passages of the *Damascus Covenant*: "It is evident that in this document we have an example (perhaps the earliest known clear example) of typology—the interpreting of an event belonging to the present or the recent past as a fulfillment of a similar situation recorded or prophesied in scripture—slipping gradually into allegory." Hanson's specific observations on these passages, however, need to be refined.

(1) God remembered the covenant of the Ancestors, and he raised from Aaron men of knowledge and from Israel wise men, and made them hear (וישמיעם) and they dug the well "the well which the princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved, with the scepter." The "well" is the Torah and those who dug it are the penitents of Israel . . . all of whom God called "princes" (אשר קרא אל את כולם שרים) for they sought him (דרשוהו), and their renown has not been repudiated in anyone's mouth. And the "scepter" is the Expounder of the Torah (דורש התורה) . . . and the "nobles of the people" are those who came to dig the well with the decrees (מחוקקות) that the Scepter (המחוקק, i.e., the Expounder of the Torah) had decreed (חקק) to walk in them . . .[51]

(2) With those who remained steadfast in God's precepts . . . God established his covenant with Israel for ever, revealing to them hidden matters, in which all Israel has gone astray: His holy Sabbaths and His glorious feasts . . . the wishes of His pleasure (חפצי רצונו) by whose observance man shall live. He opened to them[52] and they dug a well of plentiful water, but he that rejects it shall not live.[53]

It should be noted that these passages deal not only with Num 21:18, but also, implicitly, with an exegetical problem in the narrative passage: according to v. 16 it is God who gave the water and no human action is mentioned, whereas in v. 18 the well is described as the result of human digging. It seems that, according to CD, the founders of the sect had interpreted the Torah correctly; a human act was enabled by a divine revelation that enlightened their minds. This interpretation of the biblical passage is consistent with the conception of contemporary "revelation" in the ongoing life of the community; that is, revelation conceived of as divine inspiration that accompanies the community's (human) endeavors.

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[51] CD 6:2–10.

[52] This is probably an allusion to Ps 105:41: "He opened the rock (פתח צור), and water gushed forth." The word פתח has also the meaning of discovering hidden things, which is appropriate for the allegorical sense (P. Mandel, "On *Patah* and *Petiha*: A New Study," in *Higayon L'Yonah: New Aspects in the Study of Midrash, Aggadah and Piyyut in Honor of Professor Yonah Fraenkel* [eds. J. Levinson, J. Elbaum and G. Hasan-Rokem; Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2006/7], 49–82, esp. 52–55 [in Hebrew]). It is also possible that the wording at the beginning of the CD passage, "God remembered the covenant of the Ancestors," is derived from the following verse in the psalm: "for he remembered his holy word to Abraham his servant" (Ps 105:42).

[53] CD 3:12–16. These translations of CD follow F. García Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1:559, 555, with some deviations. Another allusion to the well can be found in CD 19:33–34.

Both CD and Philo consider the "digging of the well" as signifying the *seeking* (דרש, ἀναζητέω) and *discovery* of hidden matters. Those "hidden matters," however, are entirely different in the two sources: For Philo the phrase represents a profound layer of philosophical knowledge, whereas for CD it is the revelation of the correct halakhic interpretation of the commandments.

The wording of the latter passage of CD, "revealing to them . . . His holy Sabbaths . . . the wishes of His pleasure by whose observance man shall live. He opened to them and they dug a well of plentiful water, but he that rejects it (or: them, i.e., the commandments) shall not live (ומואסיהם לא יחיה)," reflects Ezekiel chapter 20:

> (11) I gave them my statutes and gave them my ordinances, by whose obser-vance man shall live . . . (13) . . . they did not walk in my statutes but rejected my ordinances . . . (24) Because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected (מאסו) my statutes and profaned my sabbaths . . . (25) I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they will not live (ומשפטים לא יחיו בהם).

Apparently, CD understood the passage in Ezekiel as saying that God had given Israel commandments "by whose observance man shall live" (Ezek 20:11, 21); but, because they rejected God's laws (v. 24), the same set of laws (improperly observed), has been converted into the opposite; namely, "statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life" (v. 25). The water of the well is life-giving, but only if the one who drinks it deserves it. We shall return to a similar idea later on.

Both CD and Paul link the well in the wilderness to their respective communities. It should be noted, however, that while Paul stresses the analogy between the Israelites after the Exodus, who consumed spiritual food, and the members of the community of Jesus believers, CD refers exclusively to the founders of the *Damascus Covenant* community, not to the ancient Israelites.[54]

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[54] Elsewhere there are allusions to the Israelites' wandering in the desert and the entrance of Israel into the Holy Land after forty years: 1) CD 20:14–15 clearly alludes to the Israelites who disobeyed God, and who were consequently punished by not being allowed to enter the Land (Josh 5:6); 2) In the *pesher* to Psalm 37 (4Q171 1–10 ii 7–9) there is an allu-sion to the same verse, and it is stressed that after forty years have elapsed the chosen can "inherit the land." These people are called שבי המדבר (3:1) and it is said that all "human inheritance" (נחלת אדם) will be theirs. One wonders what is reflected in the allusion to Josh 5:6, shared by the two passages: is it merely the drawing of an analogy between the Israelites who died in the desert because of their sin and the opponents of the commu-nity, or is it a "typological" interpretation of the wandering in the desert, in line with the

No allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Well (vv. 17b–18a) is documented in ancient rabbinic literature; such a reading of the Song is attested in neither Tannaitic nor Amoraic literature. As stated above, the well (called in rabbinic literature "the well of Miriam") is depicted as a miraculous source of water that accompanied the people in the wilderness. Attention is drawn to realistic details such as the existence of fish in the water of the well as a source of nutrition for Israel; the "scepter" and the "staffs" are described in a realistic manner as tools which miraculously helped in bringing the water of the well to every tribe in the camp.[55] There seems to be, however, one remnant of an allegorical interpretation of the passage in the Tannaitic period. The Tannaitic midrash to Exodus, *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmaʿel*, reads: "Torah is called "inheritance," *naḥalah*, as it is written "and from Mattanah (to) Naḥaliʾel" (Num 21:19)."[56] The starting point of this midrash may safely be reconstructed: the words at the end of the previous verse, "from the wilderness—*Mattanah*" (literally meaning a *gift*) were interpreted as referring to the *giving* of the Torah *in* the wilderness.[57] But the interpretation of the word *mattanah* by itself is not a sufficient reason for interpreting this verse as applying to the Torah; after all, the "gift" could be a physical well no less than the Torah could, as it is indeed in most of the midrashim and Targumim. As I mentioned above, verses 18b–20 were interpreted as a continuation of the song. Probably, then, verses 18b–19a were interpreted as referring to the Torah because the song (v. 18a) had been interpreted in this way, and the words "from the wilderness a gift" were conceived of as the continuation of the song. The saying of Rabbi Yoḥanan (3rd century CE), according to which the number of occurrences of "well" in the Torah correspond to the qualities by which the Torah is acquired,[58] assumes that the narratives mentioning a well in the Pentateuch can be interpreted figuratively (it is unclear, however, whether he knew of specific interpretation to each passage, including Numbers 21). The Babylonian Amora Rava (Babylonia,

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pesher in CD discussed here? Note also the similar phraseology used in yet another context for Israel's inheritance of the Land and the spiritual inheritance (1QS 4:16 derived from Num 26:56).

[55] *T. Sukkah* 3:11 [ed. Lieberman, 269]; *Sifre Num.* 95 [ed. Horovitz, 95]. These traditions are depicted in the Dura Europus synagogue; see S. Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America Press, 1962), 4:877.

[56] *MekhRI Shirah* 10 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 149].

[57] Compare Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 817.

[58] *Song of Songs Rab.* 4:15.

4th century CE)—and the later *Midrash Tanḥuma*—have a similar allegorical interpretation of vv. 18b–20.[59] Rava's homily is an allegorical interpretation concerning the individual and his progress:

> When one makes himself as the wilderness, which is free to all, the Torah is presented to him as a gift, as it is written, "and from the wilderness—Mattanah." And once he has it as a gift (*mattanah*), God gives it to him as an inheritance (*naḥalah*), as it is written "And from the wilderness—Mattanah, and from Mattanah—Naḥali'el"; and when God gives it him as an inheritance, he ascends to greatness, as it is written, "and from Naḥali'el—Bamoth [i.e., heights]." But if he exalts himself, the Holy One, blessed be He, casts him down, as it is written, "And from Bamoth—the valley." Moreover, he is made to sink into the earth, as it is written, "which is pressed down into the desolate soil."[60]

A remarkable feature in *Targum Onqelos* on these verses is the rendering of במחקק as ספריא (scribes), a literal interpretation of the Hebrew word according to its most common meaning (albeit not the appropriate sense for our verse, and, unlike MT, in the plural). The same rendering occurs also in the Palestinian Targumim, but the "scribes" are identified there with Moses and Aaron.[61] In the Palestinian Targumim, however, v. 18 is rendered:

> A well that had been dug by the great men of old (עלמא)[62] from the beginning, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, finished by the distinguished seventy sages of the Sanhedrin of the Israel; scribes (ספריא) drew[63] its water with their staffs, and those are Moses and Aaron, the scribes of Israel.[64]

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[59] *B. Nedarim* 55a; *Tanḥuma Ḥuqqat* 21. The passage in *Tanḥuma Ḥuqqat* includes the two interpretations side by side, without a clear differentiation: one that the words "and from the wilderness a gift" refer to the physical well of water, and the other, that these words refer to the Torah. The preceding verses, i.e., the verses of the Song of the Well proper, are *not* interpreted as referring to the Torah.

[60] *B. Nedarim* 55a.

[61] This could refer to Num 20:10.

[62] Thus *Targum Neofiti* (A. Diez-Macho, *Neophyti 1* [Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968–1979], 199); the *Fragment Targum* according to ms. V (M. Klein, *The Fragment Targums of the Pentateuch according to their Extant Sources* [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1980], 199); ms. P of the same Targum reads עמא, "people" (i.e., Israel) (Klein, *Fragment Targums*, 101). Note that the words שכלילו יתה סכלתניהון דעמא in *Targum Neofiti* of the same verse has a similar variant reading: סוכלתני עלמא.

[63] Thus (משכו) *Fragment Targum* ms. V (Klein, *Fragment Targums*, 199); *Targum Neofiti* reads משחו, "measured." In the light of the parallel in *t. Sukkah* 3:11, the reading משכו seems the original one.

[64] Translated primarily according to the text of the *Fragment Targum* manuscript V, which reads: בירא דחפרו יתה רברבי עלמא מן שירויא אברהם יצחק ויעקב שכלילו יתה

In which sense was the well dug by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob "from the beginning"? According to *Tanḥuma Ḥuqqat* 21, the well was given *due to the merit* of (בזכות) the Fathers, and Ps 105:41–42 is cited as a proof-text.[65] This is certainly not the meaning of the Targum as we have it.[66] The seventy scholars, the distinguished members of the Sanhedrin are "the nobles of the people" of v. 18, but their being scholars and religious leaders plays no significant role in the Targumic passage. The interpretation of the *passage* in all the Targumin is unequivocal: the well is real, a source of water, and this is the "gift" (*Mattanah*) at the end of v. 18. These details might be remnants of an allegorical interpretation.[67]

In medieval midrashic works that tend to elaborate more ancient material, *Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva Version A* (Geonic period) and *Midrash Aggadah* (Europe, ca. 12th century CE) an allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Well is attested, and the "well" symbolizes the Torah. The wording of these sources is clearly related to the Palestinian Targumim, and probably derives from one of them:

Palestinian Targum[68]	*Midrash Aggadah*[69]	*Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva*[70]
בירא די חפרו יתה רברבני עלמא מן שירויא אברהם יצחק ויעקב,	"באר חפרוה שרים"—זו תורה שהית' נשמרת על ידי אברהם ויעקב . . .	"באר חפרוה שרים"—אין 'באר' אלא תורה . . .

סוכלתני עלמא [עמא] סנהדרין שובעתי חכימיא דמפרשין משכו יתה בחוטריהו>>ן>> משה <<אל>>דישר   >>ן>> סופריהו ואהרן. There are several differences between the various recensions of the Palestinian Targum in the manuscripts of the *Fragment Targum* and in the various Targumim recorded in *Neofiti*. The general sense, however, does not change.

[65] See above, n. 52.

[66] According to the late midrash *Pirqe R. El.* (ch. 35) the miraculous well was repeatedly discovered in turn by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; see S. Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-fshutah*, 4.876.

[67] Some elements of this Targum, especially the mention of the seventy sages, might be related to the allegorical explanation of Exod 15:27 in *MekhRI*: "When God created the world," he created the twelve wells of Elim, and the seventy palm trees there "corresponded to (כנגד) the seventy elders"; the Israelites' "encamping by the water" means that they studied there the words of the Torah that had been given to them at Marah (*MekhRI Vayyasaʿ* 1 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 159]).

[68] Cited according to the *Fragment Targum* ms. V.

[69] To Num 21:18; S. Buber, *Midrash Aggadah* [Vienna, 1894], 2:129–30.

[70] *Batei Midrashot* (ed. A. Wertheimer; Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1956), 2:385.

Table (*cont.*)

Palestinian Targum	Midrash Aggadah	Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva
שכלילו יתה סוכלתני *עמא* סנהדרין שובעיתי חכימיא דמפרשין, משכו יתה בחוטריהון	"כרוה נדיבי העם"—אלו ישראל שקבלוה מסיני, ועל ידה נקראים נדיבים, שנאמר "נדיבי עמים נאספו" וגו' (תהלים מ"ז י'), ולפי שנתברכו בקולה לכך זכו במלכות, שנאמר ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים (שמות י"ט ו').	אין 'שרים' אלא משה ושבעים סנהדרין שהיו דורשין את התורה, "כרוה נדיבי עם" אלו הסופרים כגון דוד ושלמה דניאל ומרדכי ועזרא הסופר,
משה ואהרן ספריהון דישראל	"במחוקק"—על ידי משה שנקרא מחוקק . . . "במשענותם"—שנשענו על ידי משה שקיבלו כל מה שאמר להם מפי הקב"ה לשמור	"במחוקק"—שהכל אומרים הלכה למשה מסיני שנקרא מחוקק . . . "במשענותם"—אלו הנביאים שהיו מחיין את המתים . . .

In the Torah-oriented exegetical context of these late midrashim, "Aaron" was omitted, and "Moses" stands alone as *the* "scribe," i.e., the Lawgiver.[71] Even if we have here merely a reworking of the Palestinian Targum in an allegorical fashion, it is significant to note the smooth transformation from literal to allegorical. Some features in *Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva* and *Midrash Aggadah* are reminiscent of the *Damascus Covenant*: the interpretation in *Midrash Aggadah* stresses that all of Israel are called "kings" because they had received the Torah (note the Septuagint to v. 18: ἐξελατόμησαν αὐτὸ βασιλεῖς ἐθνῶν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτῶν . . .); similarly, it is stressed in the *Damascus Covenant* that "God called *all* of them שרים (princes/rulers)." In *Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva* the "digging of the well" is "expounding the Torah," the same term (דרש) as in CD.[72] Both late rabbinic sources

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[71] According to *Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva*, "Moses" occurs together with "the Prophets," who are described as miracle workers.

[72] It has been suggested that the verb דרש does not necessarily mean (biblical) interpretation, but has a more general sense of "teach, expound, instruct"; see recently P. Mandel, "The Origins of Midrash in the Second Temple Period," in *Current Trends in the Study of*

emphasize receiving the ordinances from Moses, whereas CD relates to the decrees (מחוקקות) given by the leader, the Expounder of the Torah. As might be expected in a rabbinic text, *Otiyyot de-Rabbi ʿAqiva* emphasizes the oral Torah (הלכה למשה מסיני) and its transmission by the sages (סופרים) throughout the ages, while CD stresses the innovative and reformative decrees of the מחוקק, inferred from the written Torah by scrutiny. While the substantial similarities to the Palestinian Targum can be positively discerned, the affinities of the medieval midrashim with CD might be incidental; but the similarities and dissimilarities to CD are nevertheless helpful for understanding the interpretations of CD and these later midrashim.

To sum up: "Water" is a common metaphor for Torah elsewhere in rabbinic literature.[73] In this particular case, applying allegorical interpretation to the song in Num 21:17–18 allows the preceding narrative (v. 16) to gain a new allegorical meaning; while vv. 18–20, originally part of the prose narrative, become part of the allegorical interpretation of the song. An allegorical explanation of the Song of the Well, known to us from Philo, existed, prior to Philo's time, in Palestine. According to this interpretation the "well" signifies the Torah. In rabbinic writings, this "well" is never explicitly interpreted allegorically, as far as I know, before the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the interpretation of the following narrative verses as referring to the Torah implies that such an interpretation did exist. The avoidance of an allegorical interpretation of the Song of the Well, alongside the evidence that it might well have been familiar to the Tannaim, is intriguing.[74]

Midrash (ed. C. Bakhos; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 9–34, esp. 28–30; and idem, "Darash Rabbi X: A New Study," *Dappim le-Meḥqar ha-Sifrut* 16–17 (2007/2008): 41–45 (in Hebrew).

[73] M. A. Fishbane, "A Well of Living Water: A Biblical Motif and Its Ancient Transformations," in *Shaʿarei Talmon: Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon* (ed. M. A. Fishbane and E. Tov; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 3–16.

[74] Not surprisingly, Origen also interpreted this passage in an allegorical fashion (*Hom. Num.* 12.1.1–3.4; in *Origenes Werke 7: Homilien zur Hexateuch in Rufins Übersetzung, T. 2* [ed. W. A. Baehrens; GCS 30; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1921], 93–103; trans. T. P. Scheck, *Homilies on Numbers* [ed. C. A. Hall; Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press Academic, 2009], 62–68); his interpretation, however, is quite different from all those surveyed in this article.

II. Sweetening the Water at Marah

In Exodus 15:22–26 we read:

> (22) They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. (23) When
> they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters[75] of Marah because
> they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. (24) And the people mur-
> mured against Moses saying: "What shall we drink?" (25a) And he cried to
> the Lord, and the Lord showed him (ויורהו) a tree (or: wood), and he threw
> it into the waters, and the waters became sweet. (25b) There the Lord made
> for them a statute and an ordinance and there he proved them, (26) saying,
> "If you will hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, the diseases that I
> put upon the Egyptians I will not put upon you, for I am the Lord, your
> healer."

Ancient sources sought exegetically to interlock the meanings of verses
25b–26 and 22–25a. As early as the second century BCE Ben Sira says, in
urging people to consult physicians and use medicines (made of plants):
"God has created medicines out of the earth, and let not a wise man
reject them, *for by a tree the water was sweetened* so that he might make
known to humans His power."[76] God's healing is granted to human beings
through medicines, the products of plants, just as God sweetened the
water by a plant. Ben Sira's words are a covert exegesis of verse 26: he
reads it together with, and interprets it in the light of, verse 25a.[77]

According to one of the opinions in *MekhRI*[78] (and elsewhere in rab-
binic literature), the "tree" signifies the Torah, which is the Tree of Life.[79]

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[75] Usually I have preferred to translate both מים and ὕδωρ by the same English word,
"water." I have been inconsistent here and elsewhere when the Hebrew midrashim are
based on the plural form of the word מים in Hebrew.

[76] Sir 38:4–5; my translation.

[77] Elsewhere I have suggested that Ben Sira's verse reflects a polemic against an inter-
pretation of Exod 15:26 asserting that God is the sole healer of those who "hearken to His
voice" and that there is therefore no need to consult physicians and use medicines; see
M. Kister, "A Contribution to the Interpretation of Ben Sira," *Tarbiz* 59 (1990): 342–43 (in
Hebrew).

[78] *MekhRI Vayassaʿ* 1 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 156].

[79] For a discussion of this identification see recently Kister, "The Tree of Life and the
Turning Sword: Jewish Biblical Interpretations, Symbols, and Theological Patterns and
their Christian Counterparts," in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views* (eds.
M. Bockmuehl and G. G. Stroumsa; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 138–55.
According to views of other Tannaim in the same passage of the *Mekhilta*, the tree of
Marah is identified with specific trees. See also *Targum Neofiti* to Exod 15:25: וחוי ליה ה'
אילן ונסב מיניה מימריה דה' מלה דאוריתא וטלק לגו מיא. This text as it stands should be
translated: "And the Lord showed him a tree, and the Memra of the Lord took from it
a word of the Law and he cast it into the midst of the water" (thus M. McNamara and

According to Philo's allegorical interpretation,[80] the "tree" is identified with the Tree of Life, representing virtue; this tree sweetens the bitter water, a symbol of the soul's bitterness.[81]

In the *Biblical Antiquities*, written perhaps at the end of the first century CE, we read: "There [= at Mt. Sinai] he commanded him [= Moses] many things and showed him the Tree of Life, a piece of which he cut off[82] and took and threw into Marah, and the water of Marah became sweet" (11:15). It seems that the Tree of Life mentioned in this passage is not an allegorical tree:[83] a piece of it is described as being cut and thrown to Marah, and there is no hint whatsoever that it symbolizes the Torah. Many hidden things, including the Garden of Eden, were revealed to Moses at Sinai according to some traditions;[84] and yet, the fact that the passage in the *Biblical Antiquities* mentions only the Tree of Life, in the context of receiving the commandments at Sinai,[85] might be an indication that it is a concretization of an allegorical reading. An allegorical interpretation seems to me unlikely for the *present text* of the *Biblical Antiquities*, but it is

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R. Hayward, *Targum Neofiti 1: Exodus* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994], 69), but this does not make sense. Two alternative renderings were combined here: (a) וחוי ליה ה' אילן ונסב מיניה וטלק לגו מיא, "And the Lord showed him a tree, and he took from it and threw it into the water"; (b) וחוי ליה (?) מימריה דה' מלה דאוריתא [וטלק לגו מיא], "And the Memra of the Lord showed him (?) a word of Torah and threw it into the water." That this is the case is made evident by the reading of the *Fragment Targum* (Ms. P): ואליף יתיה מימרא ה' מילא דאוריתא דהיא מתילא באילן חייא וטלק לגו מיא (M. Klein, *The Frament Targums to the Pentateuch according to their Extant Sources* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980), 81.

[80] *The Migration of Abraham*, 36–37. Belkin has noted the parallel between this passage and the Philonic passage cited above, albeit in a rather facile manner; see S. Belkin, "Philo's Midrash *Questions and Answers on Genesis and Exodus* and its Relationship to the Palestinian Midrash," *Horev* 15–16 (1960): 26–27 (in Hebrew).

[81] Daniel Boyarin (*Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990], 65–66) considers the main motivation of the "allegorical" interpretation to be the double meaning of the word ויורהו, whose usual meaning is "to teach," hence the identification of "tree" with the Torah. The identification of the "tree" with the "Tree of Life" occurs, however, not only in the midrash but also in Philo, who does not have a similar exegetical motivation in the Greek text which he is interpreting. Moreover, similar identifications of "*a tree*" with "*the* Tree of Life" occur in other passages as well; see M. Kister, "The Tree of Life," 138–55. It seems likely, therefore, that an ancient reading of the text was differently elaborated by Philo and in midrashic literature.

[82] Compare the additional words "and he took *from it*" in *Targum Neofiti* (above, n. 79).

[83] See also M. Kister, "Romans 5:12–21 against the Background of Torah-Theology and Hebrew Usage," *HTR* 100 (2007): 391–424, pp. 422–24.

[84] Compare *2 Bar.* 59:8.

[85] It is impossible to interpret the passage as referring to Marah (Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-fshutah*, 4.877); see also Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 628.

rather likely that in the *tradition* embedded in it the "tree" was conceived of as the Torah.[86]

I have mentioned above that according to Philo's allegorical interpretations of this passage the Tree of Life sweetened the bitterness of the soul. A parallel to this interpretation is found in a *piyyut* of El'azar birbi Qalir (7th century CE?), in which it is stated that the tree[87] "sweetened the bitterness of (their) hearts," and that God planned "to sweeten their bitterness by [the Torah] which is called 'tree.'"[88] The bitterness, however, is that, not of an individual soul (as in Philo), but of the Israelites. Similarly a midrash (*Exod. Rab.* 50:3) attributed to Rabbi Levi (end of the third century CE) interprets the words "they were bitter" as referring to the Israelites rather than to the waters (הדור היה מר במעשיו).[89]

In the aforementioned *piyyut*, it is also stated that the water of Marah became bitter *because* of the bitterness of the people.[90] Elsewhere, the midrash draws an analogy between the sweetening of the waters of Marah and Moses' prayer to God after the Israelites had worshipped the golden calf, "to sweeten the bitterness of Israel" (*Exod. Rab.* 43:3); i.e., to grant them absolution for their sin.[91]

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[86] On the concrete, nonallegorical, interpretation of this passage in *Biblical Antiquities*, and its relationship to the *Mekhilta*, see also H. Jacobson, *A Commentary on Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 478–79. Contrast Kugel, who opts for an allegorical interpretation of the passage: "for Pseudo-Philo, the tree at Marah is nothing less than the Torah" (Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 628). Although I agree with Jacobson, his argument from the *Mekhilta's* reading is problematic. Jacobson relies (following L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–1938], 6:14 n. 82) on the version of the *Mekhilta* passage found in *Yalkut haMakhiri on Proverbs* [ed. J. M. Badhab; Jerusalem: Azriel, 1927], 9); which quotes *MekhRI* as follows: "'and the Lord showed him a tree.' R. Nathan says, 'the Tree of Life' (עץ החיים)." *Yalkut haMakhiri*'s reading עץ החיים, however, is a corruption (due to the graphic similarity of letters) of the original reading in the *Mekhilta* at this point, עץ קתרוס. This view in the *Mekhilta* identifies the "tree" with some specific plant, rather than with the Tree of Life.

[87] B. Lefler, "Qedushta for Shabbat Va-yassaʿ by Elʿazar birbi Qalir," *Yerushaseinu: The Annual Journal of Toras Ashkenaz* 2 (2007): 223–58 (in Hebrew). This *piyyut* combines divergent midrashim: the "tree" is a symbol of the Torah and also an identifiable botanic species (שען עץ עבות, 243; תאשור, 251).

[88] Lefler, "Qedushta," 243.

[89] The midrashim and the *piyyut* corroborate Boyarin's reconstruction (Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 59, 66). It is reasonable to assume that what was sweetened by the Tree of Life, i.e., Torah, is not water in the physical sense, but rather the people.

[90] "When they rebelled against your Spirit, and when they turned to sin, sweet (water) became bitter for them, when they became bitter (or: rebelled)" רוחך אז כהמרו עת לסיג (נתמרו, מתוקים למו הומררו כאשר מרו); Lefler, "Qedushta," 239).

[91] See also Lefler, "Qedushta," 250.

Ephrem the Syrian (4th century CE) comments on the biblical passage:[92]

> [A] God showed Moses a piece of wood. "When he threw it into the water, the water became sweet." The wood is a type of the Cross which sweetened the bitterness of the nations.
>
> [B] After changing the water, he imposed laws on them (= the Israelites), so that just as the wood had the power to alter nature, the law might lure freedom and persuade it.

As Feghali indicates, section B, according to which the "tree" is a type of the law, might well be ultimately derived from a Jewish source.[93] It should be noted, however, that section A, according to which God "sweetened the bitterness of the nations" by the Cross, is a variation of a Jewish interpretation that God "sweetened the bitterness of Israel" by the Tree of Life, identified as the Torah. Both sections, then, adapt Jewish exegesis to a new Christian context.

Elsewhere, in one of his poems, Ephrem contrasts the sweetening of the waters of Marah with the embitterment of Israel when they made the golden calf: "Moses sweetened the waters by wood, (but) the Synagogue became bitter by (worshipping) a molten (image) of a calf; you [= Jonah] embittered the sea by your flight, (but) sweetened Nineveh by the sound of your horn (*shippurakh*)."[94] The negative connection drawn by Ephrem between the sweetening of the water and the embitterment caused by the golden calf is diametrically opposed to the positive midrashic connection made between the *sweetening* of the bitter water and the *sweetening* of Israel's sin of the golden calf; and indeed it seems plausible to me that Ephrem's statement in this poem is a reaction to a Jewish midrashic assertion.

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[92] E. G. Mathews and J. P. Amar, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Prose Works* (FC 91; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 254.

[93] P. Feghali, "Commentaire de l'Exode par saint Ephrem," *ParOr* 12 (1984/85): 121; cited by Mathews and Amar, *St. Ephrem*, 254 n. 204.

[94] *Hymns on Virginity*, 44.15; see E. Beck (ed.), *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de virginitate* (CSCO 223 = SSyr 94; Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1962), 148. The contrast is not so much between Moses and Jonah as between the Gentiles (represented by the Ninevites) and the Jews.

In *MekhRI* we find the three following homilies, the first two of them in the name of *doreshe reshumot* and the third as an utterance of Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i:[95]

1. "And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water" (Exod 15:22)—*Doreshe reshumot* say: They did not find words of Torah which are likened to water. And whence do we know that the words of the Torah are likened to water? It is said, "Ho, everyone that is thirsty, come for water" (Isa 55:1). It was because they had been without words of the Torah for three days that they became rebellious (לכך מרדו)...[96]

2. "And the Lord showed him a tree" (Exod 15:25)... *Doreshe reshumot* say: He showed him words of the Torah which is likened to a tree, as it is said, "she is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her" (Prov 3:18)

3. "[They came to Elim...] and they encamped there by the water" (Exod 15:27)—it teaches that they were occupied with the words of the Torah which had been given to them at Marah.[97]

According to the interpretation of *doreshe reshumot*,[98] "water" symbolizes "Torah," and the "tree" in Exod 15:25a symbolizes the Tree of Life, which is normally identified with the Torah. Each of these two allegorical interpretations fits in very well with biblical metaphors: water is a metaphor for wisdom and so is the Tree of Life,[99] and both are identified by the rabbis with the Torah. Moreover, while in one treatise Philo interprets the "tree" of Exod 12:25 as the Tree of Life, as we have seen, in another treatise he interprets the "water" of the springs of Elim (Exod 15:27) as "(springs of) knowledge," of which those who are thirsty for learning can drink.[100] It is possible, then, that the interpretations of sages called *doreshe reshumot* in *MekhRI* reflect two different allegorical interpretations, both attested

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[95] The literal meaning and of the appellation *doreshei reshumot* and their religious identity is still far from clear. Lauterbach's suggestion ("Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 291–305) does not account for many sayings; see Boyarin's critique of previous opinions ("On the Identification of the *Dorshei Reshumot*," 23–35 [in Hebrew]); Boyarin's own suggestion, however, does not seem to me convincing. For a similar understanding of the word *reshumot* see Bonsirven, "Exégèse allégorique," 540–41. For allegorical interpretations of Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i see section III.

[96] It is possible to suggest that the original reading of the *Mekhilta* was לכך מררו, i.e., "became bitter" rather than "rebellious" (quite often it is difficult or even impossible to distinguish between *daleth* and *resh* in ancient manuscripts).

[97] *MekhRI Vayassa'* 1 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 154, 156]; *MekhRSh* [ed. Epstein–Melamed 105].

[98] Concerning the exegetical motivations for their interpretation, see Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 58–70; idem "Identification of *Dorshei Reshumot*," 34–35; see also above, n. 81.

[99] See above, n. 81; Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*, 614–16 and above, n. 79.

[100] Philo, *On Flight and Finding*, 187. Lauterbach ("Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 310) cites other occurrences in Philo's writings where "water" is explained as wisdom.

also in Philo's writings. The two allegorical interpretations of "tree" and "water," however, do not add up to a coherent interpretation of the passage as a whole.[101]

The tree that sweetened the water was identified very early in the Christian tradition with the tree of the Cross, an identification that is well known from the work of Justin Martyr (second century CE).[102] Origen's elaborate interpretation of the biblical passage should certainly be read as continuation of the Christian exegetical tradition; it has, however, some intriguing affinities with the midrash:[103]

> I think that the Law, if it be undertaken according to the letter, is sufficiently bitter and is itself Mara.... The people of God ... cannot drink from that water. But indeed they cannot taste the bitterness of circumcision nor are they able to endure the bitterness of victims or the observance of the Sabbath. But if "God shows a tree" which is thrown into its bitterness so that the "water" of the Law becomes "sweet," they can drink from it. Solomon teaches us what that "tree" is which "the Lord showed," when he says that wisdom "is a Tree of Life for all who lay hold upon her" (Prov 3:18). If, therefore, the tree of the wisdom of Christ has been thrown into the Law ... the bitterness of the letter of the Law is changed into the sweetness of spiritual understanding and then the people of God can drink.
>
>   For this reason, therefore, precepts are given to them by which they are tested (Exod 15:25). Hence it is that also through the prophet Ezechiel the Lord says to them, "I gave you precepts and ordinances which were not good, by which you will not live" (Ezek 20:25). For when they were tested in the precepts of the Lord they were not found faithful. Therefore "the commandment that was ordained to life, the same was found to be unto death for them" (Rom 7:10), because one and the same commandment, if it is observed produces life; if it is not observed, death. For this reason, therefore, the commandments which produce death for those who do not observe them are called "commandments which are not good by which they do not live." But because he has mixed the tree of the cross of Christ with them and they have become sweet and observed, having been spiritually understood, those same commandments are called "commandments of life," as also it says elsewhere: "Hear, O Israel, the commandments of life" (Bar 3:9).[104]

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[101] Lauterbach ("Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 310–11) failed to note this while trying to reconstruct the original intention of *doreshe reshumot*.

[102] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, ch. 86. I thank Prof. Judith Lieu for stressing this component (oral communication).

[103] As has been noted by Nicholas de Lange; see N. R. M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish–Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 112–16.

[104] Origen, *Homilies on Exodus*, 7.1–2; (ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*, 205–7; translation based on that of Heine, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, 300–03).

As de Lange has observed,[105] Origen's allegorical interpretation of bib-
lical details as symbols is quite similar to the practice in the *Mekhilta*.[106]
Moreover, it should be emphasized how easily Origen could arrive at his
Christian homily by way of elaborating the midrashic course taken by
the *doreshe reshumot*: if "water" signifies Torah, then the "bitter water" of
Marah is bitter Torah that needs sweetening; it is sweetened by a "tree,"
the Tree of Life, an interpretation supported by Prov 3:18 (the prooftext of
doreshe reshumot), understood by Origen as Christ's *wisdom* (in addition
to its interpretation as the tree of the Cross).[107] Origen uses these exegeti-
cal assumptions for a direct attack on the Jews, who are still in "Marah" to
this day because they continue to interpret the Torah literally.[108]

Origen's statement, "because one and the same commandment, if it is
observed (*servetur*) produces life; if it is not observed, death," has parallels
both in rabbinic literature[109] and in the literature of the Second Temple
period (Origen, to be sure, draws the idea from Paul).[110] I dealt above
(p. 148) with a similar conception that can be inferred from the *Damascus
Covenant*, concerning the "water" of the Torah (and its correct interpre-
tation as revealed to the founders of the community). As we have seen,
the interpretation of Exod 15:25–27 offered by *doreshe reshumot* consists
of two allegorical interpretations, which do not fit elegantly together.
If these sages tried to create a coherent interpretation of the whole pas-
sage (which is open to question), the missing link *could* be that the water
of the Torah turns bitter when it is not observed properly or when it is
falsely interpreted; only correct instruction of the Torah, symbolized by
the Tree of Life, can sweeten the bitter water. Such a reconstruction is
hypothetical; yet a Jewish notion that "water" (= commandments of the
Torah) is life-giving only to those who observe the Torah according to its
correct interpretation is attested as early as the Second Temple period.[111]

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[105] De Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, p. 82.

[106] It should be noted that in this case Origen's allegory makes no use of the allegorical
interpretation suggested by Philo.

[107] See Kister, "Tree of Life."

[108] A possible Jewish reaction will be discussed later on in this article (see n. 147).

[109] For instance, "If you observe the words of the Torah for their own sake, they will
bring you life . . . if you do not observe them for their own sake, they will bring you death"
(*Sifre Deut.* 306 [ed. Finkelstein, 338]); although this statement expresses a different con-
ception, it works from the idea that the Torah and the commandments have the twofold
potential of bringing about either life or death.

[110] It is quite plausible that Paul made use of this Jewish notion.

[111] Note that Origen and CD refer or allude to the same verses, Ezek 20:24–25, and
interpret them as referring to the incorrect observance of the Torah (wrong halakhic inter-

Origen's emphasis on the precepts of the law derives, of course, from the biblical verse "and give heed to his *commandments* and keep all his *statutes*" (Exod 15:26), but similar "nomistic" utterances are found elsewhere in Origen's *Homilies on Exodus*. Here and elsewhere almost identical structures and similar formulations can very easily change their meanings depending on the religious and cultural context. Dealing with Jewish and Christian statements we are facing the unbridgeable abyss between similar, sometimes almost identical,[112] utterances.

Above I suggested that Origen accepted the Jewish allegorical interpretation that water stand for the Torah and concluded that the commandments of the Torah (if observed literally) are bitter, and that the Cross makes them sweet. As an epilogue let me introduce a late medieval Jewish interpretation of our passage:[113]

> "And the Lord showed him a tree" . . . The heretics (פוקרין) want to say that this tree was idol worship (i.e., the Cross). We grant them all their errors and answer them: since there was idol worship among them, they were in

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pretation in CD, literal observance in Origen). Any specific relationship between Origen and the CD is, of course, unthinkable.

[112] De Lange has noted the similarity between Origen's interpretation of the battle with Amalek and the interpretation(s) of the rabbis (*Origen and the Jews*, 82). Origen has two interpretations: (a) "If, therefore, the people observe the Law, Moses lifts his hands and the adversary is overcome; if they do not observe the Law, Amalek prevails"; (b) it is "an image of two peoples": "a people from among the nations who lift up Moses' hands and elevate them, that is, who elevate on high those things which Moses wrote" and the Jews "who do not lift Moses' hands nor consider anything in him [i.e., the Torah] to be lofty and subtle"; the former are victorious, whereas the latter are overcome by the adversaries. (*Hom. Exod.* 11.4 [ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*, 256; trans. Heine, *Homilies*, 360]) Origen's first assertion has a striking parallel in *MekhRI, Amalek* 1: "Why is it written 'Israel prevailed' or 'Amalek prevailed' (Exod 17:11)? When Moses strengthened (מגביר) his hands up [it is a symbol that] Israel will *grow strong in the words of the Torah* (להגביר בדברי תורה) that will be given through him (lit.: 'through his hands') [and Israel will prevail]; and when Moses lowered his hands [it is a symbol that] Israel will *grow weak in the words of the Torah* (להמיך בדברי תורה) that will be given through him [and Amalek will prevail]" (Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 168. See his notes on the reading on pages 232–33). Origen's second statement has a striking parallel in the wording of *MekhRSh*: "When Moses raised his hands up [it is a symbol that] Israel will *elevate the words of the Torah* (להגביה דברי תורה) . . . [and Israel will prevail], and when Moses lowered his hands [it is a symbol that] Israel will *lower the words of the Torah* (להשפיל דברי תורה) . . . [And Amalek will prevail]" (ed. Epstein–Melamed, 122; Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 169; for an analysis of the readings, see Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 233–34). For Origen (but not for the rabbis) both the "observance" of the Law and its "elevation" mean reading the Law allegorically.

[113] The passage is included in the commentary *Hadar Zeqenim*, composed perhaps in the second half of the 13th century CE; see S. Poznański, *Kommentar zu Ezechiel und den XII kleinen Propheten von Eliezer aus Beaugency . . . mit einer Abhandlung über die nordfranzösischen Bibelexegeten* (Warsaw: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1913), CVIII (in Hebrew).

want of water, and when they threw away the tree into the water, the water became sweet.[114]

The exegetical assumptions of the Christians are accepted in order to refute Christianity:[115] it is not the Cross that sweetens, but rather discarding it. Somewhat similarly, centuries prior to this Jewish commentator, Origen accepted the allegorical interpretation that "water" in the Marah episode stands for the Torah and concluded that the commandments of the Torah (if interpreted literally) are bitter and that the Cross (or the wisdom of Christ) sweetens them. Nevertheless, the two lines of argument are not symmetrical: Origen builds his Christian structure out of Jewish building stones, whereas the Jewish commentator makes merely rhetorical use of the Christian interpretation for the purpose of his anti-Christian disputation.[116]

III. The Manna

In the Pentateuch, the manna is described as an unknown food, having various tastes (Exod 16:31; Num 11:8). Elsewhere in the Bible, the manna is said to be a heavenly food, "grain of heaven, bread of the mighty (i.e., celestial beings)" (Ps 78:24–25). An ancient tradition that accounts for the different tastes of this food in the Bible is that every Israelite found in the manna the taste suitable to himself. This tradition is found in the Wisdom of Solomon[117] as well as in rabbinic literature.[118] According to another tradition, however, the manna is not only miraculous but also a spiritual food. This tradition is found in the writings of Philo as well as in Paul (1 Cor 10:4) and the Gospel of John (6:31–58).[119]

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[114] *Hadar Zeqenim* (Livorno 1840) 32a. See also J. Gellis, *Sefer Tosafot ha-Shalem: Commentary on the Bible* (Jerusalem: Ariel United Israel Institutes, 1987) 7:248, no. 4.

[115] For similar polemics with Christianity in the same circles, see I. Lévi, "Recueil de commentaires exégétiques de rabbins de la France septentrionale," *REJ* 49 (1904): 33–39.

[116] I am not competent to discuss the setting of medieval Jewish interpretations in which the "bitter water" of Marah signify either "another Torah" (Gellis, *Sefer Tosafot ha-Shalem*, 7:246) or the oral Torah, in whose halakhic categories, "forbidden and permitted" (איסור והיתר), there is bitterness which is sweetened by the newly-revealed mysteries of the Tree of Life (*Zohar* 1.27a; 3.153a; 124b; see Y. Tishbi, *The Wisdom of the Zohar* [trans. D. Goldstein; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989], 3:1098; 3:1106–7; I owe the references to the Zohar literature to Chananel Rosen).

[117] Wisdom 16:20–21.

[118] E.g., *MekhRI Shirah* 4 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 168); *Sifre Num.* 88 (ed. Horovitz, 88).

[119] P. Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: Brill, 1965).

Let us quote a characteristic passage in Philo's *Allegorical Interpretation* (3:169–174), from a lengthy discussion of the manna:

> (169) "In the early morning . . . it appeared all round the camp, and lo! upon the face of the wilderness . . . And Moses said unto them: 'This bread . . . is the word (τὸ ῥῆμα), which the Lord has prescribed.'" (Exod 16:13–16a). You see of what sort the soul's food is. It is a word of God (λόγος θεοῦ), continuous, resembling dew, embracing all the soul and leaving no portion without part in itself. (170) But not everywhere does this word show itself, but in the wilderness of passions and wickedness [i.e, without passions and wickedness],[120] and it is fine and delicate both to conceive and be conceived, and surpassingly transparent and pure (καθαρός) to behold . . . (171) It is possible that a resemblance between the word of God (κόριον, "coriander" Num 11:7; Exod 16:14 LXX) and the pupil of the eye (τῇ κατὰ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν κόρῃ)[121] is also intended . . . the word of God has keenest sight, and is able to survey (ἐφορᾶν) all things [. . .][122] wherewith they shall clearly see all that is worth beholding. Accordingly it is also white, for what could be brighter or more far-shining than the divine word, by communion with which even other things dispel their gloom and their darkness, eagerly desiring to become sharers in the light of the soul? . . . (174) He says in Deuteronomy also: "And He afflicted you and made you weak by hunger and He fed you with manna . . ." (Deut 8:3). This affliction is propitiation (ἡ κάκωσις αὕτη ἱλασμός ἐστι); for on the tenth day (i.e., the Day of Atonement) also by afflicting our souls He makes propitiation (Lev 16:30).[123]

When Philo writes "but not everywhere does this word show itself, but in the wilderness of passions and wickedness (ἐρήμου παθῶν καὶ κακιῶν)" (170) he takes "wilderness" (Exod 16:14) as a symbol of righteousness (more precisely: lack of iniquity), as he does elsewhere in his writings.[124] We have an exact parallel to this allegorical interpretation of "wilderness" in a midrash of Rabbi Elʿazar ha-Modaʿi (late first/early second century CE), found in the two *Mekhiltot*. Here, the verse "they turned to the wilderness" (Exod 16:10) is interpreted as referring to the Ancestors to whom

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[120] The Greek word ἤρεμος, "desert," has also the meaning of "wanting, without."

[121] Philo's interpretation is based on a Greek pun. There is no evidence that a similar interpretation existed in Palestine. It should be noted, however, that the Hebrew text, והמן כזרע גד ועינו כעין הבדלח (Num 11:7) could also be read as referring to the manna having an "eye" or resembling an eye.

[122] There is a lacuna in the manuscripts of Philo's works.

[123] LCL 1:409–419.

[124] On the desert motif in Philo's writings see V. Nikiprowetzky, "Le thème du désert chez Philon d'Alexandrie," in idem, *Etudes philoniennes* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 293–308. The theme discussed here should be added to Najman's survey of the uses of "wilderness" in ancient Judaism (H. Najman, "Towards a Study of the Uses of the Concept of Wilderness in Ancient Judaism," *DSD* 13 [2006]: 99–113).

Moses and Aaron turned: "as in the wilderness there is no sin or iniquity, so in the Ancestors there is no sin or iniquity."[125] It seems that Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i and Philo share the same interpretation of "desert" as symbolizing righteousness; Philo and Rabbi El'azar apply it to different verses of the same passage; the difference in content and attitude of their elaboration of the common interpretative tradition is remarkable. The allegorical interpretation of Philo is spiritual, on the psychological level of the individual; whereas Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i adapts the symbolic interpretation which is the core of his statement to the value of "merit of the Ancestors," a value that sustains the nation of Israel as a whole throughout its history. This is a central theme in Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i's interpretations of other verses as well.[126]

It should be stressed, however, that the interpretation of Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i on Exod 16:14 does *not* include a symbolic interpretation of "desert." The latter verse reads in Hebrew: ותעל שכבת הטל והנה על פני המדבר דק מחספס דק ככפר על הארץ ("When the layer of dew had lifted, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as hoarfrost on the ground"), and it is interpreted by Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i, according to *MekhRI*: ותעל שכבת הטל—עלתה תפלתן שלאבותינו שהיו שכובין בעפר על הארץ , "'The layer of dew lifted'—the prayers of our Ancestors who were lying [at rest] in the earth 'on the ground' arose," and in an anonymous interpretation apparently related to this line of interpretation: "ככפור" כביכל פשט המקום את ידו ונטל את תפילתם שלאבות שהיו שכובין בעפר על הארץ והוריד המן כטל לישראל כענין שנאמר להלן: מצאתי כופר "'As hoarfrost' (ככפר) God stretched forth His hand and took the prayers

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[125] *MekhRI Vayyasa'* 2, according to an excellent Genizah fragment: ר' אלעזר המו' או' לא הופנו אלא למעשה אבות שני 'המדבר' מה מדבר אין בו לא עון ולא חט כך אבות הראשנים אין בהן לא עון ולא חט. (M. Kahana, *The Genizah Fragments of the Halakhic Midrashim* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2005), 71 (in Hebrew; for another reading see 70); see also *MekhRSh* to Exod 16:10 (ed. Epstein–Melamed, 108). See also *MekhRI 'Amalek* 1 (ed. M. Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 170): "ויהי ידיו אמונה 'עד בא השמש' מגיד שהיו בתענית" דברי ר' יהושע. ר' אלעזר המודעי אומר יקר חטא על ידיו של משה באותה שעה ולא היה יכול לעמוד בו. מה עשה היפנה על מעשה אבות שנאמר 'ויקחו אבן וישימו' וג'— אילו מעשה אבות, "וישב עליה"—אילו מעשה אימהות. *MekhRSh* to Exod 17:12 (ed. Epstein–Melamed, 122; ed. Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 171) reads very similarly, with minor stylistic changes. Kahana (*Mekhiltot*, 300 n. 53) has observed the close relationship between the interpretations of Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i on Exod 16:10 and 17:12.

[126] Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i stresses that the manna was given to Israel "because of the merit of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (*MekhRI Vayyassa'* 2 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 160]). Compare D. Boyarin, "Voices in the Text: Midrash and the Inner Tension of Biblical Narrative," *RB* 93 (1986): 581–97, esp. 590–91 n. 26; Kahana, *Mekhiltot*, 166, 170–71. See also nn. 125 above and 128 below.

of the Ancestors who were lying [at rest] in the earth 'on the ground,'
and He made the manna descend as dew to Israel as it is said elsewhere
'I found ransom' (כפר; Job 33:24)"[127] Apparently these interpretations of
the beginning and the end of the verse stress the merit of the Ancestors,
reading this theme into the words שכבת הטל at the beginning of the verse
and על הארץ at its end.[128] Interestingly, the words על פני המדבר in the
middle of the verse are not interpreted as referring to the merits of the
Ancestors (or to righteousness); according to both *MekhRI* and *MekhRSh*,
Rabbi Elʿazar ha-Modaʿi interpreted these words as indicating that the
manna was not on all the wilderness but on part of it (precisely as these
words are interpreted in the *Mekhiltot* by his contemporary, Rabbi Yeho-
shua), while the word מחספס is interpreted as referring to very realistic
aspects of the manna: the raining of the manna was with no noise, it was
cold (rather than hot) and it fell on the vessels.[129] This is a good example
of the lack of consistency in Rabbi Elʿazar's symbolic-allegorical interpre-
tation, at least as far as we can tell from its representation in the *Mekhiltot*.

Even in Philo's consistent spiritual interpretation of the manna, ele-
ments borrowed from other exegetical trends are intermingled. Philo
explains the gathering of the manna "the day's portion for a day" (Exod 16:4)
as meaning that human beings are unable to contain God's gracious gifts
(*Alleg. Interp.* 3.163); he then goes on to suggest that whoever would wish
all God's good things to be given at once "lacks faith, if he has no belief
that both in the present and always the good gifts of God are lavishly
bestowed on those worthy of them" (*Alleg. Interp.* 3.163–164). While under-
lying Philo's first explanation of the phrase "day's portion for a day" is a
spiritual conception of manna, as is usual in his allegorical writings, the
second assertion tacitly takes manna in its material sense as actual food or
sustenance which is representative of God's general care for one's mate-
rial needs; Philo apparently mingles two distinct traditions. The tradition
that whoever has no belief in God's future gifts "lacks faith" occurs almost

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[127] *MekhRI Vayassaʿ* 3 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 165]; the reading cited is that of an excellent
Genizah manuscript (Kahana, *Genizah Fragments*, 75); cf. the parallel in *MekhRSh* to Exod
16:14 [ed. Epstein–Melamed, 110].

[128] This passage was interpreted in *MekhRSh* to Exod 16:14 (ed. Epstein–Melamed, 110)
as referring to the dead Ancestors (i.e., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). In the light of the
approach of Rabbi Elʿazar ha-Modaʿi in general and of his interpretation of the manna
story in particular, this is probably the correct interpretation of the statement of this sage;
contrast S. Naeh and A. Shemesh, "The Manna Story and the Time of the Morning Prayer,"
Tarbiz 3 (1995): 335–40 (in Hebrew), esp. 338 n. 20.

[129] Compare D. Boyarin, "Analogy vs. Anomaly," 661–62.

literally in a statement, probably by Rabbi Eli'ezer: "whoever has something to eat today and says, 'what shall I eat tomorrow?' lacks faith."[130]

For the purpose of the present article, it is important to stress at this point that according to rabbinic literature, in contradistinction to Philo, the manna is clearly no more than food, albeit very special food. The midrashic literature specifies where the manna fell down, the exact amount of the daily precipitation of manna, and many other naturalistic details. There are, however, some intriguing statements that look like repressed *remnants* of a spiritual interpretation. In *all* these cases, what I understand as a remnant of a spiritual interpretation cannot be read as such in the text as we have it.[131] Let us consider some of these passages:

(1) Rabbi Yose (second century CE) interprets the words "like a seed of white coriander (*gad*)" (Exod 16:31): "just as a prophet would tell Israel the concealed (matters)—so also the manna would tell Israel the concealed (matters)."[132] One's impression is that the manna is, according to this wording, akin to "prophetic" words; i.e., some message of spiritual revelation. The explanation that immediately follows, however, is absolutely mundane:[133]

> How so? If a husband and his wife came before Moses, he saying "she acted offensively against me," and she asserting: "He acted offensively against me." . . . if the *'omer* [of manna] was found in her husband's house, that was a proof that she had acted offensively, but if it was in her father's house, that was evidence that he had acted offensively towards her. Likewise when two people would come before Moses with a lawsuit, one saying: "You have

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[130] *MekhRI Vayyasa'* 2 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 161; for the attribution to Rabbi Eli'ezer, see *variae lectiones*]. See S. Belkin, "The Philonic Exposition of the Torah and the Midrashim on the Pentateuch," *Sura* 4 (1964): 17–18 (in Hebrew).

[131] Lauterbach, "Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 326–27, does not sufficiently emphasize this point.

[132] כשם שהנביא מגיד חדרים וסתרים לישראל כך היה המן מגיד לישראל חדרים וסתרים *MekhRI Vayyasa'* 5 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 171). The word חדרים is a synonym of the word סתרים, "concealed matters." Cf. חדרי תורה (*t. Ketubbot* 5:1); חדרי מרכבה (*Lev. Rab.* 16:4 [ed. Margulies, 354; see Margulies' note ad loc.]; contrast J. Dan, "The Chambers of the Chariot," *Tarbiz* 47 [1978]: 49–55 [in Hebrew]); חדרי תורה . . . גנזי בינה and חדרי חכמה וסתר בינה (*Ma'ase Merkavah*, ed. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* [2d ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America Press, 1965], 108 no. 11, 110 no. 16); and compare חדרי בטן (Prov 20:27). The parallel in *b. Yoma* 75a reads: מה שבחורין ומה שבסדקין. The collocation חורין וסדקין occurs in *m. Miqva'ot* 6:1; *t. Taharoth* 10:7; *b. Pesaḥim* 8a; *b. Niddah* 8a, while other texts have instead the collocation חדרין וסדקין (*t. Nega'im* 1:8; *y. Niddah* 2:2 [49d]); see also M. Bar-Asher, *Studies in Mishnaic Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2009), 275–76 (in Hebrew). It seems that חדרים וסתרים (*MekhRI*) became *חדרים** וסדקים and this was converted to חורים וסדקים (*BT*).

[133] Lauterbach, "Ancient Jewish Allegorists," 327 n. 30.

stolen my slave," the other saying "you have stolen my slave," if his [=the slave's] *'omer* was found in the house of his first master, that was proof that the other one had stolen him.[134]

But if this were the *original* meaning, why should this kind of information be compared to prophecy? For an allegorical-spiritual interpretation, like Philo's, such an analogy would be clear (as Philo says in the passage cited above: "The word of God . . . is able to survey all things . . . wherewith they shall clearly see all that is worth beholding").

(2)   In a *baraita* in the Babylonian Talmud the words "a white seed of coriander (*gad*)" (Exod 16:31) are interpreted differently: "It [=the manna] told (*maggid*) Israel whether a child was one of nine months' pregnancy from the first husband or of seven months' pregnancy from the second; 'white'—because it whitened (*malbin*) the sins of Israel" (*b. Yoma* 75a). This interpretation of *gad* is a variation of the passage cited above (#1), and in its present form it is no less mundane.[135] The statement that follows, that the manna whitened (i.e., cleansed) the sins of Israel is interpreted by Rashi: "because they [the Israelites] worried lest the manna would not fall down on the next day, they subdued their heart to God." This idea is found in the midrash;[136] yet, if this were the idea behind the midrash, it is not the most adequate way to express it. Intuitively, one feels that the manna according to this tradition is of some spiritual, atoning substance; indeed, the phrase שמלבין עונותיהן של ישראל ("it cleanses the sins of Israel") is used elsewhere in rabbinic literature to refer to the *Temple* as atoning for the sins of Israel.[137]

In the passage cited above from Philo's *Alleg. Interp.* 3.174, Philo connects the manna to propitiation on the Day of Atonement. Yehoshua Amir has convincingly suggested that the awkward midrash offered by Philo is a remnant of a midrash based on the Hebrew text of the Bible, in which the word ויענך in Deut 8:3 was connected with the words ועניתם את נפשותיכם in Lev 16:30 (relating to fasting on the Day of Atonement).[138]

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[134]   In *MekhRI* this long passage is abbreviated in the existing manuscripts הא כיצד? איש ...ואשה שבאו לפני משה...וכן שנים שבאו לדין זה או' עבדי גנבת For a full text see *MekhRSh* to Exod 16:31 (ed. Epstein–Melamed, 115); *b. Yoma* 75a.

[135]   The words "whether a child was one of nine months' pregnancy from the first husband or of seven months' pregnancy from the second" are apparently an elaboration of the ancient tradition.

[136]   E.g., *Sifre Num.* 89 (ed. Horovitz, 90).

[137]   *Sifre Deut.* 6 (ed. Finkelstein, 15) and parallels (cited by Finkelstein).

[138]   See his comment in *Philo of Alexandria: Writings* (ed. Y. Amir; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1997), 4:124 n. 217 (in Hebrew). The suggestion is not that Philo himself knew Hebrew,

Be that as it may, the manna is related in the Philonic passage, as here, to divine propitiation. As we saw above, it is written in the *Mekhilta* concerning the manna: "He [=God] made the manna descend as dew to Israel, as it is said elsewhere 'I found ransom' (כפר; Job 33:24)."[139] Plausibly, the connection between כְּפֹר, "hoarfrost" (an attribute of the manna in Exod 16:14) and כֹּפֶר, "ransom, atonement" (Job 33:24) is related to the propitiatory function of the manna.[140]

(3) Exod 16:31 is interpreted by Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i: "it [=the manna] was like a word of haggadah that attracts a man's heart."[141] Comparing the taste of food to a genre of rabbinic literature, enjoyable as it might be, is rather awkward; it would be more understandable if the original midrash were "*gad*—it is a word of haggadah that attracts man's heart."[142]

(4) In a version of the *Tanḥuma* we read:

> Rabbi Yose ben Rabbi Ḥanina [third century CE] said: the Divine Word spoke to each and every person according to their particular capacity. And do not wonder at this (ואל תתמה על הדבר הזה). For when manna came down for Israel, each and every person tasted it in keeping with his own capacity—infants in keeping with their capacity, young men in keeping with their capacity, and old men in keeping with their capacity. Infants in keeping with their capacity: like the taste of milk that an infant sucks from his mothers' breast. . . . Young men according to their capacity; . . . and old men according to their. . . . Now if each and every person was enabled to taste the manna according to his particular capacity, each and every person was enabled according to his particular capacity to hear the Divine Word ומה אם המן כל אחד ואחד לפי כוחו היה טועם, בדיבר כל אחד ואחד שומע) (לפי כוחו). Thus David says: "The voice of the Lord is in strength"—not "The voice of the Lord is in His strength" . . . that is, each and every person hears (and understands) the Word according their own capacity.[143]

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but rather that a Palestinian exegetical tradition was known to him in a Greek paraphrase (possibly through oral communication in Alexandria).

[139] *MekhRI Vayassaʿ* 3 (see above, n. 127).

[140] The words "as dew to Israel" are apparently an allusion to Hos 14:6, in which these words (כטל לישראל) occur. The preceding verse (Hos 14:5) mentions the forgiveness of Israel's sins; possibly, therefore, the verse was cited in connection with the propitiatory function of the manna.

[141] דומה לדבר הגדה שהוא מושך לבו של אדם; *MekhRI Vayassaʿ* 5 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 171).

[142] Compare *Sifre Deut.* 317 (ed. Finkelstein, 359), where eating and drinking in the biblical poem (Deut 32:14) are interpreted as metaphors for learning the various fields of Torah study, including "*haggadot* that attract man's heart like wine" (אלו הגדות שהם מושכות לבו של אדם כיין). See above, n. 9.

[143] Cited according to *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, Baḥodesh ha-Shlishi* 25 (ed. Mandelbaum, 1:224; trans. Braude–Kapstein, 249–50, with slight alterations). As noted by Mandelbaum

Here we have clearly not an allegorical interpretation of the manna, but rather an *analogy* between the manna and the Divine Word. In Origen's homily on the manna, however, a strikingly similar idea is expressed by asserting that the manna stands for the Word of God and Christ (following the tradition of John 6) in an *allegorical* fashion:

[A] But even today I say that the Lord rains manna from the sky. For those words which have been read to us, and the words which descended from God which have been recited to us are from heaven.... Those unfortunate people (=the Jews) grieve and sigh and say they are miserable because they are not worthy to receive the manna as their fathers received it. *They* never eat manna. They cannot eat it because it is "small like the seed of the coriander and white like frost."[144]

[B] *Do not marvel that the word of God* is said to be "flesh" and "bread" and "milk" and "vegetable" and *is named in different ways for the capacity of those believing* or the ability of those appropriating it.... Let us, therefore, now hasten to receive the heavenly manna. That manna imparts the kind of taste to each mouth that each one wishes....[145]

In section [A], Origen both argues for the allegorical-spiritual interpretation of the manna and severely criticizes the *literal* understanding of the Jews, whereas section [B] uses the ancient Jewish tradition[146] on the different tastes of the manna as a cue for a theological statement, strikingly similar in content and style ("do not marvel") to the aforementioned midrash of Rabbi Yose ben Rabbi Ḥanina. Could the statement of the latter be a way of expressing the same idea while avoiding allegory?[147]

(1:213) this section is added from the *Tanḥuma*. For a somewhat different version see also *Exod. Rab.* 5:5.

[144] Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 7.5 (ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*, 211; trans. Heine, *Homilies*, 308).

[145] Origen, *Hom. Exod.* 7.8 (ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*, 216; trans. Heine, *Homilies*, 313–14).

[146] This tradition, well known in rabbinic literature, may possibly be known to Origen from the Wisdom of Solomon (above, nn. 117, 118).

[147] Origen goes on to say: "Just as it is the same one who comes 'for the fall' of some but 'for the rise' of others, so also it is the same one who now is made the sweetness of honey in the manna for the faithful, but a worm to the unfaithful.... He remains pleasant and sweet, however, to the righteous and faithful." According to a midrash in the *Tanḥuma* (*Tanḥuma Buber, Beshallaḥ* 22, in which *MekhRI Vayassaʿ* 4 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 168] is elaborated), the taste of the manna was bitter for the nations of the world; according to this midrash they could taste the manna only in the flavor of the meat of a deer who drank from the manna when it melted.

It should also be noted that Rabbi Isaac (third century CE) has an utterance diametrically opposed to Origen's latter statement that the Word of God is bitter for the unfaithful (including, of course, the Jews) and at the same time sweet for Christians. Rabbi Isaac says: "'And its fruit was sweet to my taste' (Song 2:3). Rabbi Isaac said: This refers to the twelve months that Israel stayed in front of Mount Sinai sweetening themselves with the

Comparison between Origen's statements and this midrash confirms Origen's argument concerning the literal (and concrete) character of the biblical interpretation of the Jews,[148] in contradistinction to the Christian allegorical interpretation. This does not mean that allegory was totally foreign to Jewish interpretation in Origen's time; in the previous section we have seen (following De Lange) that it is even plausible that Origen adapted Jewish allegorical interpretations to his Christian interpretation of scriptures.

To sum up: manna is not given an allegorical interpretation in rabbinic literature. Several expressions, however, may lead to the conclusion that an allegorical-spiritual interpretation did exist in ancient (prerabbinic) tradition, and that it subsequently underwent a process of "concretization."

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Thus far I have discussed passages in rabbinic literature that are more intelligible if viewed as allegorical interpretations played down. I would like now to turn to a different aspect of the relationship between Philo and rabbinic traditions: in this case, a certain passage in Philo, stripped of its allegorical elements, is strikingly similar to a rabbinic tradition; moreover, it gives us a clue concerning the prehistory of the rabbinic tradition and its transformation. Philo says, in a passage concerning the manna:

> These "products" are nourishment . . . supplied by the soul, that is able, as the lawgiver says, to "suck honey out of the rock and oil of the hard rock" (Deut 32:13). He uses the word "rock" to express the solid and indestructible wisdom of God. . . . For this divine wisdom has appeared as mother of all that are in the world, affording to her offspring, as soon as they are born,

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words of the Torah. What is the meaning of "its fruit was sweet to *my* taste"—to my taste it was sweet, but to the taste of the nations of the world it was bitter as wormwood." (*Song of Songs Rab.* on Song of Songs 2:3) Origen and Rabbi Isaac (who does *not* deal with the manna) have in common a similar conception: the exclusiveness of each community—Christian and Jewish—is emphasized through comparison with the other. The utterance attributed to Rabbi Isaac might be a response to Origen's statements in his homily (1) that the Law of the Jews is bitter (*Hom. Exod.* 7.1 [ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*, 205; see above, p. 159]), and (2) that the same thing is sweet for the believers and unpleasant to those who do not believe. Elsewhere I argue that Rabbi Isaac apparently reacts to Origen's homilies (or to very similar Christian arguments) in *Song of Songs Rab.* 1:6 ("Self-Identity, Polemic and Interpretation in Jewish and Christian Exegesis," *Proceedings of a Conference at Beit Morashah* [ed. A. Goshen-Gottstein; forthcoming]).

[148] See R. A. Clements, "(Re)Constructing Paul: Origen's Readings of Romans in *Peri Archon*," in *Early Patristic Readings of Romans* (ed. K. L. Gaca and L. L. Welborn; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 159–79.

the nourishment which they require from her own breasts.... In another
place he uses a synonym for this rock and calls it "manna." Manna is the
divine word (λόγον θεῖον)... out of it are made two cakes (ἐγκρίδες), the
one of honey and the other of oil. These are two inseparable... stages in
education...[149]

In this utterly allegorical interpretation, Deut 32:13 is interpreted as refer-
ring to the spiritual manna, understood as the "honey" and the "oil" in
this verse. As has been pointed out by Philo's commentators,[150] although
Philo does not say so explicitly, "the idea is obtained by a combination of
the descriptions of the manna in Exod 16:31 and Num 11:8. In the first, 'its
taste is like ἔγκρις[151] in honey'; in the second 'its pleasure was as an ἔγκρις
from oil.'" The Greek word ἔγκρις renders two different Hebrew words:
(a) in Exod 16:31 the Greek τὸ δὲ γεῦμα αὐτοῦ ὡς ἔγκρις ἐν μέλιτι renders
וטעמו כצפיחת בדבש, whereas ὡσεὶ γεῦμα ἔγκρις ἐξ ἐλαίου (Num 11:8) ren-
ders כטעם לשד השמן. It should be noted that the exegetical lexicographic
tradition of the Septuagint is attested also in the Palestinian Targum: in
Targum Neofiti the two Hebrew words צפיחת and לשד are rendered שישין
"cakes."[152]

   This analysis will enable us to reveal the origins of the tradition under-
lying a well-known aggadah concerning the divine rescue of the Israelite
babies in Egypt. God himself (or, alternatively, God's angel) is described as
taking care of the babies born in Egypt, when their mothers were unable
to care for them because of Pharaoh's decree. According to one version
of this aggadah, "The Holy One, blessed be He, sent down someone from
the high heavens who washed and straightened the limbs [of the babes]
in the manner of a midwife.... He also provided for them *two cakes, one
of oil and one of honey*, as it is said: 'and He made him to suck honey out of
a crag, and oil out of the flinty rock' (Deut 32:13)."[153] We readily recognize

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[149] Philo, *The Worse Attacks the Better*, 115.

[150] See the note of Colson and Whitaker in an appendix to their translation of the
treatise in LCL (2:495). Note also their comment: "Philo passes with bewildering rapid-
ity through the different suggestions of oil (*a*) as rushing in a stream, (*b*) as giving light,
(*c*) as an element of food" (ibid.).

[151] Colson and Whitaker note: "The ἔγκρις is defined elsewhere as a sweetmeat made
from honey *and* oil" (ibid.; emphasis mine); see below, n. 154.

[152] Exod 16:31 is rendered וטעמיה כשישין בדבש, "and its taste (was) like cakes in honey,"
and Num 11:8 is rendered והוה טעמיה כשישיין רוטבה דשומנה "and its taste was like cakes
[in] moisture of fat" or, alternatively, והוה טעמיה כטעם שישי[ן] בדבש (which seems to be
an erroneous reading due to the influence of Exod 16:31).

[153] ומלקט להן שני עגולין אחד של שמן ואחד של דבש, שנאמר: 'ויניקהו דבש מסלע ושמן'
b. Sotah 11b (trans. A. Cohen, *Sotah* [London: Soncino, 1936], with slight alterations).

"the two cakes, one of oil and one of honey" mentioned by Philo and derived from a midrash on the conflicting verses describing the manna, as we have seen. As the Philonic passage is based on the rendering of Exod 16:31 and Num 11:8 in the Septuagint, the rabbinic tradition is probably a transformation of a similar midrash, based on similar renderings of the verses in Exodus and Numbers (as attested in the Palestinian Targum).[154] Philo and the tradition reconstructed from the rabbinic passages[155] have much in common: according to both, we may infer, Deut 32:13 was interpreted as referring to the manna and was juxtaposed to Exod 16:31 and Num 11:8. The difference between the accounts in the two verses is solved in the same way: two cakes, one of honey and another of oil, are made by God. The exegetical tradition shared by Philo and by the tradition *underlying* the existing rabbinic passages highlights the essential difference between Philo's abstract and spiritual symbols and rabbinic aggadah. The comparison between the two passages seems to highlight the exegetical tradition *underlying* Philo's allegorical assertions, a tradition that might well be nonallegorical.

IV. Abraham's Circumcision

As we have just seen, the process of "concretization" of traditions can be demonstrated in the case of the manna. Was this process motivated by polemic with Christian allegorical interpretations? It is difficult to answer this question. The case study in the present section, however, might suggest that polemic with Christianity was one factor of the complex development of midrashic methodology.

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[154] Note that the tradition of the "two cakes" avoids the easy solution of harmonizing the two verses; namely, proposing that the taste was like a cake made of honey and oil.

[155] The tradition concerning the angelic care for the babes of Israel in Egypt is explicitly related to the manna in a relatively late Samaritan homily included in *Tibat Marqa* (Z. Ben-Hayyim, *Tibat Marqe: A Collection of Samaritan Midrashim* [Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1988], 228): God sent his angels to nourish the newborn male children, and the angels "made him to suck honey out of a crag, and oil out of the flinty rock" (Deut 32:13) until the child was weaned; they taught the child (doing) the good (Deut 32:10 is cited; note that this verse refers to the Israelites in the wilderness) until they returned to their families. The text continues: "And similarly he did to them [=the Israelites] in the wilderness: He rained for them manna from heaven whose taste is both like a cake in honey (Exod 16:31) and at the same time like an oily *leshad* (Num 11:8)" (Ben-Hayyim, *Tibat Marqe*, 282–84, no. 76). I did not translate the word *leshad* because I am not sure how it was understood by the Samaritan author of this homily. Note that the Samaritan Aramaic Targum does *not* use the same word for צפיחית and לשד.

In a homily on the circumcision of Abraham, Origen writes:

> "No stranger uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh shall enter
> My sanctuary" (Ezek 44:9); and likewise elsewhere, no less the prophet,
> reproaching, says: "All strangers are uncircumcised in the flesh, but the sons
> of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart" (Jer 9:25). It is pointed out, there-
> fore, that unless one has been circumcised in the heart and flesh, he shall
> not enter the sanctuary of God. . . . The Jew immediately constrains me. . . .
> and says: "Behold, the prophet designates both a circumcision of the flesh
> and heart; *no place remains for allegory* where both kinds of circumcision
> are demanded." We must refute . . . the Jews . . .
>
> It is written in the prophet Jeremiah: "Behold this people is uncircumcised
> in their ears" (Jer 6:10). Hear, Israel . . . your accusation is brought forward:
> you are uncircumcised in your ears. And why, when you heard this did you
> not apply the blade to your ears and cut into them? . . . *For I do not permit*
> *you to take refuge in our allegories* which Paul taught. Cut away the ears, cut
> away the members which God created for the use of the senses and for the
> adornment of the human state, for thus you understand the divine words.
>
> But I shall bring forth still another passage. . . . "But I am uncircumcised
> in lips" (Exod 6:30). Apply the pruning-hook also your lips, and cut off the
> covering of your mouth. . . . But if you refer circumcision of lips to allegory
> and say no less that circumcision of ears is allegorical and figurative, why do
> you not also inquire after allegory in circumcision of the foreskin?[156]

In an important article[157] Maren Niehoff has thoroughly analyzed Origen's
position in this homily (and elsewhere in his writings) and his rhetori-
cal arguments against the Jews.[158] In the context of the present article it
is worthwhile to stress Origen's insistence on an allegorical interpreta-
tion *contra* the Jews' literal interpretation. Origen's Jew claims that cir-
cumcision as a metaphor in Ezek 44:9 and Jer 9:25 should be understood
separately from the physical circumcision of the foreskin; this claim is
similar to the saying of Rabbi Elʿazar ben ʿAzariah (early second cen-
tury CE): מאוסה ערלה שנתגנו בה רשעים, שנאמר: 'כי כל הגוים ערלים וכל
בית ישראל ערלי לב', "Disgraced is uncircumcision, for wicked men are
reproached as being 'uncircumcised' [*scil.* metaphorically], as it is writ-
ten, 'All nations are uncircumcised in the flesh, and all the sons of Israel
are uncircumcised in the heart' (Jer 9:25)."[159] According to this view, the

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[156] Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 3.4–5 (ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*; trans. Heine, *Homilies*, 95–96).

[157] M. R. Niehoff, "Circumcision as a Marker of Identity: Philo, Origen and the Rabbis on Gen 17:1–14," *JSQ* 10 (2003): 89–123.

[158] Niehoff, "Circumcision," 108–14.

[159] *M. Nedarim* 3:11.

concrete sense of being physically uncircumcised in the foreskin is the basis for the metaphorical readings. The same verse, however, was used as early as the *Epistle of Barnabas* (chapter 9)[160] as proof that real circumcision is *not* the circumcision of the flesh, and that the commandment of circumcision should be interpreted allegorically. Origen's allegorical interpretation in this homily is therefore only one manifestation of Christian interpretation of circumcision from the second century CE forward. For Origen in this homily "the only alternatives are either a Christian reading of all kinds of circumcision as allegories or a Jewish reading of all of them as literal commands to cut off the respective parts of the body."[161] Niehoff has also dealt with the Jewish responses to such arguments in *Genesis Rabbah* 46:5,[162] where statements by three sages may be regarded as responding to the arguments brought forth by Origen.[163]

These statements are attributed to Rabbi Ishma'el, Rabbi Aqiva and an unknown sage, Naqdah.[164] The same exegetical presumption is shared by

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[160] B. D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers* (LCL; 2 vols.; Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2:42–45.

[161] Niehoff, "Circumcision," 112.

[162] Niehoff, "Circumcision," 114–19.

[163] Other rabbinic statements might also be regarded as responding to arguments similar to Origen's in this homily. Origen says: "I wish to inquire if the omnipotent God, who holds dominion of heaven and earth, when He wished to make a covenant with a holy man, put the main point of such an important matter in this, that the foreskin of his future progeny should be circumcised" (*Hom. Gen.* 3.4, ed. Baehrens, *Homilien Pt. 1*, 43; trans. Heine, *Homilies*, 93). The following rabbinic statement seems to answer this rhetorical question in the affirmative: גדולה מילה שאלמלא היא לא ברא הקב"ה את עולמו, שנאמר: ;'כה אמר ה' אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חוקות שמים וארץ לא שמתי "Great is circumcision! Were it not for it the Holy One, blessed be He, would not have created His world, as it is said: 'thus says the Lord, without my covenant, I would not have established day and night, and the rules of heaven and earth (Jer 35:25)'" (*m. Nedarim* 3:11; cf. the statement of Rabbi Shim'on ha-Timni's [second century CE] in *MekhRI Vayyehi beshallaḥ* 3 [ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 98]). The Tannaitic passage chronologically antedates Origen; if the Jewish passage is indeed a polemic answer to Christian arguments, one must assume that Origen borrowed some of the arguments he uses in this homily from a Christian predecessor, to which the Tannaim responded. Indeed, Origen's main point occurs already in *Barnabas*; there is therefore good reason to assume a long second-century trajectory for Christian figural interpretation of circumcision, including some details that are known to us only from Origen's homily. See also n. 164.

[164] As noted by Martha Himmelfarb ("The Ordeals of Abraham: Circumcision and the *Aqedah* in Origen, the *Mekhilta* and *Genesis Rabbah*," *Henoch* 30 [2008]: 289–310), Rabbi Ishma'el and Rabbi Aqiva lived prior to Origen (mid-second century CE). If one assumes that the statements attributed to them respond specifically to Origen's homily, one must conclude either that the statements attributed to these sages were formulated in later generations, or that similar arguments were in circulation before Origen; the latter assumption seems to me quite plausible; see above, n. 163. It is unlikely that such interpretations as cutting off the heart, the ears, and the lips would not emerge as a reaction to the challenge

all three sages: circumcision of ears, lips and heart is not conceived of *initially* as metaphorical, in spite of the biblical verses cited, which do not leave much room for any other interpretation. The argument of all three sages is rather that, *since* cutting off these members of the human body is inappropriate, *therefore* they should not be cut off; each sage adduces different reasons why cutting the members is inappropriate, to conclude that the "cutting" must apply only to the foreskin.

The three sages refer explicitly or implicitly to the verses cited by Origen (concerning the circumcision of ears, lips and heart). The unknown sage Naqdah says: "If one is circumcised in the ear, he cannot hear; in the mouth, he cannot speak; in the heart, he cannot think. Where then could he be circumcised and yet be able to think? At the foreskin of the body." This is reminiscent of Origen's cry to the Jews: "cut away the members *which God created for the use of the senses* . . . for thus you understand the divine words." It answers the Christian argument by saying that the members *cannot* be cut precisely *because* they were created for the use of the senses.[165] The statement attributed to Rabbi Ishma'el is that Abraham was a priest,[166] and therefore cutting his ears, mouth or heart would make him unfit to offer sacrifices; whereas the statement attributed to Rabbi Aqiva is that one cannot be "perfect" (תמים) as Abraham was ordered to be (Gen 17:1) by cutting his ear, heart or mouth. "Where can one circumcise himself and be perfect? On the foreskin of the body." Unlike Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah (and Origen's Jew), the point of departure of the statements of the three sages is the literal interpretation, attributed by Origen to the Jews as an absurdity: the sages begin with the literal interpretation that one has to cut his ears, mouth, and heart [!], but reject it only because of specific midrashic considerations. Essentially, the Jewish responses to the Christian

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of allegorical interpretation, probably a Christian one. The considerations of Rabbi Ishma'el, Rabbi Aqiva and Naqdah in *Gen. Rab.* 46:5 are rather different from Philo's consideration: "if there were some way of avoiding other afflictions and diseases as well by cutting off some member or some part of the body, by the removal of which there would be no obstacle to the functioning of its parts, man would not be known as mortal but would be changed into immortality" (Philo, *QG* 3.48; Niehoff, "Circumcision," 98). Philo answers the question why, of all the members of the body, it is important to circumcise the foreskin; yet hypothetically merging the two arguments is not impossible (see n. 165).

[165] Compare also Philo's reference to "cutting off some member or some part of the body, by the removal of which there would be no obstacle to the functioning of its parts" (above, n. 164).

[166] The saying attributed to Rabbi Ishma'el deduces from Ps 110:4 that Abraham was a priest ("You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"). This is a counter-argument to the unanimous Christian interpretation of Psalm 110 as referring to Christ and his eternal priesthood (see Heb 5:6; see also Mark 12:36).

argument do not respond to it at all. After all, Origen tries to demonstrate, in light of other biblical verses, that the circumcision of the foreskin can, indeed must, be allegorically interpreted; the rabbis do not respond to this hermeneutical claim. This is not the only passage where Christians and Jews in antiquity ignore the real argument of their opponents either because they are deaf to its details or because they are uninterested in answering it.[167] In the context of the present article it is illuminating to see the Christian insistence on allegory and the Jewish reaction to it in this passage. It seems plausible that one of the reasons that allegory was downplayed by the sages was the threat of the Christian allegorical interpretation. Yet I do not argue that this was the only, or even the most significant, reason for this phenomenon. It should also be stressed again that Origen, who often rebukes the Jews for their literal interpretation, as he does in this case, also borrows Jewish allegorical interpretations, adapting them for his purposes. Clearly the interrelationship between Jewish and Christians biblical interpretation in antiquity was quite complex.

V. "A Horse and his Rider"

Both *MekhRI* and *MekhRSh* contain a similar interpretation of the words "He cast horse and his rider into the sea" (Exod 15:1).[168] The passage consists of two units: the first (unit A) comments on the words "horse and his rider" describing God as a judge of the Egyptians and their horses after they had drowned in the sea. In the trial, God would ask every horse why he chased Israel, and the horse would blame his Egyptian rider; he would ask the rider, and the latter would blame his horse. "What would God do? He would make the man ride upon the horse and judge them together."

Unit B follows: "Antoninus asked Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, 'After a man has died and his body ceased to be, does God then make him stand trial?' Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi answered: 'Rather than ask me about the body which is impure, ask me about the soul which is pure.'" The rabbi then adduces a famous parable of a lame and a blind man, who were judged

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[167] I do not think that Origen's argument was necessarily "directly addressed to the Jews in the audience" (Niehoff, "Circumcision," 109); after all, Origen stresses that the dispute is not only with the Jews but also with some Christian groups. The midrashic statements were certainly not directed to Christians (contrast Niehoff, "Circumcision," 118–19).

[168] *MekhRI Shirah* 2 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 124–25); *MekhRSh* to Exod 15:1 (ed. Epstein–Melamed, 76–77). The last part of the midrash was omitted by the copyists of *MekhRI* (who wrote "etc." instead of copying the text), and therefore can only be cited in full according to the wording of *MekhRSh*.

for cooperating in theft from the garden they had been supposed to guard. When the king judged them, the story concludes, "He made one ride upon the other. So the Holy one, blessed be He, brings the body and soul and makes them stand trial." He asks the body why it sinned, and it blames the soul, he asks the soul and it blames the body; finally, "the Holy one, blessed be He, brings the soul, puts it into the body [in Resurrection], and judges them together (כאחד)." Formally, unit A provides an interpretation of the biblical phrase "horse and his rider," whereas unit B, which is not exegetical, might ostensibly be taken as placed here only due to its similarity to the first unit. Is this really so?

Philo interprets the verse "He cast horse and rider into the sea" (Exod 15:1) in spiritual Platonic terms, concerning the powers of the soul:

> He means that God cast to utter ruin and the bottomless abyss the four passions and the wretched mind mounted on them. This is indeed practically the chief point of the whole Song, to which all else is subsidiary. And it is true; for if the soul be won by exemption for passion, it will have perfect bliss . . . he that is to perish by drowning is the Egyptian character . . . [169]

Philo does not refer to the body. Yet, "Egyptian" *may* also represent the body in his writings.[170] Unit B may thus be a remnant of an allegorical exegesis of the words "horse and his rider," taken to mean, allegorically, *body and soul.*[171]

This hypothesis gains force from a mention in the writings of the Roman philosopher Varro (first century BCE) of a possible view concerning the relationship between body and soul, according to which they are like a horse and its rider, the body represented by the horse and the soul by the man.[172] Varro himself disagrees: in his view body and soul complement each other, and he prefers the metaphor of a pair of horses, which together constitute a whole person.[173] Similarly, in a treatise ascribed to

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[169] Philo, *Alleg. Interp.* 2.102–03 (LCL 1:289).

[170] See J. W. Earp, "Index" (LCL 10:303), s.v. "Egypt."

[171] For an explanation in a similar vein, see L. Wallach, "The Parable of the Blind and the Lame: A Study in Comparative Literature," *JBL* 62 (1943): 333–39, especially 338–39.

[172] Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, 19.3 (CCSL 48; Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), 662. The simile of body and soul as horse and rider is also used by John Chrysostom (*Fifth Sermon on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, 4 [PG 62:41]; he, too, stresses the interrelationship between the two, although he insists that the former must be led by the latter. The simile is found also in medieval Arab and Jewish sources; see H. Malter, "Personification of Soul and Body: A Study in Judeo-Arabic Literature," *JQR* n.s. 2 (1912): 466.

[173] It has been claimed that the discussion between Antoninus and Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi should be read against the background of views concerning the relation between body and soul in a Pseudo-Plutarch treatise; see E. E. Halevy, *The Historical-Biographical Aggadah in Light of Greek and Latin Sources* (Tel Aviv: Niv, 1975), 582–83

Justin Martyr, body and soul are compared to a pair of oxen.[174] The same simile is found also in an ancient anonymous *piyyut* juxtaposed with the parable of the lame and the blind guards: "They [i.e., body and soul] are to be considered as a pair (of oxen; Hebrew: צמד), like a lame man and a blind man keeping watch over the king's field."[175] It would thus appear that the parable of Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi (late second century CE) was brought into this context in order to emphasize the nonhierarchical interrelationship between body and soul.

Keeping in mind what we have just learned, let us take another look at the two units of the *Mekhilta*. The situations and formulae in the two units are identical:

Unit A	Unit B
	mashal:
(1) He would make the man ride upon the horse and judge them together (*MekhRI*) *alternatively*:	(1) He made the lame man ride upon the blind man and judged them together.[176] *nimshal*:
(2) The Holy One, blessed be He, would bring the horse and his rider and judge them together . . . (*MekhRSh*)	(2) The Holy one, blessed be He, brings the soul, puts it in the body and judges them together. (*b. Sanhedrin* 91a; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 64.70.15; *Lev. Rab.* 4:5 [ed. Margulies, 89])

(in Hebrew). The discussion in the *Mekhilta*, however, is dominated by the question of divine judgment and resurrection, just like Christian sources. For the relationship of Christian and Jewish sources concerning the trial of body and soul, to pagan philosophical conceptions concerning the relationship between body and soul, see below n. 178. See also M. Kister, "Jewish Aramaic Poems from Byzantine Palestine and Their Setting," *Tarbiz* 75 (2007): 119–20 (in Hebrew).

[174] M. Heimgarten, *Pseudojustin—Über die Auferstehung: Text und Studie* (PTS 54; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), the edition of the text is on pages 104–31.

[175] For edition and commentary, see Y. Yahalom, "The World of Sorrow and Mourning in the Genizah: Transformations of Literary Genres," *Ginzei Qedem* 1 (2005): 132–37, esp. 134 (in Hebrew).

[176] This is apparently the original reading. Cf. *MekRSh* and *variae lectiones* of *Lev. Rab.* 4:5: "He made the lame man ride upon the blind man and they would go"; Epiphanius: "What did the righteous judge do? Seeing how the two had been put together he put the lame man on the blind man and examined them both under the lash, and they couldn't deny the charge" (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 64.70.15; *Epiphanius, Pt 2* [ed. K. Holl; GCS 31; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922; 2d ed.: Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1980], 517; trans. F. Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* [NHMS 36; Leiden: Brill, 1994], 2:202). We do not know the reading of *MekhRI*; see above, n. 168.

The statements in unit B are fully consistent with the contents of this unit, whereas the sentences in unit A hardly fit into its context; the expression "brings . . . judges them together" is not an apt description of man and horse drowning in the sea. After all, why should the aggadah depict God's bringing the horses to trial at all? It seems that these sentences in unit A were shaped on the basis of the expression that follows in unit B. One might venture to suggest that an allegorical interpretation of the verse, "He cast a horse and his rider" (of which we see a remnant in unit B), was transformed in unit A into a story concerning an actual Egyptian "horse and rider," while unit B then became detached from the interpretation of the biblical verse.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

A course of argumentation similar to the one in the dialogue between Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi and Antoninus can be found in the treatise *On Resurrection* ascribed to Justin Martyr (written perhaps in the second century CE).[177] There we find, in addition to the view that resurrection is *impossible* after the body has ceased to exist (Ch. 2), also the view that the flesh is of the essence of the earth; that it is *evil* and causes the soul to sin; and that therefore bodily resurrection is *pointless and inappropriate* (Ch. 7). The author of the treatise vehemently attacks this view, arguing that it is not the body alone which sins; rather, rather sin is result of the partnership between body and soul (Ch. 8). The claim that it would be unfair to put only the soul on trial appears also in other contexts in early Christian works on the resurrection, marshalled against those (pagans and Christians) who deny bodily resurrection.[178]

The treatise ascribed to Justin thus contains the main elements found in *MekhRI*: 1) the body's disintegration (Antoninus' question); 2) the goodness of the soul and the evil inherent in the body (this argument against bodily resurrection may be inferred from Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi's retort to Antoninus: "Rather than ask me about the body which is impure, ask me

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[177] M. Heimgarten, *Pseudojustin—Über die Auferstehung*. See also H. E. Lona, "Ps.–Justin 'de Resurrectione' und die altchristliche Auferstehungsapologetik," *Salesianum* 51 (1989): 691–768 (on the question of its authorship and time, see especially 756); for another perspective, see S. J. G. Sanchez, "Du Bénéfice du *de resurrectione*," *RB* 108 (2001): 73–100 (who also reviews previous scholarship). See also H. E. Lona, *Über die Auferstehung des Fleisches: Studien zur frühchristlichen Eschatologie* (BZNW 66; Berlin de Gruyter 1993); 135–54.

[178] For more on the relation between the pagan position and Christian arguments such as those of Origen and his disciples, see H. Chadwick, "Origen, Celsus, and the Resurrection of the Body," *HTR* 41 (1948): 83–102; see also M. Pohlenz, "Die griechische Philosophie im Dienste der christlichen Auferstehungslehre," *ZWT* 47 (1904): 241–50.

about the soul which is pure"); and 3) the problem concerning the inter-
relationship between body and soul in one's life and at God's just trial on
the Day of Judgment. Pseudo-Justin's treatise thus clarifies the *Mekhilta*'s
vague formulations in the dialogue with Antoninus, which may well be an
eroded and blurred formulation of a more elaborate dialogue, the course
of whose argumentation would have been rather similar to that in the
treatise ascribed to Justin. On the other hand, the study of the Christian
material together with the rabbinic sources is essential for evaluating the
Christian arguments in context: the Jewish parallels seem to indicate that
much of the Christian material is a heritage of ancient Jewish anti-pagan
polemics.[179] In contrast with prevailing scholarly views, the arguments in
patristic compositions were created for the purpose of countering Gnostic
and internal Christian doctrines (such as Origen's view of resurrection);[180]
the comparison with the Jewish material teaches us that the Christian
arguments continue a Jewish polemic with pagans concerning resurrec-
tion. The ancient arguments were later used in internal Christian contro-
versies; thus Epiphanius uses, for his polemic against Origen concerning
the *bodily* resurrection, the parable of the lame man and the blind man,
which, as we have seen above, was used by Jewish texts[181] in the context
of debate with pagans concerning the resurrection *per se*.

Conclusion

This article has dealt with several traditions of biblical interpretation and
their parallels outside rabbinic literature. As said above, each section of
this article is an independent unit, and deals with the specific exegeti-
cal problems emerging in each. Affinities of Philonic passages with rab-
binic and nonrabbinic Palestinian traditions have raised once again the
fundamental question of a possible (indirect) relationship between the
two; striking points of similarity and dissimilarity between rabbinic and
early Christian literature demonstrate the complex relationship between

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[179] For another argument that occurs in Christian texts, see M. Kister, "Aggadot and
Midrashic Methods," 232–34.

[180] Thus Lona, "Ps–Justin 'de Resurrectione'"; R. M. Grant, "Athenagoras or Pseudo-
Athenagoras," *HTR* 57 (1954): 121–29.

[181] Epiphanius, *Panarion,* 64.70.6–64.70.18 (ed. Holl, *Panarion, Part 2,* 516–17); trans.
Williams, *Panarion,* 2:201–2. For the relationship between Epiphanius and Jewish sources
see M. Bregman, "The Parable of the Lame and the Blind: Epiphanius' Quotation from an
Apocryphon of Ezekiel," *JTS* 42 (1991): 125–38.

Christian writers and Judaism: borrowing, adopting, and adapting traditional material for new contexts, and at the same time also rejecting and polemicizing. It is necessary to observe simultaneously the points of similarity and dissimilarity in order to perceive the subtle interplay between exegetical traditions and their varying contents in different cultural and religious contexts. Similarly, one must observe simultaneously the relationship between the common religious structures of Judaism and Christianity (which enabled easy borrowing from one religion to another) and the distinct religious ideas of the two religions.[182] These are most important issues, and they have been discussed in the various sections of the article. My main goal in the article as a whole, however, has been to deal with contradictory trends in rabbinic traditions: allegorical interpretation on the one hand, concretization and the downplaying of allegorical traditions on the other hand. Sometimes one has the impression that beneath the visible landmarks of rabbinic utterances lies a now-submerged continent of figurative interpretation.[183] Most of this is, and will remain, inaccessible;[184] but in rare cases we find a clue that makes it possible to fathom the unexpected existence of this material, and—no less important—its submersion.

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[182] I have dealt with this phenomenon in other articles; see: Kister, "Romans 5:12–21 against the Background of Torah-Theology and Hebrew Usage," pp. 391–424; idem, "Tree of Life," 138–55.

[183] This applies not only to allegory, but also to theological conceptions. Elsewhere I dealt with a midrash in *Gen. Rab.* 68:12 (ed. Theodor–Albeck, 787), where a unique tradition concerning the cosmic and heaven image of Jacob was downplayed: the saying that the angels were ascending and descending "in Jacob" was interpreted to say that they *caused him* to ascend and descend, probably in a metaphorical sense (M. Kister, "Observations on Aspects of Exegesis, Tradition, and Theology in Midrash, Pseudepigrapha, and Other Jewish Writings," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* [ed. J. C. Reeves; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994], 15–16, 19). In another study I have suggested that *Gen. Rab.* 1:1 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 2) resembles some sort of Logos-theology, that is here isolated within the context of rabbinic literature ("Some Early Jewish and Christian Exegetical Problems and the Dynamics of Monotheism," *JSJ* 37 [2006]: 576–78). One wonders time and again to what extent rabbis were aware of the original settings of these (and other) traditions (including those traditions that were originally of an allegorical nature). It may well be that, at least for some rabbis, these were already "innocent" traditions. Due to the nature of rabbinic literature, the question will most likely remain insoluble.

[184] I might add a *caveat* that one should not be tempted in the investigation and reconstruction of rabbinic tradition to try to reach their often inaccessible underpinnings; I sincerely hope that the present study adheres to this *caveat*.

APPENDIX (TO SECTION III)

Some passages have been misinterpreted by scholars as evidence for the
conception of manna as a spiritual food in rabbinic and Targumic litera-
ture. I shall deal here with two such passages:

1. *MekhRI Vayyehi* 1 has been widely cited as evidence for the interpreta-
tion of the manna as standing for Torah:[185]

> [God said at the Exodus:] If I bring Israel to the Land right away, every man
> will be taking possession of his field and vineyard and they will neglect the
> Torah. Therefore I shall send them around the desert for forty years so that
> they will eat manna and drink the water of the well and the Torah will be
> incorporated into their bodies.[186]

In contrary to the claims that this passage testifies to a spiritual under-
standing of the manna, it seems to me evident that both the well and
the manna are, according to this passage, only *means* for studying Torah
without toil. The following saying in *MekhRI*, explicitly connected to this
passage by the redactor of *MekhRI*, deals with the same problem, namely
studying Torah without toil: "Torah was given to be interpreted only
to those who eat the manna and similarly to those who eat *terumah*."
Torah is indeed described as "incorporated into one's body," but similar
expressions occur in other passages of rabbinic literature, unrelated to the
manna (or, for that matter, to the digestion of any sort of food).[187]

2. *Targum Neophyti* to Exod 16:15 reads:

> וחמון בני ישראל ואמרין גבר לאחוי מנא הוא ארום לא הון ידעין משה ואמר משה
> להון הוא לחמא די יהב ה׳ לכון למיכל

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[185] E.g., H. Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1929), 243 (Ode-
berg's argument that *parnasah* and *mazon*, like manna, are spiritual food, is untenable);
G. Vermes, "'He is the Bread,'" in Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1975),
139–46, esp. 141–43 (the other passage cited there, *Gen. Rab.* 70:5, is irrelevant: food is a
metaphor for Torah, but the manna is not interpreted allegorically. Rabbinic exegesis of
Exod 16:15 does *not* manifest "a distinctly allegorical tendency"); Kugel, *Traditions of the
Bible*, 620; A. Nye-Knutson, "Hidden Bread and Revealed Word: Manna Traditions in *Tar-
gum Neophyti* 1 and *Ps-Jonathan*," in Pomykala, *Israel in the Wilderness*, 201–25, esp. 223.
[186] *MekhRI Vayyehi* 1 (ed. Horovitz–Rabin, 76).
[187] E.g.: דברי תורה נבלעים בדמיו; "The words of the Torah are absorbed into one's
bloodstream" (*Avot de-Rabbi Nathan Version A*, ch. 24 [S. Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*
(Vienna: Lippe, 1887), 77]).

Geza Vermes has suggested that the "heavenly bread symbolizes Moses"; that it is "a personification of the divine nourishment allotted by God to Israel"; and that a close parallel to this reading is John 6:47–51, where Jesus is the "bread from heaven."[188] The idea that Moses may be *identified* with the manna is quite surprising in a Jewish context, especially in a Targumic rendering of a passage in which Moses is clearly distinct from the manna. Moreover, if this were the meaning of this sentence, the following words would need to have been: ואמר משה להון: אנא הוא לחמא; the present wording does not support Vermes' reading. Another significant consideration is that the words ארום לא הון ידעין משה render the Hebrew כי לא ידעו מה הוא, and it can hardly be explained why these words should be rendered this way (after all, Moses' form did not change when the Israelites saw the manna, and therefore there is no compelling reason to assume that they did not know Moses). A literal Aramaic translation of the Hebrew text would be: ארום לא הוון ידעין מנא הוא ("because they did not know what it was"). Once this is realized, the scribal error may be easily explained, by graphical similarity between מנא הוא ואמר and משהואמר (ש = נא, a graphical error, followed by הוא, partly omitted due to haplography of the letters וא).[189] I am convinced that Vermes' suggestion is untenable not only because it is quite awkward in the context, but also because it fits neither Aramaic idiom nor the Hebrew original, and because a simple and neat philological solution may be offered to the text. Every scribal error may be considered *lectio difficilior*; but considerations of language, translation technique, and context make a simple emendation much preferable, in this case, to the unintelligible text of the manuscript.

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[188] Vermes, "'He is the Bread,'" followed by Nye-Knutson, "Hidden Bread," 214–17.

[189] Once the scribe read משה instead of מנאה the remaining letters were ואואמר. It is readily understandable that the letters וא would be considered an erroneous duplication in the *Vorlage*, and would consequently be omitted by the scribe.

HERMENEUTICS OF HOLINESS: SYRIAC-CHRISTIAN AND RABBINIC CONSTRUCTS OF HOLY COMMUNITY AND SEXUALITY*

Naomi Koltun-Fromm

This essay begins and ends with Aphrahat the Persian Sage, a fourth-century Syriac-speaking Christian author from Persian Mesopotamia. In his eighteenth *Demonstration*, entitled, "On Virginity and *Qaddishuta*," he makes the claim that *qaddishuta*, or "holiness," manifests itself best through celibacy. Moreover, Aphrahat contextualizes this argument within a polemic against the Jews. His basic contention is that the Jews think they are holy because they procreate; but celibate Christians are more holy, because they do not. In my work I have tried to articulate the biblical hermeneutic which supports Aphrahat's position—for he depends heavily on pentateuchal texts for support—and place it in conversation with Jewish readings of the same passages. All of this comparative work leads me back to the beginning, to the biblical texts themselves, to try to uncover the histories of some biblically-based hermeneutics of holiness. Where does Aphrahat fall within this history?

   In this essay I present a précis of that journey backwards and forwards—an attempt to trace several hermeneutics of holiness and sexuality from the biblical literature forward into the fourth century. I do not intend to explain all aspects of holiness—but only those that intersect with constructs of human sexuality. My methodology is literary-historical in that I am interested in the exegetical history of a particularly biblical concept, "holiness." I have tried to survey as many ancient biblical, postbiblical, and early Jewish and Christian texts as possible, but obviously I could not discuss them all and I am sure that I have missed some as well. My focus has also been particularly Eastern in that Aphrahat is an Eastern Syriac-speaking Christian and I want primarily to contextualize his discussion within the traditions that may have been at his disposal.

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   * This article presents a summary of the argument in my recently published book of similar title: *Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient Jewish and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). In this essay, I use "hermeneutics" as the plural of "hermeneutic," meaning one particular strand of interpretation, in order to indicate the variety of interpretations of holiness. Even the biblical texts do not present one holistic hermeneutic of holiness, but several.

Two primary trajectories of holiness—trajectories that begin in the biblical texts and move across centuries and geographic locations around the Mediterranean basin and the Near East—emerge from this study. The first I call "ascribed" holiness, and the second, "achieved." The first term describes a native holiness, holiness inherent in an individual or community through birth; the second describes a holiness gained or acquired by an individual or community through certain actions. Yet, both hermeneutics of holiness appeal to divine law and its centrality to the holy community. For instance, someone who claims to possess innate or ascribed holiness claims to follow the law *because of* his or her holiness—that is, as a result of it. In some cases this natural consequence intensifies into a form of obligation: failure to comply with the law adversely affects one's holiness. The second paradigm—achieved holiness—makes the opposite claim: namely, that one is not born into holiness, but rather acquires it through obedience to the law. Similarly, according to this paradigm, once one has achieved holiness through the law, failure to comply with it can have detrimental effects on that holiness. As we shall see below, holiness and obedience to divine law go hand in hand, whether through ascription or achievement.

I will argue here that *obedience* translates, in many instances, into sexual behavior and becomes one community marker of exclusive godliness or holiness for these ancient Jewish and Christian communities. The texts studied here present holiness as dependent on sexual behavior and as a means to differentiate between "us" and "them." Yet, in creating hierarchies of holiness between communities—whether biblical, and postbiblical communities or later Jewish and Christian groups, some of these texts construct internal hierarchies between the laity and the spiritual elite, as well. In these constructs, sexual practice, particularly sexual asceticism, separates the holy from the more holy. Sexuality and sexual practice therefore become primary indicators of community and individual holiness.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

In mid-fourth-century Persian Mesopotamia, Aphrahat, a Syriac Christian leader, writes the following:

> I write you, my beloved, concerning virginity and holiness (*qaddishuta*) because I have heard of a Jewish man who insulted one of the brothers, members of our congregation, by saying to him: "You are impure (*tame'in*) you who do not marry women; but we are holy (*qaddishin*) and better, [we] who procreate and increase progeny in the world."[1]

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[1] *Dem* 18.12/841.3–9. All citations of Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* follow the edition of J. Parisot, using the form: *Demonstrations* chapter/column.lines. See J. Parisot, "Aphraatis

With this short notice Aphrahat reports a supposed polemical confrontation between a procreating Jew and a Christian celibate. The Jew accuses all Christian celibates of some sort of impurity because of their sexual restraint, claiming that Jews, who procreate, thereby remain "holy" and are thus superior. Yet, what do holiness and impurity mean in this fourth-century Persian Mesopotamian context?

For Aphrahat, celibacy clearly embodies *qaddishuta*, for he dedicates this whole demonstration to proving—from Scripture—that God calls Christians to celibacy and labels that action "holiness." Aphrahat strives to establish that Christian ascetics, through their celibacy, obey a higher divine law to "be celibate." But how did he understand the supposed Jewish opponent's accusation of impurity? While certainly for fourth-century Jews and Christians physical cultic purity remains an issue—albeit to different extents for different communities—I will argue that the authors discussed here deploy this biblical terminology primarily to designate obedience to or deviation from divine law. Hence the Jews are "holy" because they fulfill the commandment to "be fertile and increase," while the celibate Christians fail to obey that command and are thereby defiled. The impure, of course, can have no access to God—the ultimate and contested prize. In opposition, Aphrahat argues that the biblical directive to "be holy" translates best as "be celibate," and hence the celibates obey God better than do the procreators.[2] In order to understand these different interpretive developments, we must return to the biblical texts.

The Biblical Texts

The pentateuchal texts present us with several different and conflicting paradigms of holiness and purity.[3] On the one hand (in the first part of

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   [2] Yet it should be noted that Aphrahat never claims that the Jews are defiled through their procreative activities; he, too, commends procreation as a divine commandment. He argues rather that celibacy is a higher commandment—making those who comply "more" holy than those who do not.

   [3] In the following analysis of Levitical purity I am heavily indebted to the works of J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); J. Milgrom, *Leviticus* (3 vols.; AB 3, 3A, 3B; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2002); and B. J. Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness: The Torah Traditions," in *Purity and Holiness: The Heritage of Leviticus* (ed. M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz; Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series 2; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 47–59. See also the Hebrew study upon which the English

Leviticus, chapters 1–16), a *qodesh*, a holy thing, belongs solely to God. As regards human beings, God sanctifies the priests alone among all Israel. The rest of Israel remains common. In this paradigm, cultic purity (a necessary protection around the holiness of God's holy things and God's holy people) describes the absence of all of those human conditions (semen pollution, menstruation, skin disease, death) that create cultic impurity. Anyone (priest or nonpriest) may be rendered impure; certain purification processes reverse the effects of cultic impurity and render the affected individual pure once again. Purification, however, never sanctifies a nonpriestly individual. In this paradigm sanctification of individuals remains exclusive to the priesthood. A regular Israelite can never "move up" to a priestly position.

On the other hand, the latter part of Leviticus (chapters 17–27), also known as the Holiness Code, allows for just this—the sanctification of the nonpriestly Israelite. Here the text calls upon all Israel to make themselves holy through meticulous obedience to the law. In this construct, cultic purity takes on another dimension. Disobedience is construed as "bad" behavior (incest, adultery, injustice, murder, idolatry, etc.); such behavior defines impurity and cannot be neutralized—its effects are permanent. The first paradigm constructs a hierarchy between the holy—*qadosh*; the pure-but-common—*tahor*; and the impure—*tame'*. The second creates a more restrictive dichotomy between *qadosh* and *tame'*. Here the *qadosh* receives God's favor, while the *tame'*—falls out of favor with God. Thus, the authors of the Holiness Code have opened up the pursuit of *qedusha* to all Israel, not just the priesthood. Obedience to the law as laid down in the latter half of Leviticus sanctifies the obedient individual or community.

A third pentateuchal paradigm also exists, primarily in the nonpriestly texts of the Torah. In this construct all of Israel is already holy—because God chose them as his special nation of priests and as a holy people. Their holiness is innate, ascribed, and permanent. Here, fulfilling the law comes as an aftereffect of the divine choice—not as a prerequisite to it.[4] Nevertheless, in these biblical contexts the people must also protect themselves from God's holiness, which destroys the impure when encountered in the wrong way. Oddly enough these biblical texts often describe this act of protective purification by the same root word, *q-d-š*, that other texts use

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article is based: idem, *The Holiness Legislation: Studies in the Priestly Code* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1999 [in Hebrew]).

[4] See, for instance, Exod 19:6; Deut 7:6; and 10:15. Holiness is genetic. See Schwartz, "Israel's Holiness," 50–52.

to signify sanctification. And it is this semantic affinity that allows notions of purification to merge with constructs of holiness and obedience.[5]

Moreover in every category of holiness mentioned above—ascribed, achieved, and purity protective—one finds a restriction on sexual activity or sexual partners. So, for instance, a regular priest, because of his holy status, has limited marriage partners, for he cannot marry a divorcée. The high priest, because of his "higher" holy status, must restrict himself even further, to a virgin from within his "own people" (Lev 21:7, 14). The Holiness Code calls all Israelites to "be holy"; "being holy" includes a litany of prohibited sexual partners (close family members, other men's wives, animals, and even one's own menstruating wife; Lev 19 and 20). And those pentateuchal texts which claim an ascribed holiness for all Israel also strongly suggest that this special election removes them from the general Canaanite marriage market and prohibits them from intermarrying anyone from those tribes (Deut 7:1–3). Finally those texts which use *q-d-š* in the sense of "pure" or "purify" more often than not identify the act of avoiding semen pollution through temporary sexual restraint as *the* means by which one attains the kind of purity represented by *q-d-š*. The prime example of this usage is Exod 19:10–14, where the text uses *q-d-š* to connote purity as Moses instructs the Israelite (men) "not [to] go near a woman" for several days, in preparation for the revelation of the Torah.[6] Later biblical and postbiblical writers and exegetes merge and develop these distinct, earlier hermeneutics of holiness and sexuality, strengthening the link between holiness, obedience, and sexual behavior.

Late Biblical and Postbiblical Texts

Both earlier and later biblical prophets contribute to the conceptual connection of holiness and sexuality by condemning Israel's indulgence in the worship of foreign gods, in metaphorical terms, as religious harlotry.[7] Hosea, for example, accuses Ephraim/Israel of harlotry and impurity (6:10); adultery (7:4); and "mixing with the peoples" (7:8). Jeremiah compares

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[5] See Schwartz on the differences between these two connotations; "Israel's Holiness," 47.

[6] See discussions below under "Aphrahat," and "The Rabbis." Other examples include Num 11:18; Josh 3:5; 7:13; and 1 Sam 16:5.

[7] The term "religious harlotry," I borrow from C. E. Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42.

Israel's behavior to that of the wife who is twice divorced but wants to return to her first husband (Jer 3:1). By assuming that remarriage to a former spouse defiles (Deut 24:1–4), and equating Israel's idolatry with prostitution, Jeremiah posits that Israel's idolatry-cum-prostitution not only profanes God's name and defiles the sanctuary, but also defiles the land, which will eventually spew them out. Here Israel also defiles itself metaphorically through harlotry/idolatry. Nevertheless the result is real behavioral impurities that will affect the land and the people to their detriment. Idolatry and harlotry merge to create a hyperdetrimental behavioral impurity.

Ezra presents the strongest case for Israel's ascribed holiness. Building on Jeremiah's description of Israel as a holy sanctum of God (Jer 2:3), Ezra posits that because Israel is holy seed it must not be profaned by mixing with nonholy seed (Ezra 9:1–3). Hence he extends the pentateuchal prohibition against marrying Canaanites to a blanket prohibition against intermarriage between the repatriated Judahite community and the "people of the land" in his own day.[8] Ezra reasons that the progeny of such a marriage cannot be counted as holy (i.e., members of the repatriated Judahite clan) because the holy seed has been adulterated. Hence in Ezra's hermeneutic, Israel's already ascribed holiness (Israel is a holy seed from the get-go) must be protected from profanation (being rendered common) through endogamy—i.e., the proscription of certain marriage partners. By requiring carriers of the holy seed to procreate only with other such carriers, Ezra insures the production of more holy Israelites and the continuity of the community. Furthermore he labels exogamy (marriage out of his own group) as a *ma'al*, a sacrilege or transgression of God's holiness, indicating that in his mind such a marriage deviates from God's law.[9]

The author of *Jubilees* takes Ezra's paradigm one step further by declaring that the very act of sexual intercourse with a non-Judahite partner

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[8] While historians often refer to Ezra and his community as the returning "Judeans," or "Judahites," Ezra and the other postbiblical authors discussed here refer to themselves as "Israel." Even the rabbis will refer to themselves and their community as "Israel" more often than as "Jews." This nomenclature is purposeful. To call oneself "Israel" is to claim an exclusive relationship to that title and to the divine covenant that comes with it. According to these authors, there may be other people out there who claim Israelite ancestry, but they can no longer count themselves among "Israel," as heirs to the promises of the divine covenant. Thus Ezra, in calling only the returning Judahites "Israel," disenfranchises all other (non-Judahite) Israelites (and possibly even some Judahites who did not experience the exile) from participation in the divine covenant.

[9] See Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1:359–60; and Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 28–34, to whom I am indebted for parts of this argument.

defiles the Judahite partner in the same adverse way as intercourse with any other already prohibited sexual partner (close family members, other people's wives, etc).[10] In *Jubilees*' scenario exogamy certainly profanes the children of Judahite–non-Judahite marriages, but it also defiles the Judahite spouse—rendering him impure and unholy, and by extension threatening the community's holiness as well. Moreover, too much intermarriage also defiles the land, causing it to spew out the Judahites as it had previously spewed out the Canaanites. Profanation leads to assimilation, defilement to exile—either way, exogamy and other interethnic sexual activity endanger the community's very existence and diminish their ascribed holiness. Moreover *Jubilees*' author labels the act of sexual intercourse with a non-Judahite *znut* or prostitution, further associating intermarriage with sexually suspect activity and equating it with idolatry. In this respect, he pushes the prophetic metaphor even further, in order to demonstrate to his readers that God forbids intermarriage in the same way that he forbids adultery, incest, and idolatry, because it renders one impure and hence unfit for the holy community. Intermarriage represents quintessential disobedience in the *Jubilees* mindset, just as idolatry does to the prophetic writers.

Within the literature of the Dead Sea Sect we see both the continuation and the development of this Ezran–Jubilean paradigm of holiness as an innate aspect of Second Temple period Judean identity.[11] Nonetheless, other paradigms also appear, in what is often called the "full-blown" sectarian literature. The Yaḥad defines itself and its holiness by the completeness of its members' obedience to God's covenant. That is to say, only those Israelites who choose to follow the Yaḥad's interpretation of the divine covenant can be counted among God's holy people. Here we see a division between obedient (holy) Israel and disobedient and profaned

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[10] See, for instance, *Jub.* 30, where Dinah, daughter of Jacob, becomes representative of all daughters of Israel; since the author of *Jubilees* sees all Israel as priestly, Dinah in a single sexual act defiles as well as profanes both herself and her father. See also Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 74. By the Jubilean author's time, Ezra's original repatriated Judahite community has expanded extensively and is probably not as "purebred" as Ezra would have liked. The Jubilean author continues to push this notion of exclusive "Israeliteness" even as his construct of non-Israelite differs from that of Ezra because of the social and political realities of his day.

[11] See for instance 4QMMT, with the discussions in Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 82–89; and E. Qimron and J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqṣat Maʿaśe ha-Torah*, (DJD 10; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994], 54–57.

(former) Israel.[12] Under the Yaḥad's leadership some in Israel achieve holiness through their obedience and some lose it through disobedience.

Some protosectarian texts, such as the *Temple Scroll* and the *War Scroll*, focus on holiness of place rather than holiness of persons, and therefore on the purity of the personnel involved or present in those spaces rendered holy, such as the war camp or the Temple city.[13] In these contexts the locus of holiness remains with God and God's property and not in the people per se (except for the priests). These texts are interested primarily in ensuring a physically ritually pure place for God or the divine emissaries to reside. Therefore they focus on the best means to preserve the sacred territory from ritual impurity. But notwithstanding the variety of venues for ritual impurity, semen pollution, produced via sexual activity, remains a primary concern. Here too we see another example and amplification of the biblical (in this case both priestly and nonpriestly) nexus of sexuality and holiness: active sexuality (that which produces semen) prevents an Israelite from entering holy space on short notice, for he must first undergo purification rituals.[14] Both the *Temple Scroll* and the *War Scroll* provide mechanisms by which the personnel of the Temple city or the warriors in the war camp can try to prevent semen pollution for the duration of their service. Yet after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, this particular paradigm (concern for physically sacred space) seems to fade from view.

Pauline Literature

In contrast, the Pauline literature, the earliest Christian literature to struggle with issues of holiness and sexuality, places that struggle within a new worldview. Even within Paul's writings several new hermeneutics manifest themselves. The community of believers, who share the holy spirit with Jesus, is the only truly holy people, for through their faith they truly obey God. Furthermore they come by their holiness through both ascription and achievement. On the one hand, God chose the Gentiles to

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[12] See for instance the *Rule of the Community*, 1QS 5:20–23.

[13] See for instance the *War Scroll*, 1QM 1:16; 7:6; 10:11; 12:1, 4, 7–8.

[14] Women are excluded from the camp and the city, both because they are unessential personnel and because their exclusion moves sexual activities outside the boundaries of sacred space. See my discussion in *Hermenuetics of Holiness*, 67, esp. n. 37.

replace historical Israel, who had lost their holiness through disobedience. On the other hand, the Gentiles earn their holiness because of their belief (that is to say they are more obedient to God). Nevertheless once made holy, believers must protect their newly achieved status.

Paul articulates several means towards accomplishing that goal. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul constructs a barrier between "us" and "them." "We," those called by God to holiness differ, from "them" (those who do not know God). We are sanctified, they are not. We take wives in holiness and avoid *porneia*, they indulge in *porneia* and thereby render themselves unclean—unfit for God. Paul builds a dichotomy between holiness/taking wives in holiness and *porneia*/impurity. However he understands *porneia* here (I would argue that it translates *znut*—but does not necessarily mean intermarriage), it stands in contrast to taking wives in holiness.[15] Those who indulge in *porneia* cannot be holy because *porneia* defiles; hence, to be holy (and to take a wife in holiness) means to avoid *porneia*. Paul, like the author of *Jubilees*, advocates the avoidance of some type of sexual behavior—which he labels *porneia*—as a means of protecting the holy believer and by extension the holy community. A member of the faith community is holy, yet if he "fools around" (be it with a forbidden marriage partner, or perhaps more than one marriage partner) he becomes like "them" and self-evidently no longer one of "us." A person who indulges in *porneia* disobeys the law and damages his holy status gained through faith.[16]

Similarly, in 1 Cor 5–6 Paul proves himself concerned with defilement within the community. Here Paul concerns himself less with "us" and "them" and more with the bad behavior of believers, which creates pollution within the community. Using the example of the man who lives with his father's former wife, Paul attempts to show that this action, incest, defiles not only the incestuous man but the whole community. For each individual is a member of the corporate whole, which in turn constitutes the body of Christ. If they are holy by virtue of being members (through their faith) of this larger corporate entity, then he who defiles himself through incest defiles the whole community. In both cases Paul creates

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[15] On *porneia* as a direct translation of *znut* into Greek idiom, see D. Frankfurter, "Jews or Not? Reconstructing the 'Other' in Rev 2:9 and 3:9," *HTR* 94 (2001): 415–16.

[16] Here I argue contra K. Gaca (*The Making of Fornication: Eros, Ethics and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* [Hellenistic Culture and Society 40; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002], 154), who maintains that *porneia* best translates as "other-theistic copulation."

a dichotomy between impure sexual behavior (which he calls *porneia*) and the holiness of the individual and community. Clearly holiness and *porneia*—deviant sexual behavior—do not mix. Paul pronounces that one achieves holiness through faith, yet sexual deviance, which by its nature pollutes, adversely affects that holiness. In this way he remains quite close to the author of *Jubilees*: avoiding certain sexual practices or partners protects a holy believer from pollution and from losing that holy status which was granted through faith.

In sum: the Pauline texts follow closely the earlier paradigms in which a holy community must protect itself from pollution or adulteration. Paul links this pollution to *porneia*—which he understands as some sort of sexual deviance modeled on the Levitical sexual prohibitions. Yet Paul's notion of individual holiness differs greatly from that of his predecessors, in that holiness is gained through faith rather than by birth, and remains available to all, Gentile and Jew alike. For Paul, ascribed holiness no longer carries meaning or value—holiness must be achieved. In developing this model, however, Paul leaves an opening for confusing the notions of protection and obedience. For on the one hand, Christians obey God and become holy through their faith, while unbelief manifests itself as unholiness and impurity. On the other, where *porneia*/sexual deviance equals impurity, avoiding *porneia* can be understood both as a protection and as *the* act of obedience to God's will in and of itself—i.e., that which makes one holy.

We move now into the Syriac Christian realm in order to get closer to Aphrahat, where we began. In the next text, the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, we will also see how Paul's notion of the protection of holiness by avoiding sexual deviance merges more fully into the achievement of holiness.

Acts of Judas Thomas

The *Acts of Judas Thomas* is a difficult text to crack. While scholars agree that it was most likely written in Syriac, in the third century, our earliest manuscripts present the Greek translation that must have been made shortly thereafter.[17] These *Acts* narrate the missionary adventures of the

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[17] See H. J. W. Drijvers, "The Acts of Thomas," in *New Testament Apocrypha, Vol. 2: Writings Related to the Apostles; Apocalypses and Related Subjects* (ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; rev. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 323; and A. F. J. Klijn's introduction to his English translation of the Syriac, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text,*

apostle Judas Thomas in India. In the *Acts of Judas Thomas*, the Indian authorities accuse Thomas of teaching a "new doctrine" (in the Greek) and a "new doctrine of *qaddishuta*" in the Syriac (*Acts Thom.* GK/SY 100)—a doctrine that participants must follow if they wish to "live" (GK 100) or "gain eternal life." (GK 101). Salvation derives not only through faith in Jesus the Messiah (as in Paul) but through practicing the *qaddishuta* or *hagiōsynē* of this Messiah. In this way, the *Acts Thom.* intensifies the link between practicing *qaddishuta*/holiness (linked to sexual behavior, as we shall soon see) and salvation. I suggest that these texts go beyond Paul in advocating that sexual practice in and of itself is part and parcel of the larger salvation package—not just a fence around holiness gained through faith.

Yet the narratives of the *Acts* present two different practical versions of this new doctrine.[18] The first suggests that one gains salvation through restricted marriage partnering; the second, which is not the focus of my interests here, advocates full sexual renunciation as a prerequisite for entering the kingdom of God. The first, I argue, derives from the same trajectory of biblical interpretation we have been following so far, in which obedience to God is constructed as some sort of sexual behavior, equals holiness, and stands in opposition to impurity (which in turn is broadly construed as *deviant* sexual behavior). In the case of the *Acts Thom.*, monogamy stands in opposition to the taking of multiple sexual partners, be they met in prostitution, adultery, polygamy, or even serial monogamy (i.e., taking one spouse at a time). In the pericope of the youth who kills his lover (GK 51) the young man hears Judas Thomas preaching the new faith and doctrine, accepts it, converts, and then returns to his lover (who also happens to be a prostitute), in order to convert her as well. He asks her to live a life with him in "*hagneia kai politeia kathara*" (translated by Drijvers as "chastity and pure conduct") in the Greek or "*dikhiya we-qaddisha*" ("purity and holiness") in the Syriac. What he asks of her, however, is not to renounce sexual relations entirely, but only

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Commentary (Leiden: Brill, 1962), 16. The existing Syriac manuscripts clearly show later emendations and catholicizing language. I will quote the Drijvers English translation of the Greek unless otherwise noted. I will give references to the standard paragraphs and chapter numbers following these Greek (GK) and Syriac (SY) published editions.

18 On the composite nature of this text see H. W. Attridge, "Intertextuality in the Acts of Thomas," *Semeia* 80 (1997): 87–124; and Y. Tissot, "Les actes de Thomas, exemple de recueil composite," in *Les Actes apocryphes des apotres: Christianisme de monde païen* (ed. F. Bovon et al.; Publication de la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université de Geneve 4; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 223–32.

sexual relations with other men (she is a prostitute, after all!). He wants
to establish a monogamous relationship with her. When she refuses he
kills her—because he "...could not see her commit adultery with another
(*moicheuomenein*)" (GK 51).

This narrative describes Judas Thomas's doctrine as monogamous
sexual relations and connects it to notions of purity and holiness. Judas
Thomas's preaching at this point in the narrative further reinforces this
notion. According to the youth, the apostle preaches: "Whoever shall unite
in the impure union (*miarai meixei*), and especially in adultery (*moicheia*),
he shall not have life with the God whom I preach" (GK 51). Judas Thomas
preaches against "impure union"; the youth asks his lover to live a life
in "chastity and pure conduct." This "chastity and pure conduct" clearly
points to monogamous sexual relations for the youth; the "impure union"
then must have something to do with multiple sexual partners (also called
adultery by our text)—i.e., the opposite of monogamy.[19] Thomas's subse-
quent preaching gives us a further clue:

> Each of you, therefore, put off the old man and put on the new, and abandon
> your first way of life and conduct.... Let the adulterers no longer practice
> *porneia*, that they may not utterly deliver themselves to eternal punishment;
> for with God adultery is exceeding wicked, above the other evils.... For all
> these things [avarice, falsehood, drunkenness, and slander] are strange and
> alien to the God who is preached by me. But walk rather in *faith* and *meek-
> ness* and *holiness* and *hope*, in which God delights, that you may become
> his kinsman, expecting from him the gifts which only some few receive.
> (GK 58)

Using the language of Ephesians 4, Judas Thomas preaches a total life-
style change—one becomes a new person, turns over a new leaf, conducts
one's actions, behavior, and particularly one's relations with others in a
completely different fashion. Judas Thomas calls for an end to robbery,
adultery/*porneia*, avarice, falsehood, drunkenness, and slander. Adul-
tery, defined as "practicing *porneia*" comes out on top of this heap of bad
behavior as the worst of all possible sins against another human, because
God ordains it the most odious. Adultery, labeled elsewhere the "mother-
city of all evils" (GK 84) resurfaces several times in the *Acts*. Holiness,

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[19] I think our author uses "adultery" to mean "multiple sexual partners," whether at the
same time, or sequentially in otherwise monogamous relationships. Thus, taking a second
spouse after a first has died would be "adultery" in this author's understanding. Therefore
the act of having sexual relations with more than one partner registers in this narrative as
porneia, an illicit sexual act.

however gained or acquired, is lost through bad behavior, particularly the taking of more than one sexual partner, even sequentially. This is, after all, the message of the Levitical holiness code: holiness is gained through obedience and lost through disobedience (i.e., bad behavior). Paul, as we have seen, equates bad behavior with *porneia*; Thomas translates *porneia* into multiple sexual partners.[20] If one must take a wife in holiness then perhaps taking another—either sequentially or in addition, is considered *porneia* (Paul) or impure union (*Acts Thom.*)—as the youth in our narrative suggests. While Paul legislates in a negative mode—don't marry or cohabit with the wrong partners; Judas Thomas flips the equation to its positive side—be holy—live in *hagiōsynē/qaddishuta*; that is, marry or cohabit with one (legitimate) partner so as to avoid eternal damnation. Obedience, *qaddishuta*, "holiness," becomes here indistinguishable from proper sexual and marriage practice.

I contend, then, that the notion of *qaddishuta* as described in this pericope of the *Acts of Judas Thomas* derives from distilled readings of the Levitical Holiness Code: holy behavior (obedience) is placed in irreconcilable opposition to impure behavior (disobedience), which is described, above all other sins, as sexual sin. In *Jubilees znut* refers to intermarriage, among other possible sexual sins. For Paul *porneia* refers to the whole host of levitically improper sexual partners and then some. In these narratives of the *Acts Thom.*, deviant sexual behavior is equated with multiple sexual partners. In all three, problematic sexual behavior stands in opposition to holiness. Yet the author of *Jubilees* constructs sexual behavior as a fence around ascribed holiness—it is not in and of itself the means to holiness. Paul attempts to maintain a clear divide between the faith that brings one into the community and pure sexual behavior that keeps one there once admitted. This pericope of the *Acts Thom.* seems to merge these two notions into one: proper sexual behavior (in this case monogamous marriage) not only protects the faithful, but somehow maintains or solidifies or even embodies the believers' holy status, as well. Proper sexual partnering, rather than (or perhaps in addition to) faith equals the obedience required by law, for sexual uprightness looms larger than faith in Thomas's sermons.

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[20] The *Acts* here may be leaning on the NT passages which discourage divorce and second marriage (e.g. Matt 19:1–9, Mark 10:2–12), as well as on 1 Thess 4: 3–4, where Paul contrasts *porneia* with taking a wife "in holiness."

This conceptual transformation becomes particularly apparent in the passages where the *Acts Thom.* equates *hagiōsynē/qaddishuta* with total sexual renunciation. In these passages, which I refrain from discussing here, celibacy is rationalized through a completely different paradigm. Here, sexuality is equated with mortality, physical corruptibility and this-worldliness. Sexuality is then linked irrevocably to the here and now of earthly existence. The Christian believer, however, is destined for the next world and celibacy in this world marks one as standing at the threshold of that immortality and salvation. Nonetheless the composite nature of the *Acts* allows the redactor to merge these two paradigms—the one which opposes holiness, obedience, and monogamy to impurity, disobedience, and multiple sexual partners; and the other which opposes celibacy, immortality, and salvation to sexuality, mortality, and condemnation—into a new paradigm in which celibacy equals holiness and sexuality dooms one to an everlasting death.

Aphrahat[21]

Aphrahat, writing a century or so later, starts his discourse on celibacy from the position reached in the redacted form of the *Acts of Judas Thomas*; that is, he takes for granted that *qaddishuta* translates best as celibacy. Nonetheless, he exegetes this equation directly from the scriptures (something the *Acts* does not do). In so doing he builds on the nonpriestly biblical notion that sexuality/semen pollution creates physical impurity; and that the absence of either (or both) produces a state of purity—which he calls *qaddishuta*. Hence Aphrahat's explicit exegetical support for celibacy differs greatly from that of the *Acts*. Yet at the same time many of the other rationales for celibacy found in the redacted form of the *Acts* (the heavenly/earthly divide; the heavenly bridal chamber, incorruptibility) also resonate within Aphrahat's writing. Aphrahat situates himself within the Syriac tradition, and many of his rationales for sexual renunciation echo and build

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[21] For a comprehensive French translation of and commentary on Aphrahat's *Demonstrations* see M.-J. Pierre, *Aphraates: Les Exposées* (2 vols.; Paris: Cerf, 1988 and 1989). For a more recent English translation see Adam Lehto's new translation and commentary, *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2010). For a deeper discussion of this text see my article, "Sexuality and Holiness: Semitic Christian and Jewish Conceptualizations of Sexual Behavior," *VC* 54 (2000): 375–95, and *Hermeneutics of Holiness*, ch 6.

on the *Acts* as well as other early Syriac Christian writings.[22] But I will focus here on his hermeneutic of holiness, which is quite different from that of the *Acts Thom.*, even if the results are the same. And as we shall see Aphrahat's hermeneutic actually parallels more closely the rabbinic hermeneutic of holiness and sexuality—which problematizes the "Jewish" position that Aphrahat presents as his opponent's view.

In mid-fourth century Persian Mesopotamia, Aphrahat begins his discussion of celibacy by linking it to *qaddishuta*. Throughout his writings he uses *qaddishuta* as the technical term for sexual renunciation. Yet, when pushed to explain this position exegetically Aphrahat does not turn back to Leviticus. In fact the Levitical roots of this equation appear unessential to him. Rather he exegetes his defense—and a defense it is, against detractors of celibacy as a religious vocation—from Exodus.

Exodus 19 is one of those places in the pentateuchal texts in which the root *q-d-š* connotes "to purify," rather than "to sanctify," and is directly linked with sexual restraint. The Masoretic text of Exod 19:10–11 and 14–15 reads as follows:

> (10) And the Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people, purify them (*v-qid-dashtam*) today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes (11) And be ready by the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."...(14) And Moses went down from the mount to the people, and purified the people (*vayqaddesh ha'am*); and they washed their clothes. (15) And he said to the people, "Be ready by the third day; do not come near a woman."[23]

The Israelites prepare themselves in order to be able to withstand the face-to-face encounter with God's holiness. In order to survive such an encounter with the Holy the people must make themselves pure—that is, rid themselves of those things that are anathema to God's holiness. In this case the laundering of their clothing (to rid them of any residual semen pollution) and the refraining from sexual relations (so as not to produce any more semen pollution) is part and parcel of that purification process. Hence at this momentous occasion, just before revelation, the people do not sanctify themselves (God has already designated them as holy), but only prepare themselves to meet their Creator. After the event they will remain what they are; their status in relation to the holy has not been

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[22] See R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), concerning the early Syriac literary context.

[23] All translations of Hebrew biblical and rabbinic texts in this essay are my own.

changed by this preparation. In the latter part of Leviticus, by contrast, the people presumably can change their status, moving themselves into the category of holy by their "good behavior" and obedience to the Law.

We shall see here how these two biblical paradigms merge in Aphrahat. For Aphrahat focuses his attention on this preparatory and purificatory process—especially the call to sexual renunciation—as if it does have some quasi-status-changing significance. He writes:

> And concerning virginity and *qaddishuta*, I will persuade you that even in that nation [Israel] they [virginity and *qaddishuta*] were more loved and preferred before God . . . [for] Israel was not able to receive the holy text and the living words that the Holy One spoke to Moses on the mountain until he had *qaddsheh* the people for three days. And only then the Holy One spoke to them. For He said to Moses: "Go down to the people and *qaddesh* them for three days." (Exod 19:10). And this is how Moses explained it to them: "do not go near a woman." (Exod 19:15). And when they were *etqaddashu* these three days, then on the third day God (the *Qaddishe*) revealed himself. . . . (*Dem.* 18.4/824.25–27; 825.15–23).

Aphrahat makes a direct link between Moses' action of sanctifying, *qaddsheh*, and the requirement that the people refrain from sexual inter-course; the two procedures become one and the same—*qaddishuta* through sexual renunciation. Furthermore, the need for *qaddishuta* is explained through the event itself. God is about to descend the mountain to face the people. They need to "be ready," as the biblical text expressly states. Further on in this passage Aphrahat makes two more claims. First he surmises that if the people must refrain from sexual relations for three days just to have a one-hour audience with God, then surely Moses, who is constantly in God's presence, must refrain permanently. And should we not all aspire to be like Moses—who stands forever in God's presence? Thus, Aphrahat concludes:

> And if with Israel, that had *etqaddash* itself for only three days, God spoke, how much better and desirable are those who all their days are purified (*mqaddshin*): alert, prepared, and standing before God. Should not God all the more love them and his spirit dwell among them? (*Dem.* 18.5/829.8–14)

God obviously prefers the pure—for he only condescends to dwell among the pure. While in the biblical context, the Israelites may not have changed their status by way of their purification, Aphrahat's read-ing implies that something special happens to those (Christians) who continuously maintain their *qaddishuta*: God dwells permanently among them. If God chooses to dwell among them then God must approve of

what they do. Furthermore, God's indwelling can only mean one thing for the celibates—that they are holy to God. And here finally is Aphrahat's answer to his "Jewish" opponent: The Jews say that we (the Christians) are *tame'in* (impure—because we are celibate), but look—God calls our celibacy holy! Although Aphrahat bases his exegesis on Exodus 19, where the biblical *q-d-š* connotes purity, I suggest Aphrahat here merges his notions of purity and holiness. For in calling the Christian celibates holy he claims that they better obey God's word—and cannot be impure, as the Jews claim. The issue at hand is not physical impurity (semen pollution)—but divine approval for one's (sexual) behavior—making the grade in God's obedience school. Exodus provides the exegesis, but Leviticus provides the hermeneutic. Only Christian celibates can claim to be truly obedient, and hence to have achieved true holiness. Yet what would Aphrahat have said had he known that his exegesis of Exodus 19 resonated equally within certain Jewish quarters?

The Rabbis

It is impossible to know for sure what kind of fourth-century Persian Mesopotamian Jew might have made this sort of accusation against Aphrahat's Christians; or whether Aphrahat only constructs this Jew as a straw opponent to make his argument stronger.[24] Nevertheless it is interesting and perhaps instructive to find the very same exegetical reading of Exodus 19 several different times within the rabbinic texts; that is, the understanding that God calls Moses and the Israelites to celibacy before the Sinai revelation and that God approvingly labels this abstinence, though temporary, *qadosh*. Although the rabbis read the biblical text in a fashion similar to Aphrahat, they nonetheless come to different conclusions concerning celibacy as a spiritual practice. God permits only Moses to practice permanent celibacy.[25] Nevertheless, the question of obedience

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[24] For more details about the historicity of Aphrahat's polemic, see my article, "A Jewish-Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian-Mesopotamia," *JJS* 47/1 (1996): 45–63; as well as my recently published book, *Jewish-Christian Polemics in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia: A Reconstructed Conversation* Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2011).

[25] It must be noted that some of these midrashic readings do question the link between *qedusha* and celibacy even for Moses. For a fuller discussion of these texts see my articles, "Zippora's Complaint: Moses is Not Conscientious in the Deed! Exegetical Traditions of Moses' Celibacy," in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. A. Y. Reed and A. H. Becker; TSAJ 95; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,

and approval resonates throughout the rabbinic texts. One midrash does not hesitate to connect the *qedusha* of Exodus 19 with sexual restraint; *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 2:3 recounts:

> This is one of the things that Moses did on his own and his opinion matched the opinion of God.... He separated from his wife, and his opinion agreed with the opinion of God. How so? [Moses] said, "Concerning Israel, that did not purify (*nitqaddshu*) except for the hour (*le-fi-sha'a*) and were not prepared (*nizdamnu*) except to receive upon themselves the ten command-ments from Mount Sinai, the Holy Blessed One said to me: "Go to the people and purify them (*v-qiddashtam*) today and tomorrow" (Exod 19:10); and I, who am prepared for/called to (*mezuman*) this every day at every hour, and I do not know when He will speak to me either in the day or in the night—how much more so should I separate from my wife!" And his opinion agreed with the opinion of God.[26]

Like Aphrahat, the rabbis read the commandment to "be *q-d-š*" in vv. 10 and 14 in conjunction with the commandment to "be ready" in 11 and 15. They conclude, like Aphrahat, that when God said "be *q-d-š*" he meant, as Moses claims, "Prepare yourselves through sexual restraint." Furthermore, they contend, more stridently than Aphrahat, that Moses himself deduces from this that he must refrain from sexual relations permanently, since he would not necessarily have three days for proper preparation every time God called on him. The deductive analogies made by the exegetes are the same: Moses models his behavior on Israel at Sinai—only more so. Most significantly for this discussion, the *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* links this preparatory process (i.e., sexual restraint) to *qedusha*, and echoes Aphrahat's exegesis. While Aphrahat builds his theological case from this apparent link between sexual restraint and *qedusha*, the *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* here draws no such broad conclusions concerning *qedusha* and celibacy. Nevertheless, other midrashim do take this step. The *Mekilta* (*Yitro Bahodesh* 3), exegeting Exod 19:15 states:

> And [Moses] spoke to the people—"Be ready," etc. (Exod 19:15). But we did not hear that God said "separate/abstain from the woman." Rather "Be ready" (v. 15) and "and be ready" (v. 11). [They] are an analogy. "Be ready" (v. 15) here signifies "separate/abstain from the woman" therefore "and be ready" (v. 11) there [also] signifies "separate/abstain from the woman." Rabbi says, from its own context it can be proven. [God said] "Go to the people

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2003), 283–306; "Yokes of the Holy-Ones: The Embodiment of a Christian Vocation," in *HTR* 94/2 (2001): 205–18; and chapter 6 of *Hermeneutics of Holiness*.

[26] *Avot de Rabbi Nathan* A 2:3. Text from *Avoth de Rabbi Nathan Solomon Schechter Edition* (New York and Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1997), 10.

and *qiddashtam* today and tomorrow" (v. 10). If [the command] concerned bathing only they should have bathed on the fifth [day] and they would have been [physically] pure (*tahor*) by the evening sun. But why does the text say "Go to the people and *qiddashtam* today and tomorrow?" (v. 10). To indicate that God said to Moses, "separate/abstain from the woman."[27]

In this passage the *Mekilta* makes an association between the verses of Exodus 19 similar to that of Aphrahat. The "be ready" of God's command-ment in v. 11 is translated in v. 15 as to "separate/abstain from the woman." The *Mekilta* imagines that God actually explains to Moses on the mountain that "to be ready" means "to abstain from the woman." The connection is made by way of an analogy between the two verses—a methodological move similar to Aphrahat's. If God intended "be ready" to mean "refrain from sexual intercourse" as stated by Moses in v. 15, then obviously God meant the same in v. 11. The issue of *qedusha* only appears by implication in the second part of this Tannaitic midrash. Rabbi (Judah the Prince) notes that one might come to the same conclusion from v. 10, which reads "*v-qiddashtam* today and tomorrow." If God required only physical purity of the Israelites for the revelatory event, then bathing [after sexual inter-course] should have sufficed, but since the text commands bathing *and qedusha*, the text links "don't go near a woman" directly to *qedusha*. Hence for Rabbi Judah *qedusha* does indeed equal sexual abstinence (albeit only for that occasion and only for three days), for the text states *v-qiddashtam* today AND tomorrow. Purity (*tahara*) is a one-day affair—one bathes, washes one's clothing, waits until the evening, and thus purifies oneself of most defilements. This procedure certainly applies to semen pollution. *Qedusha*, by contrast, takes two days of preparation—three according to Moses—and includes sexual abstinence. It connotes something different than *tahara* here—though it is not clear from the text how Rabbi Judah would translate the term. At the very least, *qedusha* refers to a super or extreme form of *tahara*. The best translation would probably be, "pre-pare them." That is, after all, the focus of this particular midrash—how should the Israelites prepare for revelation? How should they fulfill the divine directive in vv. 11 and 15 to "be prepared"? The answer apparently is: through sexual abstinence. Nevertheless the *Mekilta* text, while it more directly links *qedusha* and celibacy than does the *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, never addresses the issue of *qedusha* as obedience to the law, in the way

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[27] *Mekilta* (*Yitro Bahodesh* 3:9). Text from H. S. Horowitz and I. A. Rabin, *Mechilta D'Rabbi Ismael* (Jerusalem: Shalem, 1997), 213.

that Aphrahat suggests. Obedience may not even have been an issue for these rabbis if they understood *q-d-š* in these texts to signify purity rather than holiness.

While we could study many more rabbinic texts, I wish primarily to show here that Aphrahat's exegesis fits well within his fourth-century Semitic milieu even if it proves innovative among Syriac-speaking Christian writers. While the rabbis draw significantly different conclusions from their reading of Exodus 19, they would partially sympathize with Aphrahat's base reading—particularly in relationship to Moses—and likewise, to some extent, with his connection between temporary celibacy and *qedusha*.

Nevertheless, while in these sources the rabbis hesitate to make strong connections between holiness and total sexual renunciation, elsewhere they have no problem following through on the Levitical paradigms that advocate the protection of holiness for all Israel through the restriction of marriage partners. In other contexts, the rabbis go so far as to construct new restrictions within the larger Jewish community, building on the biblical restrictions. So, for instance, if Leviticus forbids a man to marry his father's wife or sister, the rabbis forbid him to marry his father's mother and grandmother as well. If the biblical texts forbid a high priest to marry outside his family or clan, the rabbis forbid nonpriests to marry the off-spring of forbidden consanguineous relations, or of relations with Jews of doubtful status. This Tannaitic hermeneutic of holiness, while allowing both priests and nonpriests to be holy at their own level, is not all-inclusive. Only a Jew who follows the rabbinic restrictions (which go beyond the biblical restrictions) remains holy. This, then, is how the Tannaitic rabbis attempt to establish their authority—by drawing boundaries not only between nonpriest and priest but between rabbinic Jew and nonrabbinic Jew as well.[28] Although the Bible claims that all Israelites are or can be holy by birth and/or obedience, the rabbis place more emphasis on the obedience element—that is, obedience to their interpretations. Holiness, obedience and sexual practice—here defined as the regulation of marriage partners—come together in this early layer of rabbinic halakhah.[29]

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[28] See *m. Yebam.* 1:4, along with the discussions in *b. Yebam.* 21a and *y. Yebam.* 2:4, where the secondary degrees are enumerated.

[29] See D. Boyarin's *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Divinations; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), Introduction, where he discusses heresiologies among Jews.

The concept of Israel as holy by birth (ascribed holiness) comes to the fore in another context however. In discussing conversion for the purpose of marriage, the rabbis do not draw as straight a line between community holiness and endogamy as the earlier writers do; rather they struggle with how to allow for such conversions for marriage without adulterating the presumably holy seed of Israel. In *m. Yebam.* 11:2, we find the following statement: "The female convert who converted with her sons—they are not obligated by the laws of *ḥalitsah* or *yibum*—even if the conception of the first was not in holiness, but his birth was in holiness, and the second was both conceived and born in holiness." While the issue in question concerns inheritance, the statement presumes that someone born of a convert is born in holiness. Unlike Ezra, the authors of this dictum allow a convert's child the same holy status as a native-born Israelite (apart from his obligations in the issue of *yibum* under discussion). Holiness remains the salient characteristic for belonging to the holy community, Israel—a community elected to that position by God—even as the rabbinic borders prove more porous.

Nonetheless, in a later period and context—one more contemporaneous with Aphrahat—other rabbis look for ways to upgrade the holiness of the individual rabbi, as well as support the authority of the rabbinic community. And here, in practice, they come much closer to Aphrahat. These rabbis advocate, for the spiritually able, a level of holiness attainable only through ascetic practice—be it fasting or sexual restraint.[30] For instance, the following statement made in the name of Rabbi Eliezer can be found several times in the Babylonian Talmud. Here I cite *b. Shevuot* 18b: "R. Benjamin b. Japhet said that R Eleazar said: He who sanctifies himself during cohabitation will have male children, even as it is said: 'Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy,' (Lev 11:44) and next to it: 'If a woman conceive [and bear a male child.]' (Lev 12:2)." The context makes it clear that the rabbinic interpretation here of the Levitical call to "be holy" translates into "being holy" in sexual relations. Further on in this text, sexual restraint within sexual intercourse emerges as the rabbinic understanding of the meaning of such sanctity within sexual relations. Nevertheless the rabbis do not require sexual restraint of all Israelites, but only of those who want male children. God rewards the spiritually capable. In this way not only does obedience to the law equal holiness, but going *beyond* the

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[30] See E. Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

letter of the law becomes a means to prove oneself more obedient than one's neighbors and hence more holy.

Similarly, Aphrahat concedes that not all Christians can attain the level of *qaddishuta* gained through celibacy, for God also blesses marriage. Yet, regardless of what the Jews say, God elevated celibacy above marriage when he sanctified it. In making this claim, Aphrahat also creates a hierarchy of holiness. All Christian believers are holy by faith, that is, by obedience; but some, the celibates, achieve a higher level of holiness (that is, they are more obedient). Holiness for these fourth-century exegetes is thus hierarchical. Every member of the community is holy, by virtue of *being* a member in the community; yet certain members of that community can attain a higher level of holiness through certain prescribed sexually restraining actions. Like Moses, some holy people are super-obedient and hence holier than others.

In conclusion, then, we find ourselves with a very different hermeneutic of holiness emerging in the fourth century. Holiness, whether ascribed or achieved, which earlier helped religious or ethnic communities to differentiate one from another, becomes, for these fourth century exegetes, a means to differentiate a spiritual elite within the community. Moreover, biblically ascribed and immovable hierarchies become more porous and achievement-based. In answer to his interlocutor, cited at the beginning of this paper, Aphrahat might have replied, "I beg to differ, but we are *qaddishin*, we who understand God's call to sexual restraint as the highest level of fulfillment of divine law." Ironically, some contemporaneous Babylonian rabbis might have agreed with him, conceptually if not in practice.

THE PARALLEL LIVES OF EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TEXTS AND ART: THE CASE OF ISAAC THE MARTYR*

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Picture this: The child Isaac lies prone upon a pile of wood, on a large altar, Abraham slightly to foreground with knife upraised. In the background of the picture a figure (Sarah?) pauses at the opening of a tent. Action is frozen while all listen to God's voice. All the way in the foreground a ram waits patiently under a tree. (Fig. 1)

Now this: The youth Isaac kneels on one knee, head bowed but turned to the side, hands tied behind his back. Abraham stands in front of him, sword upraised, listening. Beside them is a small square altar, a fire blazing on top of it. To the other side of the altar, the ram waits, looking on. (Fig. 3)

And now this: Isaac half sits, half kneels, with head bent, on top of a tall (but small) square altar, knees bent to the side, left hand and foot tied together. Abraham stands beside him, hand resting on top of his head, knife raised. An angel (at top) grasps the top of the knife and points down at a ram caught in a nearby bush. (Fig. 8)

The first-mentioned image is from the synagogue at Dura Europos, thus dating from the first half of the third century. The next is from the Christian catacombs on the Via Latina in Rome, late fourth century. And the last-noted image is from a thirteenth-century Jewish illuminated manuscript, the *North French Hebrew Miscellany*. All three have points of correspondence with and difference from the biblical account in Genesis 22, and with and from each other. This investigation explores the interface between narrative and symbol in interpretations of Genesis 22, to investigate, on the one hand, what the interpretive context lends to the symbolic

power of the visual image; and on the other hand, what may be some of the consequences for textual interpretation of letting art into the picture.

The increasing number of sessions at literature-oriented conferences that invite exploration of the representation of biblical stories and texts in art or other nontextual forms testifies to the increasing recognition by biblical scholars of the importance of nonliterary media in the cultural creation and transmission of meaning for biblical texts. On the other side of the question, art historians, archaeologists, and textual critics have increasingly convened in interdisciplinary settings to offer new reflections on the function of art in the religious cultures of early Christianity and early Judaism. At the same time, the recent work of scholars in diverse fields—such as classicist Jocelyn Penny Small,[1] historian of Jewish art Steven Fine,[2] or historians of Christian art like Jaś Elsner,[3] Paul Corbey Finney,[4] and Robin M. Jensen[5]—reminds us that artistic representations of biblical scenes function in complex cultural contexts and cannot be understood by taking a direct sighting from biblical text to visual icon.

I offer these reflections as a text scholar speaking primarily to other text scholars. The very title of this Orion volume and the symposium on which it is based presupposes a community of discourse occupied primarily with asking textual questions—that is, how some interpretive writing stacks up against the writing of our base text, the Bible; or how interpretive texts stack up against one another. I became interested in artistic representations of biblical scenes because these seemed to me to provide a *non*textually-bound window onto how biblical narratives were received, were held to have meaning, in early Jewish/Christian culture—and so they do, but they then complicate the questions that the interpreter must ask. This paper is an attempt to explore some of the methodological issues

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[1] J. P. Small, *The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[2] S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). See also now L. I. Levine, *Visual Judaism in Late Antiquity: Historical Contexts of Jewish Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); my thanks to the author for allowing me access to the proofs, prior to publication.

[3] J. Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); idem, *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[4] P. C. Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[5] See, programmatically, her *Understanding Early Christian Art* (New York: Routledge, 2000); as well as *Face to Face: Portraits of the Divine in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005).

raised in the process of interpreting art as biblical interpretation, issues to which I will return below.

The story told in Genesis 22 became important for different reasons for both Jews and Christians, and the ways in which the story was read can tell us a lot about contacts and divergence between early Jewish and Christian groups. From the mid-third century onwards, rabbinic sources speak of this story as the *Akedah*, or *Binding*, of Isaac; Christian sources tend to write of the same story as the *Sacrifice* of Abraham (or Isaac). These labels reflect different slants on both the nature of the event and the protagonist of the story; the trajectories of interpretation that accompany them can tell us much about relations between the two communities.[6] I want to suggest here that a shared cultural discourse of martyrdom—that is, facing the possibility of persecution or death at the hands of Others in power, for the sake of the Law, faith, God—shaped a particular understanding of the story and of Isaac within it, which is evident in both Christian and Jewish literatures by the second and third centuries. Tracing the literary development of the figure of Isaac within this discourse may in turn suggest new ways of reading early Christian and Jewish artistic representations of this biblical narrative—and together, the literary and artistic venues can tell us about the cultural reception of this story.

1. Isaac in Early Jewish and Christian Texts

A number of fine studies have explored both the literary aspects of Genesis 22 and the trajectories of its interpretation in postbiblical literature.[7] Here, rather than rehearse the general history of this text's

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[6] It might be argued that, as with other topics in biblical interpretation where issues of origins and identity are at stake, the modern scholarly debate tells us as much about contemporary community theological issues as about ancient ones. See, for example, P. Davies and B. Chilton, "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 514–46; contra G. Vermes ("Redemption and Genesis 22: The Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus," in *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* [2d rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1973; first ed. 1962], 193–227), and R. J. Daly, "The Soteriological Significance of the Sacrifice of Isaac," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 45–75, who argue that a pre-Christian Akedah informed early Christian ideas about Jesus. Davies and Chilton maintain that rabbinic conceptions of the Akedah developed in reaction to the destruction of the Temple and the rise of Christianity. See L. A. Huizenga, "The Battle for Isaac: Exploring the Composition and Function of the *Aqedah* in the Book of *Jubilees*," *JSP* 13/1 (2002): 33–59, pp. 34–36, for a discussion of the stakes involved in this particular debate.

[7] See, e.g., Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis 22"; R. Le Deaut, *La Nuit Pascale* (AnBib 22; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963); Vermes and Le Deaut begin with and stress

interpretation, I will focus on the question, what is it about Isaac that would make him an attractive model for martyrdom? The narrative of Genesis 22 is framed entirely in religious, not social or political terms, with Abraham as the main human actor. In the biblical account, at least, it is Abraham's submission to God's demand, not Isaac's role as sacrificial victim, that is narratively significant. A number of features of Genesis 22 become important for later configurations: Abraham's unquestioning obedience to God's summons, despite the high stakes (no Isaac, no descendents [at least in the terms of the Genesis narrative]); Isaac's own seeming acquiescence (he asks one question—"Where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"—and says no more, and the two walk on "together"); Abraham's own answer ("God himself will provide the lamb"); and, of course, various details that proved ripe for symbolic elaboration in later Christian thought: the three days journey, Isaac carrying the wood for the offering, the youths left behind, and so on.

The biblical tradition (2 Chr 3:21), followed by the *Book of Jubilees* (chs. 17–18), connects the site of Isaac's sacrifice with the later site of the Temple.[8] *Jubilees* also connects the not-completed sacrifice with the festival of Passover, which Abraham and his children celebrate from this time

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the targumic tradition. Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah"; Daly, "Soteriological Significance"; and J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Qumran Literature," *Biblica* 83/2 (2002): 211–29 begin with earlier literature and (variously) evaluate the relationship of the earlier material and the Targums. J. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1993) begins with analysis of the biblical text and moves forward from that. See also E. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); and the collection of essays presented in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and its Interpretations* (ed. E. Noort and E. J. C. Tigchelaar; Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002). For a careful review of the sources with a specific focus on Isaac as an exemplary martyr figure from the perspective of New Testament reliance on this image, see also now L. A. Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew* (NovTSup 131; Leiden: Brill, 2009). And more recently, see also Y. Feldman, *Glory and Agony: Isaac's Sacrifice and National Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), which traces the trajectory of some of these ancient readings of Isaac through to modern Israeli literature.

  [8] Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 114–23, discusses this etiological function within the Genesis narrative itself; he suggests that the narrative identifies the site of the sacrifice, however indirectly, with the site of the Temple (and by implication, its sacrificial cult). He points to the fact that Jerusalem itself is never directly named in the Pentateuch, and suggests that "the text may be deliberately employing a term that only suggests Jerusalem and does not name it" (123); 2 Chr 3:21 makes the connection explicit.

forward.[9] In *Jubilees*, the emphasis is on Abraham's obedience to God and thanks for Isaac's rescue. A related text from Qumran, 4Q225 *Pseudo-Jubilees* (cols. 1–2), appears to considerably expand this account, adding details that will be elaborated much later in other contexts, including rabbinic midrashim.[10] The most significant detail for our purposes is the fact that Isaac speaks, apparently opening with the request, "bind me well." Unfortunately, the text is so fragmentary we have no other information about the exchange.[11]

Philo of Alexandria casts both Abraham and Isaac as "Stoic heroes."[12] The primary focus is on Abraham, steadfastly unswayed by emotions.

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[9] Pointed out by Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis 22," and others. M. Segal has a careful discussion of this connection in his book, *The Book of* Jubilees*: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology, and Theology* (JSJSup 117; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 189–202, where he notes that two different links are made to the festival; viz., one suggesting that the sacrifice took place on the 14th of Nisan (not the 15th as generally read by commentators); and one tying the festival to Abraham's seven-day journey to the mount and back. Segal sees the difference as indicative of two authorial traditions represented in the text. J. L. Kugel disagrees with this reading, at least in part. He holds that the primary author of *Jubilees* tied significant events to significant days (viz., the 15th of the month, in this case, Nisan), but that he did not consider the Akedah to be connected with the festival of Passover *per se*. See Kugel, "*Jubilees*," in *Outside the Bible* (ed. L. Feldman, J. L. Kugel, and L. H. Schiffman; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, forthcoming 2013), on *Jub*. 17:15; developed at length in idem, *A Walk through* Jubilees*: Studies in the* Book of Jubilees *and the World of its Creation* (JSJSup 156; Leiden: Brill, 2012), ad loc. The fact remains, however, that the book's subsequent redactor understood the connection to be an etiological one, and explicitly tied the journey and the sacrifice to the later festival (*Jub*. 18:17–19; see also Segal, *Jubilees*, 196–8).

[10] The critical edition is by J. C. VanderKam and J. T. Milik, "225. 4QpseudoJubilees a," in *Qumran Cave 4. VIII: Parabiblical Texts, Part I* (ed. H. Attridge et al.; DJD 13; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 141–55. See for further discussion of the text, J. Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice"; M. Bernstein, "Angels at the Akedah," *DSD* 7 (2000): 263–91; and F. García Martínez, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in 4Q225," in Noort and Tigchelaar, *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 43–57. Among the additional details are: the fire already (seemingly) burning on top of the mountain; the presence of weeping angels, opposed to the rejoicing of the hosts of Mastema; Mastema's later subjugation on Isaac's account; God's blessing directly upon Isaac for his role in the proceedings. It does *not* give us further details about Isaac's age or his attitude to ward the business.

[11] See the discussion in García Martínez, "Sacrifice," 52–53. Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice," 216, gives the restoration of Vanderkam and Milik: כ[פות אותי יפה. The text is restored, but Fitzmyer (ibid., 218–19) notes that the wording leading to the restoration has an exact parallel in the Targumim; see, e.g., *Targum Neofiti* ad loc. In *Neofiti* Isaac states the reason for his request: "That I may not struggle in the agony of my soul and be pitched into the pit of destruction, and a blemish be found in your offering" (translation as in Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice," 218). The mention of Isaac looking at the angels immediately following constitutes another strong narrative parallel between the scroll and the Targum, although in 4Q225 they are weeping and in the Targum they are not.

[12] See the discussion in Daly, "Soteriological Significance," 55–56, which brings together references scattered throughout the Philonic corpus, as well as the main narrative

Philo portrays Abraham as a priest, offering the fruits of his soul; he also relates the story to "beginning the sacrificial rite," (the *tamid* or daily offerings) that would later be located in the Temple (*De Abr.* 198). Isaac is a lofty character as well, but a relatively passive and silent fellow traveler of events.[13]

Some decades later, the Palestinian Jewish historian Josephus and the unknown writer we call Ps.-Philo develop a new ingredient in their castings of Genesis 22: although the emphasis is still on Abraham as primary actor, Isaac is now shown taking the initiative as a joyful and voluntary consenter to and participant in his own sacrificial death. In Josephus's account, the father explains to the son the necessity and reason for his being offered up as a sacrifice; the son "receives these words with joy," and "rushes to the altar and his doom" (*Ant.* 1:230–232).[14] Josephus styles Isaac as twenty-five years old, and it has been suggested that this stems from making him over in the image of those who died in the Jewish War against the Romans (66–70), as "the type of voluntary martyr."[15] Josephus calls the act a sacrifice, linking it to the future Temple site; he emphasizes the obedient piety (θρησκεία) of both main actors.[16]

Ps.-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* (dated roughly to the late first century CE),[17] which retells the biblical history from Adam to the death of Saul, alludes to the Akedah three times—though not at the point in the narrative that

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interpretation in *De Abrahamo* 167–207. For the text and translation of Philonic passages I have consulted (with occasional alterations to the English) *Philo in Ten Volumes* (ed. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker; LCL; London: Heinemann, 1929–1962).

[13] Philo does consider the sacrifice "complete and perfect," despite the fact that it was not carried out (177).

[14] For text and translations of Josephus's *Antiquities* I have used Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish Antiquities, Books 1–20* (trans. H. St. J. Thackeray et al.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930–1965).

[15] Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 521–22.

[16] Cf. Daly's summary, "Soteriological Significance," 57–58; contrast Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 521–22.

[17] The dating of the *L.A.B.* is a contested point among those arguing for the Jewish (Vermes, Daly) or Christian (Davies and Chilton) origins of a full-blown "Akedah theology." The former locate the book in the mid- to late first century; the latter in the early decades of the second. A similar debate characterizes 4 Maccabees (see below). For a review of the issue of dating in general, see L. A. Huizenga, "The Aqedah at the End of the First Century of the Common Era: *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, 4 Maccabees*, Josephus' *Antiquities, 1 Clement*," *JSP* 20/2 (2010): 105–33, pp. 108–09; on *L.A.B.* see ibid., 110–11; Huizenga accepts the arguments for pre–70 dating, though he notes that references to the Akedah in *L.A.B.* function as "not an innovation, but a resource" (111)—meaning that the document itself uses the tradition as an already well-known complex.

would reflect Genesis 22.[18] The first allusion occurs in God's speech to Balaam the prophet (called to curse the Israelites, but able only to bless them), in *L.A.B.* 18:4:

> And I asked for his son as a burnt offering and he brought him to be placed on the altar, but I returned him to his father, and because he did not demur, the offering was acceptable in my sight, and for the sake of his blood, I chose them.[19]

In this enigmatic passage, the emphasis is entirely on Abraham's activity, apart from the last phrase. Scholars have connected the mention of blood here with both Isaac's willing acquiescence and the atoning value of the sacrifice (real or considered as such).[20] As the first in the sequence of allusions, the passage sets the stage for the proto-martyr dynamic found in the subsequent references—that is, that (Isaac's or others') willingness to die causes the people to be chosen.

The most extensive retelling of the Akedah occurs as part of the Song of Deborah (*L.A.B.* 32:2–4). This retelling begins with the account of God's choice of Abraham following his own ordeal in the furnace at the time of the building of the tower (*L.A.B.* 6).[21] Abraham tells his son of his intention, Isaac puts forth a rational objection,[22] and then says in essence, "but

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[18] The story of Abraham is told in chapters 6–8; chapter 8 briefly recounts the birth and marriage of Isaac—but there is not a word about the Akedah. It is significant, however that Abraham himself is introduced as a near-martyr. Chapter 6 relates at length a story unique in form to the *L.A.B.*, wherein Abram refuses to join in the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1–9) and is thrown into a fiery furnace in consequence. He emerges alive, and it is because he trusts God and withstands this trial that God chooses him and brings him to the blessed land (7:4). Thus in this telling of the story of Abraham proper, Abraham himself (not his son) is the focal model of willingness to "die for God," and the chosenness that results. In view of the recounting of the Akedah in *L.A.B.* 32 (see below), this choice of beginnings for the story of the patriarchs is surely significant.

[19] The translation is that of D. Harrington in *OTP* 2:297–377, p. 325.

[20] See the discussion in Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis 22," who sees here the germ of the rabbinic theology of the Akedah as atoning and efficacious, a complex connected to the blood or ashes of Isaac; Daly, "Soteriological Significance," 63–65, summarizes the core of the complex at the time of the composition of the New Testament writings. See also the discussion of the rabbinic midrashic complex in S. Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah* (trans. and introduced by Judah Goldin; New York: Behrman House, 1967), 30–66.

[21] See n. 18 above.

[22] "If a lamb from the flocks is accepted as an offering to the Lord with pleasing odor, and if for the iniquities of men flocks are provided for slaughter, whereas man is appointed for inheriting the world, how can you now say to me, 'Come and inherit secure life and immeasurable time'?" (*L.A.B.* 32:3). The last part of this sentence, which seems puzzling to some (see Davies and Chilton, "Aqedah," 524–25), may make perfect sense if considered as a developing theology of the rewards of martyrdom.

for what other purpose have I been created?" In the story of Jephthah's daughter (*L.A.B.* 40), the daughter alludes to the Abraham/Isaac story in language which suggests later formulations: " . . . and he did not refuse him but gladly gave consent to him, and the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing."[23] Here, Jephthah's daughter's willing sacrificial death, on the model of Isaac, is redemptive (politically) for the people. By dislocating the narrative of the Akedah and using it to frame the narratives of other biblical characters, Ps.-Philo brings into relief Isaac's function as a model. In all of these recountings, his willing acquiescence in the face of death is the salient feature—both as the basis of God's choice and as the model for others facing death.

Redemptive death as martyrdom, on the model of Isaac, appears as a more explicit and fundamental element in 4 Maccabees.[24] The elder Eleazar, before his own death, exhorts the "children of Abraham" to die nobly for their religion (6:16–23), and is said to himself have used "the reasoning of Isaac (τῷ Ισακίῳ λογισμῷ)" to overcome torture (7:14). The story of the seven brothers calls them at various points children of Abraham (9:21, 17:6; 18:20–23—that is, like Isaac, about to die), and styles their mother as "of the same mind as Abraham" in her willingness to give up her children to God (14:20; 15:28; cf. 16:20, 28; 17:18–20). One of the brothers refers to Isaac as a model of willingness to be killed "for the sake of piety" (διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν; 13:12).[25] At 16:20–21 the mother refers to Isaac, Daniel among the lions, and the three young men in the fiery furnace as models of those who "endured for the sake of God." The deaths of the youths are in "substitution" for Israel's sins, and so bring about the salvation of the nation (17:21).

In the New Testament, the Akedah is explicitly represented from Abraham's point of view.[26] Hebrews 11:17–19 presents Abraham's willingness to

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[23] E.g., *Targum Neofiti* ad loc.: "One slaughters and one is slaughtered. The one who slaughters does not hesitate, and the one who is slaughtered stretches out his neck." See also *Gen. Rab.* 56.4: "*And the two of them went together*—One to bind and one to be bound; one to slaughter and the other to be slaughtered"; and compare *Midrash Tanḥuma* 18 for a similar formulation.

[24] Dates for 4 Maccabees range from the mid-first century to the early decades of the second; see now the discussion of dating and also of the role of Isaac more generally in Huizenga, *The New Isaac*, 115–22.

[25] Interestingly, at the end of the document (18:6–19), the mother rehearses for her sons what they learned from their father, giving a catalogue of biblical heroes; Isaac here is called ὁλοκαρπουμένον, a whole burnt-offering.

[26] Most other New Testament allusions to Isaac by name place him in the patriarchal list of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He appears in the spotlight in relation to two other

sacrifice his son as an act of faith in God's promise; Js 2:21 takes the sacrifice (expressed with a past participle as a completed act, "when he had offered" [ἀνενέγκας]) as the act that confirmed Abraham's faith, expressed earlier, in Genesis 15. A strong intertextual current invokes Genesis 22 indirectly to characterize the relationship between God and Jesus, with Jesus in the role of Isaac (e.g., Rom 8:32; John 3:16); this linking of the stories of Isaac and Jesus lays the groundwork for future developments.[27] By the end of the second century, this link had grown into a full-blown Akedah–Passion typology which then tended to dominate Christian readings of the story[28]—but from the standpoint of this paper it is more fruitful to stay with the exploration of the "nontypological" Isaac.

Isaac is first evoked independently as a model of willing obedience in *1 Clement*. The letter, dating most likely from the early second century,[29] is an exhortation to the Corinthian church to heal the squabbles that had led to divisions and the deposition of church leadership. The author, writing from Rome, however, early evokes the history of the martyrs in that city as the extreme possible consequence of the envy that is splitting the Corinthian community (chs. 5–6). Later in the letter (ch. 31), he invokes the example of the patriarchs, to see how blessing may be attained. The example of Abraham alludes to Genesis 15; but "Isaac, with perfect

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narrative moments: Paul focuses on the circumstance of his birth as the "child of the promise," scriptural antecedent of the Gentile believers in Christ as "children of the promise" (Rom 9:6–9; Gal 4:22–31); Heb 11:20 details his deathbed blessing of the sons of Joseph as an act of faith.

[27] Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis 22," 218–27, discusses primarily the connections with the Pauline literature and the Fourth Gospel. See more recently, in addition, the work of L. A. Huizenga, arguing that the martyrly Isaac underlies the intertextual use of the Akedah in the Gospel of Matthew; in addition to *The New Isaac*, see particularly, "Obedience unto Death: The Matthean Gethsemane and Arrest Sequence and the Aqedah," *CBQ* 71 (2009): 507–26.

[28] This reading is classically recognized in early Christian sources, where the emphasis is primarily on the action of God as sacrificing Father, and where Isaac may be seen as a type of Christ's passion and/or resurrection (see, for example Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 8; John Chrysostom *Hom. Gen.* 47; cf. idem, *Hom. John.* 55). In the classic functioning of this type, the slaughter of the ram is actually seen as the type of Jesus' death; it seems theologically important to assert that Isaac "did not die" (see, e.g., Athanasius, *Festal Letter* 6; Easter 334 CE).

[29] See the discussion of L. L. Welborn, "On the Date of First Clement," *Biblical Research* 29 (1984): 35–54; and see the discussion of Isaac in *1 Clement*, in Huizenga, "Aqedah at the End of the First Century," 131–33. Huizenga accepts the slightly earlier dating of B. Ehrman, *1 Clement*, in *The Apostolic Fathers* (2 vols.; LCL 24–25; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1: 24–25.

confidence, as if knowing what was to happen, cheerfully yielded himself as a sacrifice."[30]

Isaac emerges most fully as a Christian model for martyrdom in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, an account which itself owes something to 4 Maccabees. The narrative is set at the time of Passover. Like Isaac, Polycarp goes to his death with "confidence and joy."[31] Most significantly, at the moment of execution, Polycarp refuses to be nailed to his funeral pyre and is bound instead, like a "distinguished ram," prepared as an "acceptable burnt-offering" to God (cf. the mother's last description of Isaac in 4 Macc 18:11). All of these images evoke Genesis 22 and its interpretations; although many features of the narrative cast the martyrdom as an "imitation of Christ," Polycarp's refusal to be nailed and his subsequent "binding" gives his martyrdom an element of "imitation of Isaac."

At the same time, during the second century, the figure of Isaac begins to be invoked sporadically as a predictive type of Jesus' Passion. The *Letter of Barnabas*, which is our earliest reference, alludes briefly to the "type established in Isaac, who was to be offered upon the altar." Near the end of the century Irenaeus of Lyon and Clement of Alexandria invoke briefly the image of Isaac carrying his own wood as a type for Jesus carrying his own cross.[32]

Melito of Sardis first *emphasizes* Isaac as a type for Jesus.[33] In his sermon, *Peri Pascha*, dating from slightly after the martyrdom of Polycarp, Isaac makes an explicit appearance twice, each time in a catalogue of biblical figures (*PP* 59, 69). In each case it is Isaac's having been *bound* (not sacrificed) which provides the type for Christ.[34] It has been suggested

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[30] Translation as in *ANF* 1:22.

[31] Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 78–81, discusses possible allusions to Isaac traditions and more definitely detectable parallels to 4 Maccabees.

[32] *Letter of Barnabas* 7; see Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.5.4; Clement, *Paed.* 1.5. Justin fails to mention the narrative of Genesis 22; in *Dialogue* 120, he does allude to the promise of descendants in Gen 22:17, only to interpret the sand/seashore language in a negative fashion. The allusion to Isaac in that chapter is to God's later blessing (Gen 26:24).

[33] Translations are from S. G. Hall, *Melito of Sardis:* On Pascha *and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

[34] A few fragments explore the Isaac type in more detail. Melito alludes to Christ carrying the wood and being led to slaughter by his father, "like Isaac," and then demurs: "But Christ suffered, whereas Isaac did not suffer; for he was a model (τύπος) of the one who was going to suffer (πασχείν)." Fragment 9 expands on the image of the uncomplaining Isaac, "not frightened by the sword/Nor alarmed at the fire . . ." The "strangeness" of the concept of a Father sacrificing his son draws attention to the fact that the whole scene is but a model for what is to come. In both fragments 9 and 10, Isaac is ransomed by the ram which was slain. The ram then provides the model for the slain and ransoming Lord. Collectively, the fragments have points of contact with several other seemingly unrelated "tracks" of interpretation. Frg. 9 calls Isaac "foot-bound, like a ram" (compare Ps.-Philo,

that Melito's insistence on Isaac bound and the slain ram as the proper type for Jesus' death represents a "displacement" of Isaac from his central soteriological position in developing Jewish traditions; more explicitly, a "reclaiming" of Isaac for the Christians in the face of a well-developed Akedah/redemptive death tradition prominent among Jewish communities like that of Sardis.[35] I suggest, however, that we should read Melito's interpretation of Isaac, at least in part, as a move to locate the figure of Jesus within the active culture of martyrdom in Asia Minor, that is, as making Jesus over into the figure of a martyr *like the Christians themselves*, via the model figure of Isaac.

Finally, I want briefly to consider an early rabbinic midrash that appears in the third century *Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael*; its primary location is Tractate *Pisḥa* 7, on Exod 12:13 from the narrative of the first Passover and the Exodus from Egypt ("And when I see the blood, I will pass over you...").[36]

The second part of the midrash reads: "And when I see the blood: I see the blood of the binding (*akedato*) of Isaac." As with our Ps.-Philo passage, the mention of blood seems to contradict the plain sense of the biblical text, and presents a logical problem in its own right (it seems a self-contradictory statement: there is no blood in "binding"). Judah Goldin has pointed out that, barring a single occurrence in the Mishnah (*m. Tamid* 4:1, in relation to the daily sacrifice in the Temple), the use of the noun *akedah* here may be its earliest occurrence; the term quickly became an exclusive name for the synthesis of interpretive elements clustering around Genesis 22.[37] Perhaps, then, Melito's usage is directly in tune with Jewish thinking, as well as popular Christian understandings, after all. I suggest that the allusion to "the *blood* of the *binding*" makes perfect sense if we

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L.A.B. 32). The "bush" becomes a *sabek* tree, "tree of forgiveness"; the tree occurs in the earliest (Jewish) iconographical representations of the Akedah; and the reading of *sabek* for *shbaq* occurs elsewhere, as well.

[35] See R. Wilken, "Melito, the Jewish Community at Sardis, and the Sacrifice of Isaac," *TS* 37 (1976): 53–69.

[36] H. S. Horowitz and I. A. Rabin, *Mechilta D'Rabbi Ismael* (Frankfurt a. M.: Kauffmann, 1928–1931); text with translation: J. Z. Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1933–1935). A doublet of the entire midrash appears in *Pisḥa* 11 on Exod 12:23. Later on in Tractate *Amalek*, on Exod 17:11, Exod 12:13 is invoked as one of three examples, interpreted via a kind of shortened version of the first part of the midrash in Tractate *Pisḥa*.

[37] Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, xix–xx. It is suggestive that Isaac becomes identified with the Tamid offering in Philo and some midrashim. The single use of the term *Akedah* in the Tosefta, *t. Soṭah* 6:5, does specifically refer to Isaac, which suggests that already by the mid-third century, the "Akedah" was a short hand label for the developing complex of traditions we have seen thus far.

read it, as with Melito, in the larger context of understanding Isaac as a model for the martyrs, where "binding" is shorthand for the complex of Isaac's eager desire to give up his life as a perfect sacrifice, for the sake of piety; of his "confidence and joy" in embracing his death; of the idea that his (martyr's) death is redemptive for all. This is the Isaac of the Maccabees, *1 Clement*, Polycarp, Melito—who will later reemerge as the model for Jewish martyrs.

2. Text and Image—Continuities and Discontinuities

The earliest Christian art, whether by accident of preservation or other causes, comes to us from the Roman catacombs. The wall paintings that decorate the catacombs feature "freeze frame," single-moment representations of a limited number of biblical narratives; among the scenes thus depicted, we frequently find Daniel (identified by his two surrounding lions); Noah (solo, in chest, with dove);[38] and Abraham and Isaac, with altar, ram, and wood, in a variety of positionings.[39] Jensen emphasizes the limited repertoire of early Christian biblical subjects, asking "why certain images were especially popular and what that reveals about the original community and its beliefs."[40] She emphasizes that such a limited repertoire requires that the images themselves be more multivalent and less narrative-specific (my term) than images that function within a "large artistic vocabulary," and that their language and meaning is "symbolic, rather than precise."[41] This is the type of image we have primarily in view in the earliest extant Christian (and Jewish) representations of Isaac.

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[38] On the significance of early Noah iconography, see R. A. Clements, "A Shelter Amid the Flood: Noah's Ark in Early Jewish and Christian Art," in *Noah and his Book(s)* (ed. M. E. Stone, A. Amihay, and V. Hillel; SBLEJL 28; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 277–99.

[39] Other images from the Jewish Scriptures that frequently appear include Jonah, the Three Young Men in the fiery furnace, Susanna (and the Elders), and the Good Shepherd—which is pivotal between the Jewish Bible and the New Testament writings (and likewise seems to have had a broad currency within Roman culture generally; see the discussion of the shepherd imagery in Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 37–41). Popular New Testament imagery includes the baptism of Jesus, the raising of Lazarus, the loaves and fishes, the healing of the paralytic; again, see Jensen, ibid., 65, and further at 94–103, where she discusses the shift, accompanying the Christianization of the Empire, from biographical to theological themes.

[40] Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 11.

[41] Ibid.

Before moving to the images proper, I want raise three methodological points concerning the relationship between textual and iconic representations of biblical narratives and scenes. My first point concerns the *nature* of the relationship between texts and artistic productions. The title of this paper invokes that of a monograph by classicist Jocelyn Penney Small—*The Parallel Worlds of Classical Art and Text.* In that monograph, Small charts the *lack* of direct connection or influence between classical texts and the representations of their narratives in ancient vase painting and other media. She notes, first, that illustrated classical *texts* are a relatively late phenomenon (second century CE), and that it is difficult to argue, given the lack of evidence, that the phenomenon is centuries old by the time we see the first sign of it; thus, we have no basis for saying that, e.g., Attic vase iconography represents the adaptation of a prior practice of text illustration.[42] She also notes that the *broad* reception of classical texts in ancient culture was carried out by oral (and aural) means: oratory; the enactment of dramas or episodes of ancient stories in public celebratory contexts; and presumably retellings in private contexts—but not by means of the study (or reading) and criticism of texts. The artists in the vase-painting workshops produced their representations on the basis of collectively remembered oral performance and the traditions and constraints of the medium in which they worked.[43]

I have suggested elsewhere that the relationship between the biblical text and early Jewish/Christian art is at least partly analogous to that envisioned by Small for classical texts and art.[44] We know from the evidence of the Qumran scrolls that the study of written biblical texts—including the production of a variety of written forms of textual interpretation—was an important part of the Jewish framework out of which early Christian and contemporary Jewish cultures emerged. However, neither the Qumran biblical texts nor other early biblical manuscripts present concrete evidence of a practice of biblical text illustration prior to about the fifth

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[42] In this, Small is arguing against the influential position of Kurt Weitzmann (see, programmatically, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex: A Study of the Origin and Method of Text Illustration* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947; 2d ed. 1970]). See my previous discussion of the implications of Weitzmann's work and Small's discussion for the contextualization of early Christian art, in "Shelter," 277–79.

[43] See also, for example, the collection of essays, *Orality, Literacy, Memory in the Ancient Greek and Roman World* (ed. A. MacKay; Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece 7; Leiden: Brill, 2008), many of which explore the role of memory in the transition of ancient Greek society from an oral to a written culture.

[44] Clements, "Shelter," 278.

century. Thus, it is likely that Small's insights hold good for early repre-
sentations of biblical scenes as well; that is, we should be evaluating these
representations, not in terms of how well or how closely they replicate
biblical *texts*, but in terms of what they tell us of the meaning of biblical
stories for those who told and heard and retold them.

My second point concerns the mechanics and economics of art produc-
tion. One fundamental historical element in the consideration of early
Christian art is the fact, in the words of Paul Corby Finney, that "no dis-
tinctively Christian art predates the year 200."[45] Traditionally, church his-
torians and art historians alike tended to explain this time lag by assuming
that the earliest Christians rejected visual imagery on religious grounds.
The same argument was used to explain the long-standing Jewish prac-
tice of the use of symbolic art forms (menorah, lulav, shofar, etc.) and
supposed avoidance of narrative art.[46] The theoretical problem with this
construction in either case is that the eventual emergence of what I will
call narrative or portraitive art must then necessarily be construed as a
either a "fall" from a primitive state of spirituality or a (grudging) conces-
sion by a religious "establishment" to the popular imagination.[47] Besides
that theoretical issue, the model also fails to account for the ways and
contexts in which Christian and Jewish art actually did emerge, and for
such roughly contemporaneous phenomena as the Noah coins, the Dura
Europos synagogue, or the early Roman catacombs.[48]

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[45] Finney, *Invisible God*, 99.

[46] See the programmatic discussion of this problematic in both early Judaism and the
early Christian sequel, in J. Gutmann, "The Second Commandment and the Image in Juda-
ism," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 161–74; repr. in *Beauty in Holiness: Studies in Jewish Customs and
Ceremonial Art* (ed. J. Gutmann; New York: Ktav, 1970); and in *No Graven Images: Studies
in Art and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. J. Gutmann; New York: Ktav, 1971). And compare Finney's
discussion in *Invisible God*, 99–104.

[47] See Finney, *Invisible God*, 102–03; Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 9,
13–15.

[48] The Noah coins are a series of coins minted by the city of Apamea Kibotos under the
Severan emperors (starting with Septimius Severus, 192–211 CE); they bear a box-like ark
containing two figures and labeled Νωε; see my discussion in "Shelter," 279–84. The Dura-
Europos frescos may be dated to ca. 240 CE; the earliest Christian catacomb paintings have
been dated to the end of the second/beginning of the third century. See the discussion of
Levine, *Visual Judaism*, esp. 69–79, on the climate of religious creativity that marked the
third century and spurred the flourishing of Jewish monumental art in locations such as
Dura Europos and Bet Shean. Levine is, of course, most directly concerned with Jewish
artistic expression, but his remarks apply to the rise of Christian and pagan art as well, as
he makes clear particularly in his discussion of Dura Europos.

Finney has suggested that we need instead to consider the cultural circumstances of the earliest Christians as an invisible group (to a certain extent) within Greco-Roman society—thus, though they were bound together by a set of shared beliefs and developing ritual, they had no distinctive dress, institutions, or physical characteristics to set themselves apart.[49] Aside from the public, identity-defining acts of refusal to participate in the imperial cult and of "confession of the name"—both of which set one on the road to judicial punishment or martyrdom, depending on one's point of view—Christians blended in.[50] Finney suggests that the design and construction of catacombs or other specially constructed buildings bespeaks the expectation of continuity in a given social setting; such expectation of cultural continuity would be a prerequisite for the development of a distinctively Christian art.[51] Finney develops a conceptual framework of the earliest Christians as invisible but selective consumers within the wider culture. He reminds us of Clement of Alexandria's advice in the matter of seal rings—one goes to the artisan's shop and votes with one's pocketbook:

> And let our seals be either a dove, or a fish, or a ship scudding before the wind . . . and if there be one fishing, he will remember the apostle, and the children drawn out of the water. For we are not to delineate the faces of idols.[52]

The prohibition against idolatry may be understood (according to this reading) not as wholesale condemnation of the use of images, but rather of the use of obvious scenes from pagan mythology.

Thus, the Christians who commissioned the first catacombs could not go to a Christian tomb-decorators workshop—they went to pagan artisans

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[49] Finney points out that a number of other minority cultural groups seem to have shown the same lag time as the Christians—he points to neo-Pythagoreans in Rome, and second century Gnostics—both of which groups evidenced extensive literary output but no distinctive art culture or material culture generally (*Invisible God*, 101–02).

[50] This observation touches on recent scholarship on the relationship between the experience of martyrdom and the development of early Christian (and Jewish) identity. Amid the burgeoning literature, see, programmatically, J. Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2002); eadem, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco–Roman World* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). I will return to this issue below.

[51] See the discussion of Finney, *Invisible God*, Chapter 6, "The Earliest Christian Art," 146–230, on the social and economic contours of the construction of the earliest Christian catacombs in Rome.

[52] *Paed.* 3.11; *ANF* 2.285–86; Finney, *Invisible God*, 111.

and selectively chose/adapted/ascribed new meaning to whatever appropriate images were available in the workshop's pattern books. Steven Fine, tackling the same issue from the standpoint of Jewish art "start[s] with the premise that Jewish art in antiquity was a 'minority' or 'ethnic' art and explore[s] ways that Jews fully participated in, transformed, and at times rejected the art of their general environment."[53]

The work of Jaś Elsner suggests a theoretical model for understanding this "selective consumerism" in terms of its cultural function as a way of shaping identity in second- and third- century Roman culture. He notes that art functions both as a shaper and upholder of culture and as an imaginative space for "cultural resistance."[54] That is, images offer the possibility—not necessarily always realized or explicitly articulated—for expressions of challenge or resistance to the larger cultural framework. In a discussion particularly focused on the religious art of Dura Europos, Elsner sketches a dynamic of interaction and resistance between "parochial" or local cultic expressions and the centralizing dynamic of Roman imperial religion in the second and third centuries. In peripheral locations such as Dura, one may see how local artistic cultic expressions make statements vis-à-vis one another as well as the imperial cult itself.[55] Elsner suggests that generally speaking, the cults of the Roman Empire offered opportunities for "self-affirmation through self-definition" (302), which reinforced a strong sense of local, or sub-group, identity; this unifying element, however, was "in direct opposition to the state's attempts to create a religious universalism both in the polytheistic second and third centuries and in the Christian Empire thereafter" (302). Artistic representation provided a language and space "for generating resistance if and when it was required" (303).

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[53] S. Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

[54] Elsner, "Cultural Resistance and the Visual Image: The Case of Dura Europos," *Classical Philology* 96/3 (2001): 269–304. An expanded version of this article appears as chapter 10 of *Roman Eyes*, 253–88.

[55] Elsner, "Cultural Resistance," 275–78, discusses the predominance of images of sacrifice within the pagan cult centers at Dura, with their shared emphasis on "broadly local" deities and local functionaries and patrons. That is, the images reenact the ritual activity carried out locally in the cult centers; "in this sense they establish and affirm peripherality, or the centrality of local cult and identity, in a way that ignores the Roman Empire and the distant imperial center" (278). On the other hand, the images of the Mithraeum, the synagogue, and the Christian building, "turn away from representing actual ritual practice and instead depict their own—very different—initiate mythologies" (278), directed away from local deities and, implicitly or explicitly, denying the efficacy of other cults as paths to salvation.

The practical implications of these points for any discussion of early Jewish and Christian art are that, first of all, one must be slow to project a Jewish/Christian artist into the scenario of artistic production—there may have been such, but the bulk of cultural evidence we have for the locus of artistic production is for pagan workshops and artistic traditions.[56] Second, in thinking about how early Jewish and Christian narrative art began to take shape, we should presume a model of selective consumption: the conscious choice of, adaptation of, and reassignment of meaning to available image choices—and the recognition of the possibility of their multivalence. Third, that multivalence may speak to both the internal group context, and to the external placement of the group within the surrounding culture, offering a message of coherence or resistance.

Taken together, these methodological points imply that reading ancient biblical art *only* in relation to ancient texts (biblical *or* interpretive) may give rise to wrong readings—faithfulness to the text, which is in some ways an axiom of biblical interpretation, differs from faithfulness to the story and its cultural meaning for a given community. In turn, *divergences* from the text can be precisely the clues to that meaning and its cultural function.

3. Iconographic Isaacs

There exists an extensive literature on the subject of *iconographic* representations of this story.[57] This literature generally considers the earliest

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[56] E.g., the situation at Dura Europos, where artistic similarities between the synagogue, church and pagan sites have made clear that the same groups of artists worked in all three venues. See R. M. Jensen, "The Dura Europos Synagogue, Early Christian Art and the Religious Life of Dura," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue* (ed. S. Fine; London: Routledge, 1999), 174–89, esp. 184–86.

[57] A useful and recent treatment of the broad topic is found in Kessler's *Bound by the Bible*, ch. 7. The earlier classic study by I. S. van Woerden, "The Iconography of the Sacrifice of Abraham," *VC* 15/4 (1961): 214–55, continues to be an extremely useful article from the standpoint of Christian representations, in terms of both its scope and its insightfulness, and in the catalogue of representations of various types assembled in the appendix to the text. J. Gutmann carried the discussion forward, particularly from the Jewish side, in two papers from the 1980s: "The Sacrifice of Isaac: Variations on a Theme in Early Jewish and Christian Art," in *Thiasos tōn Mousōn: Studien zu Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Josef Fink zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. D. Ahrens; Köln: Böhlau, 1984; repr. in idem, *Sacred Images: Studies in Jewish Art from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* [Northampton: Variorum Reprints, 1989]), 115–22; and "The Sacrifice of Isaac in Medieval Jewish Art," *Artibus et Historiae* 16 (1987): 67–89; and see as well R. M. Jensen, "The Offering of Isaac in Jewish and Christian Tradition: Image and Text," *Bible Interpretation* 2 (1994): 85–110.

manifestations of the iconographic Akedah in Christian art to symbolize deliverance and in post-third-century contexts to function as a type point-ing to the passion of Jesus; this shift is seen to be in keeping with the development of mainstream Christian typological exegesis of the Genesis text from the end of the second century on.[58] As I have shown in the earlier section of this article, however, the conception of Isaac as a model for martyrs carries over from Jewish into Christian literary contexts and persists in both at least through the end of the second century. I wish to explore here the extent to which this literary depiction continues to have currency for artistic depictions of the Akedah. For our purposes, I will consider a small selection of images and focus on just one aspect of Akedah iconography—the positioning of Isaac—to see what attention to this graphic element may and may not tell us about the reception of the biblical story in Jewish and Christian community contexts from late antiquity and forward.

The earliest image of this story comes from the synagogue of Dura Euro-pos, dating from the first half of the third century (Fig. 1).[59] This painting was placed directly above the Torah shrine, thus in the focal visual loca-tion of the building. The panel has three parts: on the left, the Menorah, in the middle, the Temple, to the right the Akedah. Abraham fills the right side of the space, knife raised; Isaac is a small, childlike figure, placed supine upon the altar; in the background is a tent with a figure that might or might not be Sarah;[60] all the human figures have their backs to the viewer; the hand of God over all indicates God's role in the proceedings;

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[58] On the typology see the discussion and notes on p. 215 above. Van Woerden articu-lates the distinction as: 1) "an example of deliverance in need"; and 2) "a typological con-figuration of the Redemption by Jesus Christ" ("Iconography," 215). She starts with the texts (215–20), then looks at the way art mirrors these interpretations. Kessler rightly criticizes the tendency of many studies to assume that it is the literary interpretation that gives rise to the image, although it appears that he also tends to impose frameworks which may not fit all components of the image (see nn. 65 and 67 below). I work from the premise that narrative correspondences between the image and some given text can provide a useful cue to the larger interpretive complex that the image is meant to evoke.

[59] See C. H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue* (The Excavations at Dura Europos: Final Report 8.1; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), esp. 346–63. Among many subsequent publica-tions on the synagogue and its art, I want to highlight the collection edited by J. Gutmann, *The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); and Fine, *Art and Judaism*, Chapter 11, "Liturgy and the Art of the Dura Europos Synagogue," 172–83.

[60] See the discussion in Kessler, "Art Leading the Story: The Aqedah in Early Synagogue Art," in *From Dura to Sepphoris: Studies in Jewish Art and Society in Late Antiquity* (ed. L. I. Levine and Z. Weiss; JRASup 40; Portsmouth, R. I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 2000), 73–81," pp. 76–77.

Figure 1. Dura Europos Synagogue (mid-third century), fresco above the Torah ark. Courtesy of the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology, Slide Archive, no. 12980.

prominent in the foreground is the ram, tied to a tree. This last detail, although it would appear to contradict the biblical narrative (at least in Hebrew), emerges literarily through a reading of the various translation traditions, which gloss the *sabek* as "tree" (*phuton* in Greek; *ilana* in the Aramaic targums). This detail has been read by many commentators to indicate that the emphasis in this "midrash" is entirely on Isaac's redemption; the fact that the ram is tied suggests that this redemption has been God's intention all along.[61] The background figure in the tent (whether Sarah or someone else) may be functioning to remind us of the original promise to Abraham (after he opens his tent to the three visitors), that it would be "through Isaac" that God would fulfill the covenant (Gen 18:10; cf. 17:21); in a sense, the image gives us a progression of three narrative moments—promise, crisis, and redemption. Thus, the Dura painting portrays Isaac as the channel of God's blessing, covenant, and promise of future redemption, linked to Torah and Temple.

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[61] B. Kühnel, "The Synagogue Floor Mosaic in Sepphoris: Between Paganism and Christianity," in Levine and Weiss, *Dura to Sepphoris*, 31–43; and Kessler, "Art Leading the Story," 77.

The next representations of this scene come from frescoes in the Christian catacombs of Rome.[62] The earliest images place Isaac in a variety of positions—none, as far as I know, upon the altar itself. Often, both Abraham and Isaac are standing, in the *orans* position (hands raised in prayer), identifiable by the accompanying accoutrements of bundle of sticks, ram, tree, blazing altar.[63] Often, this version of the Akedah appears in conjunction with representations of Daniel among the lions, the Three Young Men in the fiery furnace, a solitary Noah in the ark; generally in these representations, the *orans* stance prevails.[64] It is usually suggested that these portrayals of the Akedah represent post-deliverance thanksgiving.[65] However, the fact that they keep company with these other figures who are still in the thick of danger suggests that these Isaacs, too, might better be read in terms of the "confidence and joy," felt while facing the certainty of death, as in those early Isaac texts. A possible confirmation of this reading might be seen in an interesting arcosolium fresco from the catacomb of Priscilla (late third or early fourth century; Fig. 2), which shows Abraham and Isaac emerging at the top of the mountain, where the fire is already burning in readiness;[66] Isaac is carrying the wood on his

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[62] Van Woerden, "Iconography," has an extensive listing of the monumental evidence.

[63] E.g., the Catacomb of Callixtus, early third century (one of the very earliest examples); cited, for example, in both Kessler articles cited infra.

[64] A common configuration is a round ceiling design consisting of a number of discrete panels radiating from a center point which feature these and certain other biblical or New Testament freeze-frame illustrations. A good example comes from the catacomb of Priscilla (late third/early fourth century) where the standing Akedah figures are placed at the opposite point on the circle to the Three Young Men in the furnace.

[65] See van Woerden, "Iconography," 215, where she notes that the image may provide an example of "deliverance in need" or prefigure the redemption in Christ. She cites as the literary framework for this understanding, liturgical formulae which mention many biblical figures, including Abraham and Isaac, as paradigms of deliverance. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, 71, notes the difficulty with this argument: the particular prayer usually cited (by van Woerden and others) "cannot be dated before the fourth century." She also notes, however, a loose correspondence between the exempla to the faithful offered in Book V of the *Apostolic Constitutions* (third century Syria; this book is on proper behavior in relation to martyrs and on how to bear true rather than false witness) and popular catacomb imagery (e.g., Daniel, the Three Young Men, Job); only the Three are explicitly connected with martyrly execution, but the correspondences are suggestive. Cf. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 157–60, who distinguishes between the earlier images as working via the theme of deliverance and the later kneeling Isaacs as functioning typologically.

[66] The fire burning on top of the mountain is a narrative detail in 4Q225 (cf. n. 10 above) which surfaces in later midrashim as well (cf. *PRE* 105, where the fire is the sign that designates the correct place). See Fitzmyer, "Sacrifice," 216–17; G. Vermes, "New Light on the Sacrifice of Isaac from 4Q225," *JJS* 47 (1996): 140–46, particularly 146. But see García

Figure 2. Arcosolium fresco from the catacomb of Priscilla (late third or early fourth century). After J. Wilpert, *Die Malereien der Katakomben Roms* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1903), fig. 78.

back, which reinforces the suggestion that this is a pre-sacrifice scenario.[67] The parallel panel features the three young men standing in the midst of the flames with uplifted hands, while a dove with olive branch (from Noah iconography), here representing the holy spirit, flies in overhead. The juxtaposition of the two images (with an element of Noah thrown in), reinforces the notion that we are being brought into the story *before* the moment of deliverance has arrived.

In the fourth century, we begin to see more consistently, representations of the narrative moment of the sacrifice itself. In one representation from the Via Latina catacombs (late fourth century; Fig. 3), we see a small, square Roman-style pedestal altar (with fire going); a fairly strapping, no longer childlike, Isaac kneeling at the side on one knee, hands bound behind him, head bent to receive the blow. Although these details contradict the literary account, this configuration becomes fairly standard in Christian sarcophagus art of the fourth century, where this image of

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Martínez, "Sacrifice," 51–52, who is more doubtful about the identification of the word "fire" in the fragment.

[67] Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 157, calls this an image of deliverance.

Figure 3. Cubiculum C, Via Latina (Late fourth century). Courtesy of the Hebrew
University Institute of Archaeology, Slide Archive, no. 33213.

Figure 4. Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Rome (359 CE). Courtesy of the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology, Slide Archive, no. 46217.

the Akedah often keeps company, as in the catacomb frescos, with Jonah, Daniel, the Three Young Men, and certain scenes in the life of Jesus.[68] The sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (359 CE; Fig. 4) provides an instructive case in point. This is a particularly fine "columnar sarcophagus"; which is to say that its principal images are separated into distinct scenes by intervening columns. There are two rows of such scenes, separated by an intervening set of images in the spandrels between the arches. The Akedah is at the far left corner of the upper register, balanced at the far right corner by the scene of Jesus before Pilate (including the handwashing scene).[69] Also represented are the trials of Peter (top, second from left) and Paul (bottom, far right), Daniel between the lions (bottom, second from right), Christ seated in judgment between Peter and Paul (top, center), Job (bottom, far left), Adam and Eve after the Fall (bottom, second from left), and the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (bottom, center). A striking feature is the presence within the separate frames of "outsider" figures, who seem to function as spectators of the unfolding events. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, in a definitive study of the iconography of the

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[68] Note, for example, the so-called "Two Brothers" sarcophagus (Lat 55); and the Adelphia sarcophagus (Syracuse; ca. 340 CE); both of these examples have the Akedah scene flanking the central medallion with portrait of the deceased patron. The opposite flanking scene is Moses receiving the Law; Daniel and the lions figure as well.

[69] The spandrel scene on the far left, beneath the Akedah, is that of the Three Young Men in the furnace.

sarcophagus, notes compositional and iconographical links between the Akedah and the scene of Jesus before Pilate.[70] She reads the connection in typological fashion; that is, the Akedah points to the Passion of Jesus, and the trial scene stands metonymically for its fulfillment.[71] Elsner, focusing on the rhetorical message of the scenes from Jesus' trial,[72] notes the link between the Akedah and handwashing scenes but leaves this link on the level of biblical typology; it is the scene of Pilate washing his hands, in Elsner's construal, that bears the weight of resistance to Roman political and cultural hegemony.[73]

Up until the fourth century, it is hard to say that one standard iconography of the Akedah emerges; but seemingly from the fourth century on, the kneeling Isaac beside or upon the altar then predominates in various permutations through the Middle Ages, even when Christian art moves out of the catacombs and into either churches or texts.[74]

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[70] E. Struthers Malbon, *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); see her diagrams of the linkages between the various scenes, 130–31.

[71] Ibid., 44–47; she does not comment on the oddity of the Isaac iconography; like van Woerden, she cites writings of church fathers in support of the typological understanding.

[72] See J. Elsner, "Image and Rhetoric in Early Christian Sarcophagi: Reflections on Jesus' Trial," in *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi* (ed. J. Elsner and J. Huskinson; Millenium Studies 29; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011); 359–86; n. 16 on p. 363 lists the surviving examples, drawn mainly from *Repertorium der christlich-antiken Sarkophage* (3 vols: *I. Rom und Ostia* [ed. F. Deichmann, G. Bovini, and H. Brandenburg; Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1967; hereafter *Rep. I*]; *II. Italien mit einem Nachtrag Rom und Ostia, Dalmatien, Museen der Welt* [Mainz: von Zabern; 1998]; *III. Frankreich, Algerien, Tunisien* [Mainz: von Zabern, 2003]).

[73] The link between these two scenes is expressed in various ways on other sarcophagi as well. Note, for example, "Lateran 174" (*Rep. I*: 677; Elsner, "Image and Rhetoric," Fig.11.3, 366), from the Vatican cemetery (third quarter of the fourth century); this is another columnar sarcophagus, which places the two scenes in the same visual relationship (Akedah at the far left end, handwashing at the far right). A particularly interesting example is the "Two Brothers" sarcophagus (*Rep I*: 45, not pictured in Elsner; see n. 68 above). It is not columnar, so the biblical scenes spill into one another. The kneeling Isaac faces away from center toward a small table-like structure which doubles iconographically as Isaac's incense altar and the table for the handwashing scene.

[74] Note, for example, the mosaic in the mid-sixth-century church of San Vitale, in Ravenna. This is a narrative panel, like Dura, that moves from promise to crisis and redemption: from left to right, we see Sarah in her tent, the visit (at table) of the three angels, and the moment of sacrifice on the altar, with the ram tugging at Abraham to get his attention. This is one of two scenes over the altar (the companion piece shows Melchizedek offering bread and wine to Abraham). The liturgical interest here is on the Akedah as a type of the Eucharist; although Isaac is now in a more exegetically appropriate location (that is, on the altar), he is still pictured kneeling on one knee—i.e., in the martyr position. See G. Bovini, *San Vitale di Ravenna* (3d ed.; Milan: Silvana, 1957).

Figure 5. Beth Alpha synagogue mosaic (sixth century CE). Courtesy of the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology, Slide Archive, no. 104942.

Thus, the question becomes not only, whence this form of the iconography in the first place, but why the nonliterary image persists, even when it companions the biblical text? A possible answer to both questions may be found in Joseph Gutmann's discussion of the Akedah mosaic in the Bet Alpha synagogue (sixth century; Fig. 5).[75] Here, as in Dura, we have a narrative sequence, including this time the young men who come with Abraham,[76] moving to the moment of sacrifice on an altar that looks very

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A textual example of a similar tendency may be seen in the Byzantine Octateuchs (eleventh–thirteenth centuries). The several manuscript copies of this Octateuch feature virtually the same image to illustrate the text of Genesis 22: Isaac kneels beside the altar, with its fire blazing. Perhaps in an attempt to come closer to the biblical text, Isaac is younger and less strapping-looking than in the sarcophagi images, and his head is positioned to receive Abraham's blow in the throat, rather than on the back of the neck (more sacrificial and less executioner-like than the fourth-century images). See especially K. Weitzmann and M. Bernabò, *The Byzantine Octateuchs* (Princeton: Dept. of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University in association with Princeton University Press, 1999).

[75] See the discussions in Gutmann, "Variations," 120–22; and idem, "Revisiting the 'Binding of Isaac' Mosaic in the Beth-Alpha Synagogue," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 6 (1992): 79–85. See now, as well, the extensive discussion of the mosaic and the synagogue in general, in relation to its situation within its Byzantine Christian context, in Levine, *Visual Judaism*, 280–93.

[76] Whom we have already seen in the catacomb painting (Fig. 3 above, although only one of the servants is shown), and who also appear in the Akedah mosaic in Sepphoris. See the discussion of this mosaic in Kessler, "Art Leading the Story," 80, who suggests that

Figure 6.   Terracotta tile, North Africa, sixth century CE; Musee du Bardo, Tunisia.
After Gutmann, "Variations," in idem, *Sacred Images*, XIII, pl. 8, fig. 4.

much like the pagan-style altar of earlier representations. Other persist-
ing features include: the fire alight on the altar, the hand of God, the tree
with the tied ram. Two oddities—Isaac's seemingly suspended position
and what looks like strange sort of "scarf" at his neck, seem to make this
representation "of no known category."[77]

However, Gutmann found a very interesting iconographical parallel to
this image. A terracotta tile (dating from the sixth century) from North
Africa features Isaac kneeling apparently suspended, *blindfolded*, before a
blazing altar (Fig. 6).[78] Abraham grabs him by the blindfold rather than
by the hair as seen in earlier images. We have not seemingly met with

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the two figures there represent Abraham admonishing his (single) servant to stay behind,
rather than the two servants alone.

[77] Van Woerden, "Iconography," 228.

[78] Gutmann also adduces a ninth century miniature from a manuscript of the *Carmen
Paschale*, which it has been suggested goes back to a 5th century model; see "Variations,
12–21: and "Revisiting," 80, 82.

a blindfolded Isaac before this. The similarities to Bet Alpha are striking, and this, suggests Gutmann, explains Isaac's odd "scarf" at Bet Alpha—the artists wanted to get rid of the blindfold, but "misunderstood their model."[79] The "flying" effect may emerge from the exigencies of the medium, or from trying to convey depth; one of its outcomes is to convey a sense of rushing, of movement—these Isaacs appear to be "kneeling towards" their deaths.[80]

I concur with Gutmann about the aptness of the parallel. However, I think we are dealing with more here than artistic misunderstanding. In fact, the use of the blindfold suggests a different semantic arena for understanding the kneeling Isaacs in general. From the late third/early fourth century comes a fresco representing the execution of three contemporary martyrs by decapitation (Fig. 7).[81] The similarities to the positioning of Isaac are striking: they are kneeling on one knee, heads bent, with backs to the executioner—and blindfolded. James Stevenson says that representations of actual martyrs are "not common" in the earliest Christian art.[82] André Grabar states that Roman political art provided the models for both the execution scenes and the forensic scenes (trials of apostles, etc.) in early Christian art; he suggests a parallel to this scene from the depiction of the execution of military prisoners on the column of Marcus Aurelius.[83]

These insights should now give us a different sense of what is happening with the early Christian Isaac iconography (and with Daniel, and his companions, for that matter). Like the spiritual athletes of 4 Maccabees,

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[79] Gutmann, "Variations," 121. Levine cautions, however that it is far from clear whether the parallels "point to direct borrowing or only to generic similarities" (*Visual Judaism*, 288). For the present discussion it is not the question of influence per se (if any), but the presence of the blindfold within the idiom of Akedah/Sacrifice iconography, that is the salient factor.

[80] A similar technique can be seen, for example in MS of Cosmas Indicopleustes (Vatican Cod. gr. 699; perhaps a 9th century model), where Abraham and Moses, in compositionally parallel panels, appear to be walking "on air" up their respective mountains. Both perspective and a sense of movement are effected by the technique.

[81] J. Stevenson, *The Catacombs: Rediscovered Monuments of Early Christianity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 38, names them as Crispin, Crispinian and Benedicta); the fresco was found in a chamber under the Basilica of SS John and Paul in Rome.

[82] Ibid. He points to one further example, a (later fourth century) relief portraying the decapitation of Achilleus, found on a pillar in the basilica of SS Nereus and Achilleus in the Domitilla catacombs.

[83] A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of its Origins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 41–45, 49–50.

Figure 7. Three martyrs (Crispin, Crispinian and Benedicta); chamber under the Basilica of SS John and Paul in Rome. After Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, fig. 147.

the athletic Daniel of the catacombs and the muscular young Isaac of the sarcophagi show themselves as martyr athletes facing death like the Christians who died in the arena. The spectators in the background of both the Isaac and the Daniel frames on the Junius Bassus sarcophagus remind us that martyrdom was a public spectacle, a mode of public identification and witness.[84] The small altar in Isaac's imagery has a double function: pointing us textward to the biblical Isaac's altar, and contextward to second and third century scenarios of forced choice between sacrifice and martyrdom.[85] Perhaps the incomplete blindfold of the Bet Alpha iconography, along with the other features matching the scene on

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[84] See E. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), particularly chapter 4, "Martyrdom and the Spectacle of Suffering," on the role of "looking on."

[85] As we know from both nonliterary evidence (e.g., Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96–97) and literary accounts of early martyrdoms (e.g., the martyrdoms of Polycarp and Justin and his companions (cf. 4 Maccabees), the demand to publicly sacrifice to the gods or the divinized emperor was a standard element in the forensic trials of early Christians.

the North African tile, is a conscious evocation by the mosaic's artists (or patrons) of the Isaac who chooses his death.

It seems quite suggestive that the martyrly Isaac emerges at about the time of the establishment of Christianity as the religion of Empire. Grabar argues that the scenes of Christians on trial and under the sword represent a reversal of the values implied in Roman imperial triumphalist iconography—that is, the glorification of the "defeated" for their spiritual victory over the political victors.[86] Thinking back to the Junius Bassus iconography, this insight fits well with Elsner's reading of the "trial of Jesus" scene; but it suggests that in cases like the Junius Bassus iconography, the Akedah and trial scenes function *together* as an expression of cultural resistance to imperial pressure and power.

Finally, an all-too-brief note on the transformation of the Akedah in later Jewish interpretation and art. Shalom Spiegel has written about the persistence and reception of the tradition that Isaac was actually sacrificed in the Akedah. As we saw above, this tradition first surfaces fully in rabbinic writings in the *Mekilta of Rabbi Ishmael*, but it comes to the fore in poetic form especially in the wake of the Crusades, which were responsible for the martyrdoms of entire Jewish communities.[87]

I would like to highlight one artistic example from this period, found in the thirteenth-century *North French Miscellany*,[88] which illustrates the way that iconography may cross cultural contexts in order to make a statement of community identity. The *Miscellany* features a full page medallion of the Akedah-in-progress (Fig. 8). Isaac is once again positioned on the altar, but in a half-sitting, half-kneeling position. This altar, however is a tall, square pedestal affair. There is no fire; the bundle of wood, still tied, is fallen to the side. Significantly, Isaac is "half" bound: one hand and foot are tied together, the other hand uplifted. Head is bent waiting for

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[86] Grabar, *Christian Iconography*, 50.
[87] See discussion above, pp. 217–18. On the whole subject see Spiegal, *The Last Trial*.
[88] The *Miscellany*, now held by the British Museum (BM Add. MS. 11639) is a compendium of diverse Jewish texts, ranging from the Five Books of Moses; to daily, Sabbath, and festival prayers; to halakhic documents; to liturgical poetry. Facsimile edition with critical essays: *The North French Hebrew Miscellany: British Library Add. MS 11639* (prep. M. and L. Salter; *Companion Volume* ed. J. Schonfeld; London: Facsimile Editions, 2003); this image is on f. 521v. On the general iconographic provenance(s) of the miniatures, see Chapter 7 in Volume 2 (74–161), "The Decoration of the Miscellany, its Iconography and Style," by Y. Zirlin; as well as the earlier article by G. Sed-Rajna, "The Paintings of the London Miscellany," *JJA* 9 (1982): 18–30.

Figure 8. *North French Hebrew Miscellany*, f. 521v. © British Library Board (BM
Add. Ms. 11639 f521v); used by permission.

the uplifted sword in the hand of Abraham. Like other miniatures in the
Miscellany, this one bears compositional and iconographic resemblances
to biblical scenes produced in French Christian artisan workshops, par-
ticularly those of the *St. Louis Psalter* (produced before 1270).[89]

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[89] Bibliothèque nationale de France MS Latin 10525. On the general affinities of the
Miscellany artwork to Christian models, and in particular to the royal Parisian workshops,
see Sed-Rajna, "Paintings," 18, who suggests that the creators of these miniatures were Jew-
ish artists working within the confines of Christian workshops; and Zirlin, "Decoration,"
145, who feels that the artists were most likely Christian but that the work was supervised

The *Miscellany* itself took shape in the aftermath of a massacre and martyrdom of Jews at Metz in 1278, and the text had been completed by 1286.[90] Among its extensive collection of liturgical poems are a set of 12 "*Akedot*"—liturgical poems on the sacrifice of Isaac.[91] It also features a poetic lament, written by Benjamin, the scribe of the volume, commemorating the martyrdom of Shimshon of Metz, in language that makes the cultic-sacrificial nature of his death quite evident.[92]

Joseph Gutmann notes that there is a gap between the late antique synagogue mosaic representations of the Akedah and the next Jewish depictions of this scene, which surface in medieval biblical manuscripts, prayer books, and *haggadot*. In general, the later representations do not seem at all to have the earlier iconography in view; on the other hand they tend to approach more closely both the biblical text and rabbinic interpretations thereof. So in these contexts, Isaac is often shown lying upon the altar, usually upon the wood, with bound hands and feet; occasionally hands and feet are bound to each other. Thus, the representation in the *Miscellany*, which draws on this later representation of binding, but hearkens back to earlier Christian models particularly in the positioning of Isaac, is significant.

In a number of ways, the iconography of the miniatures here included, painted in Christian artisans' workshops (albeit perhaps by some Jewish artisans), using Christian iconographic models, nevertheless succeeds in articulating a stand against the Church and its secular agents: the governments of Louis IX and his son and successor Phillip III. In this case, the painting partially picks up the "exegetical" detail of binding from developing medieval Jewish iconography; but the freedom of the raised hand, the kneeling Isaac, and the head bowed to the sword suggest a chosen martyrdom.

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closely by a Jew, perhaps the scribe himself. On the relation to the *St. Louis Psalter* illustrations, see Clements, "Shelter amid the Flood," 297, esp. n. 70.

[90] The codex contains a copy of the *Sefer Mitvot Qatan* by Isaac of Corbeil, which was written in 1277, and refers to Yehiel de Paris (d. 1286) as a living personage. See G. Sed-Rajna, "Paintings," 18 n. 7.

[91] 510b–514a. These could be the subject of a study in themselves; to my knowledge such a study has not been undertaken.

[92] See the discussion of this poem (with transcription and translation) in S. Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), chapter 4, "Wheels within Wheels: Literature, History, and Methodology," 100–23.

Conclusions

I want to suggest that the kneeling Isaac iconography originally developed by way of Isaac's prior cultural role, along with Daniel, the three young men, and other figures, as a model for martyrs. As a threesome, Isaac, Daniel, and the Three symbolically represent as well the three types of death most often met with by the early Christian martyrs: execution (beheading), beasts, and burning.[93] The nontextual elements in the Isaac iconography—the athletic Isaac; kneeling beside, not on, a pagan-style altar (with fire already burning); the occasional sword rather than knife in Abraham's hand;[94] the blindfold where present—all may be attributed to scenarios of trial and execution.

I suggest that, even after Genesis 22 early begins to be subordinated to the general typological framework of foreshadowing Jesus' death and resurrection (*Sacrifice* of Isaac) in written Christian tradition, the iconographic martyr Isaac persists, along with Daniel and the saints on trial, as models for early Christians and Jews in thinking about death for the sake of heaven (*Binding* of Isaac).[95] The persistence of Isaac the martyr, even into the fourth century and beyond, in Christian iconography may be one index of the depth to which the cultural context of martyrdom had become a part of early Christian identity. The sharing of literary and iconographic details between Jewish and Christian models point to a context of social interaction, and away from the necessity of reading one set of interpretations always polemically "against" the other.

The interpretive details that developed around Isaac may, but do not need to, coalesce into an image of Isaac the martyr that emerges when Jews or Christians are in need of the support such a model gives. It is the narrative's underlying acceptance of the possibility of the human as an acceptable sacrifice for God that gives impetus to the model, and the explicit promise of blessing (read: redemption) through Isaac that makes

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[93] Note also the possibility of death by drowning (e.g., the martyrdom of Clement of Rome); the prominence of Jonah iconography in the catacombs is also suggestive in this respect; and note that Jonah figures in the *Mekilta* as the leading example of the prophets who "give their lives" for the people of Israel (*Pisḥa* 1).

[94] The Vulgate uses the term *gladius* for Abraham's implement; might this translation itself result from "art leading the story," in Kessler's phrase; in other words, from the established understanding of the Akedah as martyrdom context?

[95] I do not mean to imply that the typological reading usually given to the iconic Akedah is wrong; rather, I want to suggest that the image itself is multivalent, and for those who invoked it, the persistence of the martyrly iconography testifies to the importance of the model.

him a model of "confidence and joy" for the believers facing their own inescapable deaths, but confident of their place in the World to Come.[96]

This still leaves us, however with specific questions about the function of this imagery in different Jewish and Christian contexts. Why is the martyrly Isaac image nearly ubiquitous in Christian iconography of the late fourth century and beyond? Why, when the threat of political martyrdom is no longer ever-present for most Christians, should this image come to predominate? And on the other side of the question, how should we understand functions of the later representations of the Bet Alpha mosaic and the *North French Miscellany*?

I suggest that the answers lie in the dual significance of martyrdom itself. Martyrdom is both a religious act of self-negation in doing the will of God, and a public act of political defiance, an act which says that earthly "powers and principalities" are not ultimately in charge. I want to hazard the suggestion that we should consider the post-Peace appearances of Isaac-as-martyr iconography in Christian contexts, *especially* in its "originating" context of funerary art, both as a way of identifying oneself with those who had committed the (no longer available) ultimate act of faith, and as in some subtle way an act of continuing cultural resistance in the face of the "triumph" of the church (or the takeover of the Church by the secular power). For many Christians, finding themselves newly on the "victors'" side of the political establishment, the ambivalence must have been very great. Perhaps the post-Constantine Isaac iconography, similarly to the great fourth-century projects of refurbishing and venerating the tombs of the previous century's martyrs,[97] gives us a hint of the ambivalence with which early Christians were facing the new reality.

In the Jewish contexts, the Isaac iconography proved itself adaptable to the changing social and political circumstances in which the Jewish communities found themselves. The Bet Alpha mosaic, created after the beginnings of legislation designed to prevent the embellishment of old synagogues and the building of new ones, and roughly contemporary with the development of Talmudic expansions on the martyrdoms of

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[96] And note that both in 4 Maccabees and here, the fact that these biblical martyrs DID NOT DIE, and were in fact rescued from death, is almost immaterial; it is the fact that they faced what they clearly assumed to be certain death which provides the model.

[97] Notably under Pope Damasus, 366–84 CE.

R. Aqiva and compatriots,[98] reveals itself as a robust political statement, in the face of the political triumph of the church. The Akedah iconography of the *North French Miscellany*, retaining the martyrly features of the Christian iconography and indicating Isaac's willingness to submit to the sacrifice, reinforces the message of the *Akedot* poems and the elegy for the martyr Shimshon; that is, that dying for God is a mark of love for God and of covenant, not a sign of defeat and divine rejection. Both the mosaic and the Akedah of the *Miscellany* serve to remind their challenged but by no means cowed communities, that "for the sake of *his* blood, I chose *them*."

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[98] See the discussion of the development and cultural function of these stories in D. Boyarin, *Dying for God*, especially 93–126; and note the remark of Levine, *Visual Judaism*, 293, that in Byzantine Christian Bet Alpha, both "a reaction to political and religious hostility and a response to cultural stimuli," influenced the construction of the synagogue and its art.

INTERPRETIVE TRAJECTORIES

DIDYMUS THE BLIND AND THE *PHILISTORES*: A CONTEST OVER *HISTORIA* IN EARLY CHRISTIAN EXEGETICAL ARGUMENT

Richard A. Layton

Didymus the Blind was a celebrated Christian instructor in the second half of the fourth century.[1] He was, according to Evagrius of Pontus, the "great and gnostic teacher."[2] Out of respect for the blind exegete's interior vision, Jerome dubbed Didymus as "my seer," and traveled to the teacher's home city of Alexandria to consult him about doubtful passages of the Scriptures.[3] Rufinus, perhaps his most devoted student, judged that "something divine and above human speech" sounded in the words of his teacher.[4] These admirers regarded Didymus as the foremost exponent of his era of the figurative modes of interpretation that characterized the Alexandrian exegetical tradition. At the same time, however, his commentaries barely touched, in Jerome's judgment, the "historical sense."[5]

Jerome's assessment might have been shared by some critics of Didymus, whom the blind exegete identified as *philistores*. Didymus refers to these opponents by this term in only two instances in the extant

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[1] For notices of Didymus's life and activity, see Rufinus, *Hist.* 11.7; Socrates, *Hist.* 4.25; Sozomen, *Hist.* 3.15; Theodoret, *Hist.* 4.26. For discussion, see R. A. Layton, *Didymus the Blind and His Circle in Late-Antique Alexandria: Virtue and Narrative in Biblical Scholarship* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 13–35; E. Prinzivalli, *Didimo il Cieco e l'interpretazione dei Salmi* (Quaderni di studi e materiali di storia delle religioni n.s. 2; Rome: Japadre, 1988), 6–9.

[2] Evagrius, *Gnost.* 48; critical ed.: *Le gnostique, ou, A celui qui est devenu digne de la science* (ed. A. and C. Guillaumont; SC 356; Paris: Cerf, 1989), 186.

[3] Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* 1. prol. (ed. D. Vallarsi; PL 26: 369–70); Jerome, *Comm. Eph.* 1. prol. (ed. D. Vallarsi; PL 26: 539–40), cf. Jerome, *Comm. Os.* 1. prol (ed. M. Adriaen; CCSL 76; Turnholt: Brepols, 1969), 5: *virum sui temporis eruditissimum.*

[4] Rufinus, *Hist.* 11.7 (*Eusebius Werke, 2. Die Kirchengeschichte* [ed. E. Schwartz]; *Die lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus* [ed T. Mommsen]; GCS 9; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1903–1909), 1012–1013). Rufinus published books 10 and 11 of the *Ecclesiastical History* in 402–03 as a continuation of Eusebius's earlier work. The Latin edition of Rufinus, which included both an abbreviated translation of Eusebius as well as his own continuation, was published by Mommsen under the works of Eusebius in the Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller (GCS) series. For an English translation of Rufinus's two books of the *Ecclesiastical History*, see *The* Church History *of Rufinus of Aquileia. Books 10 and 11,* translated by Philip R. Amidon (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise specified.

[5] Jerome, *Comm. Zach.* 1.prol. (CCSL 76: 748): *historiae vix pauca tetigerunt.*

commentaries.[6] The first is in a comment on the outburst of Job, in which the patient sufferer curses the day of his birth (Job 3:3–5). The second is in a comment on the enigmatic act in Genesis in which God clothes the first pair with "skin tunics" (Gen 3:21) before casting them from Eden.[7]

Who are these mysterious opponents that Didymus attacks? The name *philistores*, which might be translated as "devotees of history," gives only a slight clue to follow. The appellation as applied to a faction appears nowhere else in fourth-century Christian literature. The terminology used in any fashion is rare and always carries a positive connotation.[8] Given this positive valence, it seems probable that Didymus did not fashion the label for his opponents. The label perhaps signifies that this group—however loosely formed—regarded itself as a guardian of the historical foundations of biblical narrative against allegorizing approaches to Scripture. It is nonetheless difficult to determine what group Didymus might have had in view, or how accurately he represented their position, or even whether these opponents possessed identity as a fixed faction. In his valuable study of Didymus's exegetical techniques, Wolfgang Bienert judged that Didymus did not engage with an actual faction, but only addressed

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[6] After the condemnation of Origenism, Didymus's voluminous exegesis was preserved only in a fragmentary form. A buried corpus of sixth/seventh century manuscripts, discovered in 1941 and now known as the "Tura papyri," provides the primary basis for reconstructing Didymus's exegesis. See L. Koenen and W. Müller-Wiener, "Zu den Papyri aus dem Arsenios Kloster bei Tura," *ZPE* 2 (1968): 41–63; L. Koenen and L. Doutreleau, "Nouvel inventaire de papyrus de Toura," *RSR* 55 (1967): 547–64; L. Doutreleau, "Que Savons-nou aujourd-hui des Papyrus de Toura?" *RSR* 43 (1955): 161–76; O. Guéraud, "Note préliminaire sur les papyri d'Origene découverts à Toura," *RHR* 131 (1946): 85–108.

[7] In two other instances, Didymus seems to have the same or a similar group in mind. In commenting on Job 4:11 (LXX), Didymus skeptically reports the efforts of the *historountes* to find a naturalistic explanation for the "ant-lion." In his comments on Gen 3:6–7, Didymus challenges those who would find a historical explanation (*tous tê historia hepomenous*) for the manufacture of girdles from fig leaves.

[8] Gregory Nazianzus, *Or.* 43.7, uses the verb form *philistorein* to refer to a fondness for historical inquiry. The dictionary of Stephen of Byzantium refers to a book of inquiries by Hierocles (*logois en philistorsin*). (see *Stephani Byzantii Ethnica* [ed. M. Bilerbeck; [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006], 1: 376). The twelfth-century writer John Tzetzes seems to refer to the same work (see *Ioannis Tzetzae Historiae*, 7.709 [ed. P. A. M. Leone; Pubblicazioni dell' istituto di filologis classica Universita degli Studi di Napoli 1; Naples: Libraria Scientifica, 1968), 283. The nearest parallel in Latin is Jerome, *Comm. Zach* 1.3.8–9 (CCSL 76: 776): *amatores historiae sic de Christo intelligunt, ut post Jesum filium Josedec Christum dicent venturum*. Jerome's "lovers of history" might refer either to those who are devoted to the "historical narrative" of the Bible or to those who delight in scholarly investigation. Rufinus, in his translation of Origen's hexateuchal homilies, employs on several occasions the phrase *amici litterae* (see Origen, *Hom. Gen.* 6.2*, Hom. Exod.* 2.1 [ed. W. A. Baehrens, *Origenes Werke VI* (GCS 29; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920), pp. 70, 155), but it is clear that Origen does not refer to a distinct faction with the terminology.

generally those who interpreted Scripture in an overly literal manner. In my own previous discussion of the issue, I also suggested that it was best to regard these shadowy opponents as a "general hermeneutical stance rather than a specific faction."[9]

I would like here to revisit the argument with the *philistores*. Even if these opponents cannot be given a specific identity, the *philistores*, as encountered in the Tura commentaries, represent a well-defined and coherent understanding of Scripture that challenged the legitimacy of the exegetical practice of Didymus's school. I aim to show that, contrary to Jerome's assertion, Didymus demonstrated a strong interest in the *sensus litteralis*. His engagement with the *philistores* raised the issue at a theoretical level: what constitutes meaningful "literal" interpretation? If such is the case, the central point Didymus sought to make lies beyond the justification of allegory. His criticism of the *philistores* instead would denote a more ambitious effort: it would encompass a question of the nature of biblical language and the character of biblical narrative composed in that idiom.

Allegoresis, Myth, and Origenism

Christian allegoresis, the practice of employing figural approaches to textual interpretation in order to generate a deeper understanding of transcendent realities, is rooted in the hermeneutical presuppositions and exegetical techniques of Philo.[10] We do not have the luxury here to examine the many facets of the procedures, rationales, and purposes of allegory in Philo's exegesis. It will be valuable, however, to draw attention to one critical role that Philo assigned to allegoresis—that of defending

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[9] W. A. Bienert, *"Allegoria" und "Anagoge" bei Didymos dem Blinden von Alexandria*, (PTS 13; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972), 114–17; Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 71–72, 105–7.

[10] The significance of Philo to subsequent Christian allegoresis is taken for granted in contemporary scholarship, but the nature of that contribution is susceptible to several different explanations. Some recent and stimulating discussions of Philo as pioneer of Christian exegetical theory and technique include: C. Blönningen, *Der Griechische Ursprung der jüdisch-hellenistichen Allegorese und ihre Rezeption in der alexandrinischen Patristik* (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 15. Klassische Sprachen und Literaturen 59; Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1992; D. Dawson, *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and more briefly, I. Ramelli, "The Philosophical Stance of Allegory in Stoicism and its Reception in Platonism, Pagan and Christian: Origen in Dialogue with the Stoics and Plato," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 18 (2011): 335–71 (with further bibliography).

biblical narrative from being construed by readers in the company of
Greek "myth."

As Adam Kamesar has elucidated, Philo both maintained that the Pen-
tateuch contained no "myth," and that any apparent mythical content
in the sacred writings could be resolved or "healed" by allegory.[11] Philo
championed the ability of allegory to reorient narratives that might ini-
tially appear to a reader as "myth."[12] For Philo, myth refers to the type of
implausible story that imports fantastic and monstrous elements (*Agr.* 97).
It contaminates truth with the fictions of the poets, whom Plato rightly
evicted from the true and justly constituted state. One problem for Philo
is that readers might encounter elements in biblical narrative, such as
giants and talking serpents, that resemble the type of fantastical crea-
tures that populate Greek stories. He gives his most detailed explication
of how allegory cures "myth" at the outset of his treatise *On the Confusion
of Tongues*.

Philo opens his exposition of the tower story (Gen 11:1–9) by claiming
that critics of the "ancestral constitution" (*tē patriō politeia*) have seized
an opportunity in this narrative to identify "myths" in the holy books.
These unnamed critics, as Maren Niehoff has persuasively detailed, are
probably Jewish colleagues of Philo, who produced a treatise that com-
pared the Jewish scriptures with two Greek stories.[13] One comparison
centered on the attempt of the Aloeidae, as narrated in the *Odyssey*, to
construct a road to heaven by means of piling mountains on top of one
another. The second story, found in the anthologies of the "mythologists"
(*muthoplastōn*), tells how in the ancient past animals all shared a com-
mon tongue until they became "satiated with the abundance of available
goods" and destroyed their fortune by dispatching an embassy to the gods
to demand eternal youth. The gods punished this audacity by separating
their languages, "so that from that day forward they were no longer able
to understand each other because of the many languages into which the
one and common tongue had been divided."[14]

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[11] A. Kamesar, "The Literary Genres of the Pentateuch as Seen from the Greek Perspec-
tive: The Testimony of Philo of Alexandria," *SPhA* 9 (1997): 143–89, pp. 168–69. See also
idem, "Biblical Interpretation in Philo," *The Cambridge Companion to Philo* (ed. A. Kamesar;
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 65–91, esp. pp. 72–85.

[12] Cf. *Gig.* 7, 58; *Opif.* 157.

[13] M. R. Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge:
Cambridge University Press, 2011), 77–94; see Philo, *Conf.* 14.

[14] Philo, *Conf.* 4–8. See Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis*, 87–90, for the relationship between
the fable of the animals' speech and a similar poem by Callimachus that circulated in
Alexandria.

The biblical story, these exegetes deemed, despite its improvements over the Greek tales, retained a "mythological" (*muthôdes*) character, and God's actions were susceptible to criticism in the biblical version. Philo rejects this comparative mythological exegesis out of hand. It is the work, he complains, of "godless" critics who devote their efforts to undermining the Law; such base and fraudulent scholars must be refuted. Those who cling to a literal sense of the Scriptures, who rely on "ordinary expositions" (*tas procheirous apodoseis*), will doubtless respond in their own manner. For his own part, Philo will adopt an allegorical approach. Allegory follows the chain of logical sequence of Scripture (*tō tēs akolouthias heirmō*) and never fails, but easily sets aside every obstruction. Philo proceeds on this basis to offer a moral reading of the tower story, addressing in detail the criticism of his contentious colleagues to defuse the comparison of the narrative to myth.

Philo's summary of (whether accurate or not) and response to an anonymous and now-lost comparative mythological exegesis is instructive. He strenuously resists any connection between biblical narrative and "myth," and advocates allegory as the more effective means to expose the categorical distinction between the Jewish Scriptures and Greek literature. Philo does not oppose allegory to literal readings; even if he refers patronizingly to those who limit themselves to what is "manifest and common" (*emphaneis kai procheiros*), he solicits them as allies in the defense of the sacred law.[15]

Both literal and allegorical approaches to interpretation can enable a reader to discern the categorical distinction between biblical narrative and myth. This does not, however, make the two approaches equally useful for interpretation. Philo takes the opportunity in *On Sobriety* to tout the superiority of allegory over literal exegesis. The opportunity is provided by the puzzle of the curse of Canaan (Gen 9:25–27). What sin had Canaan committed when it was Ham, his father, who had shamed Noah? "Perhaps," Philo conjectures, "they who are accustomed to determine the precise meaning of the words and ordinary explanations in the laws have examined [this problem] in their own manner. Let us, however, who are obedient to the suggestions of right reason expound the interpretation embedded within."[16] There is a clear polarity. To pursue the "right reason" (*orthos logos*) it is necessary to press beyond what is ordinary and on the

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[15] Philo, *Conf.* 190–191.
[16] *Sobr.* 33 (ed. L. Cohn and P. Wendland, *Philonis Alexandrini Opera Quae Supersunt*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Georgii Reineri, 1897), p. 222.

surface, and to see the logical connection of what is embedded within and below the surface level of the text. The words are expressions that point to the meaning, but do not constitute it, and certainly do not exhaust it. Philo distinguishes his hermeneutical stance in two directions. The first is the absolute rejection of the scholars who find generic resemblance between the biblical narrative and traditional Greek literature—such is to taint the revealed word with myth. The rejection on the other front is less absolute: those scholars who find naturalistic explanations for the speaking of the serpent, for the curse of Canaan, and for the division of languages, undertake a worthy, if cramped, effort.

Where Philo sought to develop a constructive relationship between allegoresis and biblical history, Didymus's opponents argued that it was necessary to eliminate allegory altogether, in order to protect the integrity of the Bible as history. While we don't have statements from the *philistores*, we may be able to envision the nature of their critique by turning briefly to two of the most prominent critics of allegory in the fourth century: Diodore of Tarsus and his student, Theodore of Mopsuestia. These critics of allegorical interpretation operated from a presumption that literal and allegorical approaches to exegesis signaled irreconcilable conceptions of the nature of the text to be interpreted. Literal exegesis preserved the historical truth of biblical narrative, while allegoresis was a method for rescuing a reader from the embarrassment of myth.

Diodore, a contemporary of Didymus, based his critique on the familiar definition of allegory as a rhetorical trope. The pagans, he maintained, "define allegory as a thing (*pragma*) that is conceived in one way but expressed in another."[17] He illustrated this definition by reference to two familiar myths: the snatching of Europa by Zeus in the form of a bull, and the sacred marriage between Zeus and his sister, Hera. In both cases, Diodore contended, allegorists provide rationalizing explanations for the elements of the story. The capture of Europa was not explained in allegory as a literal crossing of the sea on a bull's back, "but rather, Europa having embarked on a boat that bore the sign of a bull was transported across the sea." Similarly while "the text (*hē lexis*) makes clear" that Zeus engaged in intercourse with his sister, "it is allegorized thus, that when the ether, since it is fiery, is mixed with the air, a certain blending brings to

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[17] Diodore, *Proem. Ps. 118* (ed. L. Mariès, "Extraits du Commentaire de Diodore de Tarse sur les Psaumes," *RSR* 9 [1919]: 79–101; quotation from p. 90).

perfection the elements (*pragmasin*) that surround the earth."[18] Diodore declined to explore either the historicizing explanation for the origin of the Europa tale or the well-known application of the *hieros gamos* to the physics of Stoic cosmogony. His use of these two examples is limited to illustrating a strict divide between myth and history, and between the consequent exegetical techniques appropriate for each. Allegory can have no positive contribution to make toward the explication of historical narrative, as it destroys any meaningful connection between the textual level of narration (*hē lexis*) and the underlying reality (*pragma*) to which that narration points.

Diodore warned against the use of allegory in Christian exegesis, which he viewed as a kind of importation of an alien, pagan tradition that subverted the *historia* of the Scriptures. His student, Theodore of Mopsuestia, took this critique yet further. In his polemical introduction to Psalm 118, Theodore targeted the Alexandrians as responsible for the baleful influence of allegory among Christian exegetes of his day.[19] In particular, he blamed Origen for adopting the methods of the Jew, Philo. Philo, Theodore maintained, had been instructed in the teaching of pagans, and was the first to introduce the allegorical interpretations of the pagans. Philo believed that the Scriptures could be explicated by means of allegory because he failed to perceive that it defiled the Scriptures when an interpreter removed the historical content of the texts so that they "appear to be mendacious and false as the myths of the pagans."[20]

Thus, Theodore's addition to Diodore's critique is that allegoresis is an alien introduction into Christian culture, baptized by the misguided Origen from a Jewish teacher who was himself under the spell of pagan learning. This was a potent allegation when joined with the more specifically doctrinal controversy surrounding Origen. Conflict over Origen's legacy, which had simmered in Alexandria throughout Didymus' lifetime, occasioned an open ecclesiastical battle in the last quarter of the fourth century.[21] The

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[18] Ibid.

[19] I use here the French translation of L. van Rompay, *Théodore de Mopsueste: Fragments syriaques du Commentaire des Psaumes (Psaume 118 et Psaumes 138–148)* (CSCO 436; Scriptores Syri 190; Louvain: Peeters, 1982), 1–18. I have also consulted the German translation provided by F. Thome, *Historia contra Mythos: Die Schriftauslegung Diodors von Tarsus und Theodors von Mopsuestia im Widerstreit zu Kaiser Julians und Salustius' allegorischem Mythen verständnis* (Hereditas: Studien zur Alten Kirchengeschichte 24; Bonn: Borengässer, 2004), 124–49 (with commentary).

[20] Rompay, *Fragments syriaques*, p. 15.

[21] The fullest account of the Origenist controversy of the fourth and early fifth centuries is E. A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian*

controversy peaked in Alexandria shortly after Didymus's death (ca. 398), when Bishop Theophilus convened a synod to condemn Origenist teaching and subsequently evicted recalcitrant monks from the dioceses under his jurisdiction.[22] A second round of controversy in the sixth century led to an edict issued against Origen by the emperor Justinian in 543.[23] Ten years later, the fifth ecumenical council of Constantinople condemned Origen as a heretic and anathematized as well the teachings of Didymus and Evagrius relating to the controversial doctrines of the preexistence of souls and a universal eschatological restoration.[24]

These two doctrines divided factions, primarily rooted in monastic communities, over Origen's vision of the believer's spiritual progress as participating in an epic drama of cosmic fall and restoration. In the scheme widely attributed to Origen, a primordial fall had alienated rational beings from their original contemplation of God's being, and propelled them into a situation in which they labored in the material world to return to direct participation in God's fullness.[25] The material creation represented

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Debate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). See also E. Prinzivalli, "The Controversy about Origen before Epiphanius," in *Origeniana Septima: Origenes in den Auseinandersetzungen des 4. Jahrhunderts* (ed. W. A. Bienert and U. Kühneweg; BETL 137; Louvain: 1999), 195–213; J. F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity: Epiphanius of Cyprus and the Legacy of Origen* (Patristic Monograph Series 13; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1988); A. Guillaumont, *Les "Kephalaia Gnostica" d'Evagre le Pontique et l'Histoire de l'Origénisme chez les Grecs et chez les Syriens* (Patristica Sorbonensia 5; Paris: Seuil, 1962), esp. 81–123.

[22] See the discussion of J. Declerck, "Théophile d'Alexandrie contre Origène: Nouveaux fragments de *l'epistula synodalis prima* (CPG, 2595)," *Byzantion* 54 (1984): 495–507. N. Russell, *Theophilus of Alexandria* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 89–174, collects and translates the scattered anti-Origenist writings of Theophilus.

[23] Justinian, *Contra Origenem*, in *Collectio Sabbaitica contra acephalos et origeniastas destinata: insunt acta synodorum Constantinopolitanae et Hierosolymitanae A. 536* (ed. E. Schwartz; ACO 3; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1940), 189–214. For the sixth-century controversy, see D. Hombergen, *The Second Origenist Controversy: A New Perspective on Cyril of Scythopolis' Monastic Biographies as Historical Sources for Sixth-Century Origenism* (Studia Anselmania 132; Rome: 2001), and the still useful account of F. Diekamp, *Die origenistischen Streitigkeiten im sechsten Jahrhundert und das fünfte allgemeine Concil* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1899).

[24] *Canones contra Origenem sive Origenistas*, in *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum sub Iustiniano habitum* (*AD 553*) (ed. J. Straub; ACO 4.1; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 248–49; cf. Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Saba* 90 (ed. E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1939]), 199. See further, A. Guillaumont, "Evagre et les anathématismes antiorigénistes de 553," in *Papers Presented to the Third International Conference on Patristic Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1959* (ed. F. L. Cross; StPatr 3–6; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1961–1962), 3: 219–26.

[25] See M. Harl, "La préexistence des âmes dans l'oeuvre d'Origène," in *Origeniana Quarta: Die Referate des 4. Internationalen Origenskongresses (Innsbruck, 2–6 September 1984)* (ed. L. Lies; Innsbrucker theologische Studien 19; Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1987), 238–58.

a school for salvation, in which all rational beings were educated through a divine pedagogy to progress—albeit slowly in some cases—towards recovery of their created condition in the contemplation of God.

The doctrine of preexistence, the theory that rational souls existed independently of and prior to embodiment, was the platform from which critics launched attacks against both Origen's theological system and his exegetical method. In promoting this doctrine, it was alleged, Origen had attributed the cause of embodiment to sin, and consequently, human corporeality was a fallen state in and of itself.[26] Such criticism led directly to attacks on Origenian exegesis because preexistence organized the trajectory of human experience into a narrative that seemed to tear asunder the fabric of events carefully knitted together in the Scriptures. Such distortions of the individual events constituted "myth," in opposition to authentic biblical history; and preexistence was highlighted as the foundation for this mythology. Theophilus, for example, held preexistence to be the "starting point" from which "this most impious man invents myths (*muthologei*) and wishes to do combat with the truth."[27]

The critique of Origen necessarily integrated a hermeneutical, as well as a doctrinal, dimension. Opposition to Origenian "myth" may also have supported a simultaneous effort to develop a more precise theory of biblical "history." The foremost theorizer of historical exegesis in the middle of the fourth century was Diodore of Tarsus, whose critique of allegory we encountered above.[28] *Historia*, in Diodore's concise definition, was the "clear narrative of an event that had occurred."[29] The inspired writers,

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For the logic of preexistence in Origen's thought, see especially two contributions by G. S. Gasparro: "Doppia creazione e peccato di Adamo nel *Peri Archon* di Origene: Fondamenti biblici e presupposti Platonici dell'esegesi Origeniana," in *La "Doppia Creazione" dell'uomo negli Alessandri, nei Cappodoci e nella gnosi* (ed. U. Bianchi; Rome: Ateneo e Bizzarri, 1978), 45–82; and "Restaurazione dell'immagine del celeste e abbandono dell'immagine dell terrestre nella prospettiva Origeniana della doppia creazione," in *Arché e telos: L'antropologia di Origene e di Gregorio di Nissa: Analisi storico-religiosa (Atti del Colloquio Milano, 17–19 Maggio 1979)* (ed. U. Bianchi; Milan: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 1981), 231–73.

[26] Clark, *Origenist Controversy*, 87–92; Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*, 297–301.

[27] Theophilus *apud* Justinian, *Contra Origenem*, 203, cf. 192. Russell, *Theophilus of Alexandria*, 92, appends this sentence to another fragment from the first synodal letter of the bishop.

[28] For an account of Diodore's exegesis see C. Schäublin, *Untersuchungen zu Methode und Herkunft der Antiochenischen Exegese* (Cologne: Hanstein, 1974), esp. 156–70. For Diodore's critique of myth, see Thome, *Historia contra Mythos*, esp. 83–119.

[29] Diodore, *Proem. Ps. 118*, pp. 94–95: *Historia de esti pragmatos gegonotos kathara diêgêsis*. A German translation of the prologue is provided by Thome, *Historia contra Mythos*, 99–118.

he insisted, always grounded their communication in an historical reality (*pragma*). The *historia* of Scripture might contain an intention (*theoria*) to foreshadow subsequent events or it might cloak "hidden meanings" (*ainigmata*) in a narrative, but it always rested on the sturdy platform of the trustworthiness of the events reported. In contrast to the allegorists, a responsible exegete unfolded *to historikon*, that is, the genuine reality (*alētheia*) of the historical events (*pragmata*) to which biblical narratives, oracles and poetry referred.[30]

The critique of the concept of preexistence led naturally to criticism of Origen's exegesis, in part because this "myth" seemed to expose the failure of Origenian exegesis to maintain the crucial link between narrative and *historia*.[31] The theory of preexistence features prominently in both of the extant passages in which Didymus inveighs against the *philistores*. Didymus, unfortunately, does not explain whether opposition to this teaching is the basis for the objections of the *philistores*, or whether their critique rests on more extensive hermeneutical grounds. It may be possible, nevertheless, to see in his self-defense an attempt to fashion a conception of *historia* that provides a credible alternative to the theory of biblical history articulated by Diodore.

In the next section, we will take up in detail Didymus's response to the *philistores*. He will attempt to recover the positive relationship that Philo construed between allegoresis and biblical narrative. That effort, however, is complicated by two difficulties. First, he cannot simply appeal to the tradition of allegoresis, since some critics had insinuated that Philo himself was an alien influence on Christian exegesis. Second, the problem of "myth" and "history" had shifted since Philo's apology for allegory. Didymus cannot achieve his goal by appeal to the potential of allegory to "heal" myth. Critics held that Origen, far from healing myth, had created a pagan mythology that infected the biblical tradition. Thus, where Philo might take an indulgent, if condescending, attitude toward his literalist

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[30] On occasion, Diodore seems to allow that the *pragma* of a historical narrative might not be identical with the events themselves. For example, a catena fragment on Gen 25:31–34 that probably derives from Diodore raises the possibility that the *pragma* of the Jacob and Esau story is a figure (*typon*) of "the Jews and the Christians." See F. Petit, *La Chaîne sur la Genèse: Edition Intégrale* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca 1–4; Louvain: Peeters, 1992–1996), fr. 1397 (3:309).

[31] See, e.g., Cyril of Scythopolis, *V. Saba* 36 (ed. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis*), 124: "the myths produced (*memuthologêmena*) by Origen and Evagrius and Didymus concerning preexistence´ and *Canones Contra Origenem sive Origenistas*, Canon 1, 248.

colleagues in Alexandria, Didymus finds it necessary to press more force-
fully the inadequacy of a literal approach to biblical interpretation.

Job's Curse and Consistency of Character

In his *Commentary on Job*,[32] Didymus presents the protagonist as a hero
of perfect virtue. The predominant virtue Job displays is courage, which
Didymus defines along Stoic lines as "fortitude" (*karteria*), the knowledge
of what to endure or not to endure.[33] Moreover, Job exercises courage
with a "constancy of tone" (*eutonia*) which indicates that the saint makes
a persistent and uninterrupted display of his virtue.[34] Will and reason are
inextricably joined in Job's devotion; his courage is not simply instinctive
resistance, but an enactment of the self's innermost values and priorities.[35]
For Didymus, consequently, it would be a breach of character for Job to
experience even a momentary lapse from perfect equanimity, even in the
midst of his suffering.

This perfectionist reading receives a strenuous test at the outset of the
lengthy dialogue between Job and his friends. The friends have come to
console Job after he has endured two rounds of testing at the hands of
the Satan. Their mutual grief is marked by the observation of a weeklong
silent vigil. At the conclusion of this period, Job delivers a searing speech,
opening with the famous curse of the day of his birth: "Let the day perish
in which I was born, and that night in which they said, 'Behold, a male
child.' That night! Let it be darkness and may the Lord not seek it again,
nor may daylight come to it" (Job 3:3–5 LXX). Ancient exegetes struggled
to accommodate this tirade to Job's reputation for virtue. John Chrysos-
tom excused the curse on the grounds that Job spoke while discouraged
and confused, by which Scripture demonstrated that even the most heroic
of saints share a common humanity. An earlier Antiochene exegete, the
"Arian" Julian, made the intriguing suggestion that these outbursts could

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[32] Critical edition: *Didymos der Blinde: Kommentar zu Hiob (Tura-Papyrus)* (ed.
A. Henrichs, U. Hagedorn, D. Hagedorn, and L. Koenen; 4 vols.; PTA 1–3, 33; Bonn: Habelt,
1968–1985).

[33] See Galen (*SVF* 3.256), and Cicero (*SVF* 3.285). This definition of courage was com-
mon to Alexandrian exegetes; cf. Philo, *Leg.* 1.68 (= *SVF* 3.263), Clement, *Strom.* 2.79.5
(= *SVF* 3.275).

[34] Didymus, *Comm. Job.* 13.8, cf. *Comm. Ps.* 189.7–8. Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* 4.61–62.

[35] Cf. esp. Didymus, *Comm. Job* 33.19–34.27, 49.15–50.5 on the unity of reason and cour-
age in Job.

be taken as purposeful efforts at self-consolation.[36] Didymus, however, had already foreclosed an appeal to the frailty of human nature through his assertion that Job's fortitude remained unshaken by any blows and that his breathtaking endurance perfectly embodied the saint's rational and unequivocal trust in God's providence. Didymus consequently insists that these words—far from requiring excuse—exemplify the insight of the saint.

To pursue this exegetical strategy, Didymus blends close philological analysis with an appeal to the canons for depicting character in prose and poetry. He begins by emphasizing that the verses take the form of a petition. Interpreted with respect to natural phenomena, he observes, Job's wish is counterfactual and therefore impossible to fulfill. Could a sage truly petition God to grant something that defies the basic physics of time? How can darkness actually seize a day that has already passed?[37] This preliminary move invokes the practice of *ethopoeia*, the conventions that governed the construction of character.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle had asserted that characters should speak and act suitably to their social station, maintain consistency, and display a clear resemblance to previous representations of the character. Aristotle faulted depictions of characters that either attributed actions unsuitable to a character's dignity (such as the image of Odysseus engaging in lament) or expressed jarring discontinuities in conduct (he faulted here a depiction of Iphigenia which departed from her initial supplications).[38] By the end of the fourth century, analysis of character was integral to both grammatical and rhetorical education. Libanius' *progymnasmata* include numerous exercises on *ethopoeia*, requiring students to fashion appropriate speeches for epic and dramatic heroes: what would Achilles say at the funeral of Patroclus, or Medea before the slaughter of her children?[39] In his commentary on the comedies of Terence, the grammarian Donatus made *ethopoeia* the central stylistic criterion. Diodore and his successors

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[36] Julian, *Comm. Job* 3:4–5 (ed. D. Hagedorn; PTS 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1973), 35. See also John Chrysostom, *Comm. Job* 3:3 (ed. U. und D. Hagedorn; PTS 35; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990), 50–51; cf. ibid., 9:32b–10:1 (p. 99); 7:18b (pp. 86–87); and Olympiodorus, *Comm. Job.* 3:3 (ed. D. and U. Hagedorn; PTS 24; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1984), 37–38), who adds that the saint carefully directed the curse against past targets so that no present reality could be harmed.

[37] Didymus, *Comm. Job* 55.16–33, cf. *Comm. Job* 54.21–55.1

[38] Aristotle, *Poet.* 15 (1454a). I have used the translation of D. S. Margoliouth, *The Poetics of Aristotle* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 184–87.

[39] Libanius, *Opera Libanii* (ed. R. Foerster; Leipzig: Teubner, 1915), 8:361–437.

in the Antiochene school also employed the criterion of believable and consistent representation of character as part of their critical investigation of biblical history.[40]

In several instances in the Job commentary, Didymus points to the propriety of Job's speech and behavior.[41] In consequence, the ground is well prepared for him to invoke this criterion as the foundation for his criticism of the *philistores*:

> But should the *philistores* cling to the literal meaning, by supposing [Job] to be subject to such faint-heartedness, they would undo the courage of the saint, which the devil was unable to loosen. Nor would the devil be brought to shame by encountering his courage, nor would the Lord say to him: "do you think I would have treated you for any other reason than that your righteousness might be manifest?" (Job 40:8 LXX). Since the literal meaning does not yield a sense that is rational and suitable to the holy man, it is necessary to interpret according to the rules of allegory.[42]

In the "literal meaning," as promoted by the *philistores*, Job's curse is directed against natural phenomena. Didymus would acknowledge that this reading would constitute the plain meaning of the words Job utters, but he argues that literality must be subordinated to a higher requirement, that of maintaining consistency of character. Since Job has previously demonstrated his complete sanctity, these words demand a reading which would be "rational and suitable" to his holiness. The citation of Job 40:8 is more than a prooftext; the words of God in praise of Job direct the reader's interpretive activity. God's unqualified approval of Job reinforces the reliability of the narrative prologue as a full, exhaustive depiction of Job's character.

The theory of preexistence lurks in the background of this apology for allegory. Via the "rules of allegory," Didymus argues, Job's speech alludes to the precosmic drama through which embodied existence came to be. The saint does not, he asserts, petition the divine to prevent his own individual birth. Rather, he speaks on behalf of the entire human race, regarding as a "painful day and worthy of a curse" the fall by which rational souls became knit together with the body. Job petitions God to block the

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[40] On Donatus, see R. Jakobi, *Die Kunst der Exegese in Terenzkommentar* (Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte 47; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 158–76. On Diodore and Theodore of Mopsuestia with reference to the book of Job, see Schäublin, *Untersuchungen*, 77–83.

[41] Cf. Didymus, *Comm. Job* 49.15; 60.15; 64.19–33.

[42] Didymus, *Comm. Job* 55.33–56.20.

path to the entrance to corporeal life with a "thick darkness" that would hinder the "impulse to the inferior life."[43] In opposition to the *philistores*, Didymus presents the ancient hero as a sponsor for the Origenist theory of preexistence. It is equally the case, however, that Didymus invokes preexistence to substantiate his allegorical reading of Job's curse. As a sage who has perfectly disciplined his emotions, Job is capable of perceiving the hidden reality of nature and piercing the visible phenomena to understand the invisible reality of the soul. Didymus leverages the apparent scandal of Job's curse to deepen the portrait of the saint. Not only does Job brave the assaults of Satan—though that alone would be commendable— he also obtains the mystic insight of the contemplative.

Didymus embeds the appeal to the "rules of allegory" in a contention about the nature of scriptural language. Job's imprecations, as readers both inside and outside of Didymus's circle recognized, are perfectly understandable as corresponding to physical phenomena.[44] Didymus, by contrast, requires the reader to determine the meaning of ordinary terms such as "day" and "night" by their function in a wider network of referentiality. That network itself is established by a *historia* of Job which goes beyond the recounting of the remarkable feats of bravery by a past saint. This history aims more profoundly to provide a model of contemplative perfection for the ascetic believer to imitate.[45] An allegorical reading of Job's curse does not remove the reader from the text, but rather prods the reader to assimilate a new language capable of depicting this contemplative reality. By insisting on applying scriptural terms merely to external referents, the *philistores* undermine this *historia*. Didymus's explication, which initially appears to be simply a defense of allegory against literalism, brings to light contested ground over the character of biblical history which could not be resolved by direct appeals to exegetical method. As we turn to the second passage, the heavily disputed identification of the "skin tunics," the disparity between these two views of the idiom of biblical language and its fashioning of a narrative becomes even more sharply pronounced.

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[43] Didymus, *Comm. Job* 58.17–18; 59.29–60.1
[44] Cf. Didymus *Comm. Ps.* 34:17 (ed. M. Gronewald; PTA 8; Bonn: Habelt, 1969), 222.15– 226.11.
[45] Cf. Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 8–12, 54–55, 79–84.

Skin Tunics were not Skin Tunics:
Meaning and Reference in Biblical Terminology

In Genesis 3, after God issues judgment against the transgressors (vv. 14–19), Adam names the woman "Eve" (v. 20), and God makes skin tunics (*dermatinous chitonous*) for the couple before casting them from the Garden (vv. 21–24). The manufacture of these garments for the protoplasts raised a variety of questions for ancient readers. The simple, ubiquitous fabric of the tunic was typically a cotton or linen cloth, so what significance is to be discerned from this anomalous reference to a garment from animal hides? How did God obtain the hides without destroying an entire species of animals? Didymus, as will be discussed, solves these problems by seeing this episode as a reference to the formation of the present human body. This curious incident attracted rich interest in postbiblical literature and became a focal point for speculation in Judaism and Christianity about the fissure between the original human reality and the fallen condition in which it subsequently found itself.[46] As has been richly documented, the dispute over Origen had generated heated controversy in the exegesis of this passage by the time Didymus engaged in his debate with the *philistores*.[47] To situate Didymus's commentary, it will be useful to survey that earlier history, with a focus on the underappreciated literary dimension of the exegetical debate. Readers confronted the problem—as they did in explaining Job's speech—of how this action by God cohered with proper characterization of the divine. Philo, as is so often the case, was the first to investigate this question.

In his *Questions and Answers on Genesis,* Philo approached the tunics as an example of a problem of *ethopoeia*: why does Scripture attribute actions to God that are not "suitable" to the divine majesty? Just as the incongruity of Job's speech posed a difficulty of characterization for Didymus, so also

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[46] See, e.g., G. A. Anderson, "The Garments of Skin in Apocryphal Narrative and Biblical Commentary," in *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (ed. J. L. Kugel; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 101–43, and idem, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 117–34.

[47] P. F. Beatrice, "Le tuniche di pelle: Antiche letture di *Gen.* 3,21," in *La tradizione dell'Enkrateia: Motivazioni ontologiche e protologiche* (*Atti del Colloquio Internazionale Milano, 20–23 aprile 1982*) (ed. U. Bianchi; Rome: Ateneo, 1985), 433–82. See also M. Simonetti, "Didymiana," *Vetera christianorum* 21 (1984): 129–55; J. Daniélou, "Les Tuniques de Peau chez Grégoire de Nysse," in *Glaube, Geist, Geschichte: Festschrift für Ernst Benz zum 60. Geburtstage am 17. November 1967* (ed. G. Müller and W. Zeller; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 355–67; M. Simonetti, "Alcune osservazioni sull'interpretazione Origeniana di Genesi 2:7 e 3:21," *Aevum* 36 (1962): 370–81.

Philo found the menial nature of the actions attributed to God to require explanation. He addressed this perceived incongruity on two levels, the one ethical and the other anthropological. With respect to the former, Philo discerned a moral lesson in God's action. As God dignified this ordinary garment with such honor, so too the wise would forego the pursuit of luxury fabrics and dyes in favor of the unadorned utilitarian virtues of the tunic. Philo regarded this as the "literal" interpretation, inasmuch as the force of the ethical injunction depended upon the reader identifying the tunics with the simple attire worn by ordinary people. At the second level, Philo suggested that the tunic referred symbolically to the "natural skin of the body." Here as well, he identified an inherent propriety to the action. "It was proper," Philo asserted, "that the mind and sense should be clothed in the body as in a tunic of skin, in order that [God's] handiwork might first appear worthy of the divine power. And could the apparel of the human body be better or more fittingly made by any other power than God?"[48] Concern with *to prepon*—what is proper—directed Philo's response to the *quaestio* at both the literal and allegorical levels. With respect to the latter, he justified God's action by appeal to the magnificence of the human body. The investiture with the skin tunics was not a punishment of the first pair, but an attestation to God's incomparable "handiwork."

   Philo's solution to Gen 3:21 cast a long shadow over subsequent Christian interpretation, both in establishing the possible equation of the tunics with the body and also in identifying the fundamental exegetical question in terms of the appropriateness of God's action. While Valentinian exegetes followed Philo in regarding the skin tunics as the final layer that completed the embodied human self, an alternative strand of exegesis developed in the second century that linked the tunics to the narrative of transgression.[49] Irenaeus construed the tunics as an act of compassion by God, who provided them as a substitute for the penitential girdle of fig leaves (Gen 3:7) the couple had imposed upon themselves. Tertullian, by contrast, regarded the tunics as a symbol of God's judgment, the propriety of which he defended against Marcion. This judgment, Tertullian held, perfectly balanced the previous blessings of the creator. The earth, which had been blessed, now fell under a curse. The man, who had been erected

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[48] I have used the translation of R. Marcus, Philo, *QG* 1.53, in *Philo, Supplement 1: Questions and Answers on Genesis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953), 31.

[49] Clement of Alexandria, *Exc. Theod.* 55.1 (ed. F. Sagnard; SC 23; Paris: Cerf, 1948; repr. 1970), 170.

from the earth, now was "bent down toward the earth," and the one who had been naked and unashamed now was covered in "leather garments" (*scorteis vestibus*). The Eden narrative thus demonstrated, Tertullian concluded, that "the goodness of God precedes, in accordance with nature; the sternness comes afterward, in accordance with a cause."[50] As had Philo, both Tertullian and Irenaeus explicated the tunics in keeping with conventions of *ethopoeia*. Tertuallian harmonized the tunics with the prerogatives of divine sovereignty, while Irenaeus introduced the tunics as evidence of God's compassion.

Philo's approach to the tunics focused on the literary conventions of characterization. Irenaeus and Tertullian brought into consideration the necessity of causal relationships between elements in a well-formed plot. Origen united these two exegetical strands, joining the anthropological focus of the Alexandrian tradition with the insistence on narrative causality advocated by Irenaeus and Tertullian.[51] He began by taking up the *quaestio* raised by Philo concerning "unsuitable" (*aprepês*) actions attributed to God. It was "unworthy," Origen contended, to imagine God acting as a "leatherworker" and fashioning crude coverings from animal hides. One way to bring Gen. 3:21 in line with the criterion of suitability was to construe the tunics as "nothing other than [a quality] of the body."[52] If adopted, this solution to the *quaestio* would introduce a distinction between a prelapsarian state of human existence which was corporeal, but not "fleshly," and the postlapsarian condition in which human bodies were subjected to a heavy and corruptible quality designated as "flesh."[53] Whereas Philo could perceive that the tunics divulged the full beauty of God's handiwork, for Origen the tunics defaced and covered the unsullied luster of God's image within the casing of the postlapsarian body. In

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[50] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 3.23.5; Tertullian, *Marc.* 2.11.1–2 (ed C. Moreschini, *Tertulliani Adversus Marcionem* [Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino, 1971]).

[51] On Origen's interpretation, see in addition to Beatrice, "Le tuniche di pelle," and Simonetti, "Didymiana," C. Noce, *Vestis Varia: L'immagine della veste nell'opera di Origene* (SEAug 79; Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 2002), 99–108; and Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*, 115–33.

[52] Origen, *ad Gen.* 3:21 (F. Petit, *Catenae graecae in Genesim et in Exodum, vol. 2: Collectio Coisliniana in Genesim* [CCSG 15; Turnhout: Brepols, 1986]), fr. 121.

[53] Cf. Epiphanius, *Anc.* 62.2 (*Epiphanius I* [ed. K. Holl; GCS 25.1–2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915, 1922], p. 74), citing Origen as asserting that the tunic represents the "fleshly quality of the body, or the body itself" (*to sarkôdês tou sômatos ê auto to soma*). In a subsequent polemic against Origen, Epiphanius, *Haer.* 64.63.5 (*Epiphanius III* [ed. K. Holl; GCS 31; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922], pp. 500–01), attributes to Origen the view that the tunics represent the "earthy body" (*to gêinon soma*).

keeping, however, with his exegetical rigor, Origen proposed alternative means to resolve the *quaestio*. He recognized that whoever adopted the tunics-as-flesh interpretation would also need successfully to resolve a difficult problem, since in Gen 2:23, when the woman is presented to him, Adam declares, "This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."[54] To circumvent this difficulty, Origen acknowledged that some have understood the tunics as the quality of mortality that characterizes the postlapsarian body.[55] One might, however, lodge an objection from the perspective of *ethopoeia* to this interpretation as well. How is it said, for example, that *God* and not sin imposed the tunics on the transgressors? How can this action be reconciled with the quality of God's compassion for humanity?[56]

   In the extant fragment Origen did not definitively state a preference for one solution to the *quaestio*. His critics, however, had no doubt that he intended to promote the equation of the tunics with the postlapsarian fleshly body.[57] Before Origen, the tunics-as-bodies interpretation did not provoke strong opposition.[58] By the middle of the fourth century, however, this exegesis occasioned a storm of protest. Origen's analysis had altered the situation by bringing the historical dimension into relief. By incorporating Philo's allegory of the tunics into a narrative of the Fall, Origen treated the clothing of the humans as enacting the sentence of mortality. Consequently, the tunics did more than symbolize the human

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[54] In *Coisl.* fr. 121, Origen fails to provide a resolution to this apparent contradiction. Methodius, *Res.* 1.39 (*Methodius* (ed. G. N. Bonwetsch; GCS 27; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1917), pp. 282–83, expressed indignation that Origen had applied Gen 2:23 to "intelligible" bones and flesh—which may reflect at least one strategy employed by Origen (cf. Simonetti, "Alcune osservazioni," 377–78). Didymus, *In Gen.* 4:1–2 (ed. P. Nautin, *Didyme l'Aveugle: Sur la Genèse* [2 vols.; SC 233, 244; Paris: Cerf, 1976–1978]), 1:117.17, holds that Gen 2:23 is a prophetic utterance that finds its actualization at Gen 3:20, which may also have been suggested by Origen.

[55] Origen, *Hom. Lev.* 6.2 (ed. W. A. Baehrens, *Origenes Werke* VI; GCS 29; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1920), p. 362; Cf. Hippolytus *ad Gen* 3:21 (Petit, *La chaîne sur la Genèse*, frg. 437 [1.282–283]).

[56] In contending that death places a limit on the reign of evil, Methodius, *Res.* 1.38.5 (GCS 27.281–282) may respond to this objection.

[57] H. Crouzel, "Les critiques addresseés par Méthode et ses contemporains à la doctrine origénienne du corps ressuscité," *Gregorianum* 53 (1972): 679–716, esp. 707–09 expresses some doubt that Origen asserted a fully developed garments theory. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism*, 315–19, notes that the primary document targeted by Methodius's polemic is lost, and suggests that the interpretation of the tunics in view might have been contained in Origen's lost treatise on the resurrection.

[58] Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.5.5 and Tertullian, *Res.* 7 both note the Valentinian identification of the tunics with bodies, but do not expend energy in criticizing this reading.

condition in all its frailty: the act of covering caused a deep rift between the present human experience and its created glory "according to the image" (Gen. 1:26). For critics of Origen, this reading of Gen 3:21 was another point at which the Alexandrian exegete had dangerously detached the biblical language from its authentic *historia*. Epiphanius complained that Origen had introduced a "mythical theory" (*muthōdē theōrian*) that "the skin tunics which the divine Scripture said God made to be clothing for Adam were not skin tunics."[59] Didymus approaches his commentary on Genesis well aware of the allegation of mythology that accompanied critiques of Origenist doctrine.

Didymus first approaches this issue in his comment on the description of Adam and Eve's act of fashioning girdles from fig leaves (Gen 3:7). He challenges his critics to explain the numerous difficulties the narrative presents:

> It is fitting that those who adopt the historical sense (*tous tê historia hepom-enous*) should say, without abusive attack, how they stitched together aprons from the leaves of the fig, and how they heard the sound of the Lord walking about—they who had done things unworthy of such hearing; why the Lord walks about in the late afternoon, further, how they hid themselves under the tree, what conception they held about God. For I think in all these things they are not able to conserve the logic of the history (*ton heirmon tês histo-rias*) worthy of the narrative by the Holy Spirit.[60]

Didymus is doubtful that any explanation from such quarters could resolve these problems and yet provide the reader with a narrative of spiritual benefit.

He suggests that the couple's actions are better understood as the attempt to fashion a "plausible excuse" (rather than actual leafy coverings) for their action. To buttress this exegesis, Didymus undertakes a more general consideration of the nature of scriptural language. Scripture mentions "fig leaves," he says, because it is consistent with the form of the narrative (*akoulouthos to schēmati tēs historias*), in which previously both a "garden" and "nakedness" have been introduced. Therefore, he continues:

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[59] Epiphanius, *Anc.* 62.1–2 (*Epiphanius I* [ed. K. Holl; GCS 25.1–2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915, 1922],.1: 74); cf. idem., *Haer.* 64.4.9; 64.63.5; 64.66.5 (GCS 31. 412, 500–01, 508); *Ep. ad Ioh.* (=Jerome, *Ep.* 51.5.2 [*Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae* (ed. I. Hilberg; 3 vols.; CSEL 54–56; Vienna: Tempsky, 1910–1918), 54.403]), Jerome, *Jo. Hier.* 7 (*S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera: Opera polemica 3* [ed. P. Lardet and A. Canellis; CCSL 79A; Turnholt: Brepols], 13).

[60] Didymus, *In Gen.* 3:7–8 (1:84.12–18).

The text says, using the vocabulary suitable to the narrative (*oikeiō tēs diēgēseōs*) and consistent with the custom of the inspired Scripture, that the covering was made from leaves. For it often comes about in the divine instruction that the soul is called at one time a "vine," at one time a "sheep," at one time a "bride," and the Word consistently adds the fitting complement to each. When it hints that the soul is a vine, saying, "a luxurious vine is Israel" (Hos 10:1), then it calls the teachers "cultivators" and the enemies "foxes"; as in, "oppress for our sake the small foxes who have ravaged the vines" (Song 2:15). When Scripture names the soul a "sheep," teachers are said to be "shepherds" and those who pervert are "wolves" and "lions"; as it is said, "an errant sheep is Israel, lions have chased him out" (Jer 27:17). When it calls the soul a "bride," it names the one who leads to the truth the "bridegroom," and the one who does harm an "adulterer." All of these things, even if the names are different, receive a meaning that is appropriate and suitable to the divine spirit (*oikeian kai prepousan tō theiō pneumati*) when applied to the soul, not that the soul is either a sheep or a bride or a vine.[61]

Didymus grounds his explanation of the fig leaves in a conception of what constitutes appropriate (*prepon*) diction for Scripture and how that diction configures a narrative (*historia*).[62] As he does in his treatment of Job's curse, Didymus denies that scriptural language can be applied univocally to external referents. In the Eden narrative, Scripture represents the reality of the soul via a network of symbols and employs expressions consistent with that network. The meaning of "fig leaves," consequently, should be determined with respect to other terms in that particular scheme of the narrative (*to schēma tēs historias*). This *historia* is not an assemblage of diverse external realities underlying the text, but is constituted by the coherent interrelationship of the elements of that text (*ho heirmos tēs historias*). All of these elements combine to depict a single *pragma*—the soul—by use of various images. The practice of the prophets to refer to the entity of Israel under several figures provides the platform on which Didymus proposes to construct the Eden narrative as a *historia* of the soul.

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61   Ibid., 86.6–25.
62   Didymus does not define the term *historia* in this context. Philo, *Mos.* 2.45–47, divides the Pentateuch into narrative (*historia*) and law. The designation *historia* refers to the narrative form and not to the attempt to chronicle human events. In several instances, Philo insists that the narrative is a vehicle for things that can benefit the soul (see, e.g., *Cong.* 44, *Somn.* 1.52). Clement of Alexandria, *Str.* 1.28.176.1–3, identifies a four-fold division: narrative (*historikon*), legislative (*nomothetikon*), sacral (*hierourgikon*), and doctrinal (*theologikon*), and correlates the first two with the ethical level of philosophical instruction. For both writers, narrative is primarily an instrument for moral cultivation.

This theoretical digression in the exegesis of the fig leaves underlies Didymus's interpretation of the skin tunics. As the comment is quite lengthy, I will restrict the discussion to the portion that deals most directly with rebutting his opponents. To facilitate discussion, I divide the comment into three sections:

> [A] It is quite appropriate that the future mother of all (cf. Gen. 3:20) should be joined with the man when the skin tunics are made, which someone might say is nothing other than [a quality] of the bodies.
>
> [B] For if the *philistores* will judge that God made garments from skins, why is it also added "he clothed them," since they had the ability to do this themselves? They, who stitched together girdles for themselves from leaves, were not ignorant of coverings.
>
> [C] But it is evident that the body is called "skin" in many places of the divine instructions. [*C1*] For the blessed Job says, "I know that everlasting is the one who will release me, to resurrect my skin upon earth that has endured these things" (Job 19:25–26). It is clear to everyone that Job speaks about his own body. [*C2*] And again the same person says similar things concerning himself: "You have clothed me in skin and flesh, with bones and nerves you have strung me together" (Job 10:11). This is clear and perfectly manifest proof that the body is the skin tunics, because Job also makes mention of the "clothing," which is also said with respect to the first-molded humans.[63]

In this excerpt, Didymus sustains a tightly connected argument to secure the tunics-as-bodies interpretation. At the outset, he concisely establishes the logic for the alteration in the human condition occurring at this point in the Genesis narrative [A]. He next anticipates the primary objection, both identifying the position assumed by the *philistores* and stating his initial rebuttal to their criticism [B]. In [C], Didymus marshals supporting evidence for his contention by reference to analogous terminology used elsewhere in Scripture. At the heart of this compact argument is the contention that identifying the tunics with the physical body as presently experienced in the fallen, material world is the only means to maintain a coherent narrative that would be worthy—as he previously argued—of the Holy Spirit.

In his introductory sentence [A], Didymus connects the tunics to Adam's naming of the woman in 3:20. In explicating that verse, Didymus asserts that "a prophetic understanding" illuminated Adam in naming the woman "Life," because he recognized that the two of them would soon be cast

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63 Didymus, *In Gen.* 3:21 (1:106.10–26).

out of the garden.[64] Didymus now calls attention to the "appropriateness"
(*katallēlōs*) of this sequence. The fashioning of the tunics which follows
upon Adam's declaration of Eve's significance is a necessary precondition
of her future role as "mother of all living." By making this brief recollec-
tion at the outset of the comment to 3:21, Didymus links the two verses in
terms of prophecy and fulfillment. The single sentence of [A] establishes
the primary assertion and its justification in terms of plot coherence and
ethopoeia. God's action fulfills Adam's visionary statement, as the tunics
bestow upon the protoplasts the sexual functionality necessary for procre-
ation. It simultaneously answers the implicit *quaestio* that had persisted
since Philo: how is this action appropriate to God? The comment also
quite obviously provides an etiology for human sexuality, but Didymus
defers elaborating on this aspect in order to clear away anticipated objec-
tions to his exegesis.[65]

He begins this task in [B] with a compact two-sentence critique that
both attacks his opponents and defends the interpretation of the tunics as
bodies. Didymus telescopes the spectrum of variant interpretations, ignor-
ing both Irenaeus's suggestion that the tunics are signs of penance and
Origen's alternative reading of the tunics as mortality. Didymus holds that
the *philistores* fail to account for a critical detail, namely that the narrative
attributes to God the actual act of clothing. He recasts Philo's *quaestio*
of the suitability of attributing such a menial action to the character of
God.[66] Where his predecessor invoked the conventions of *ethopoeia* as
an exegetical problem to be investigated, Didymus raises the same issue
as a fatal defect in his opponents' position. As noted above, Origen had
targeted the impropriety of God's action as a *constructor* of tunics as the
primary exegetical difficulty that prevented the application of the verse
to actual physical garments. Antiochene interpreters subsequently devel-
oped a counterargument to defuse Origen's objection to the depiction
of God as a "leatherworker." In his homilies on Genesis, John Chrysos-
tom informs his listeners: "As I have often said, now I say again, let us
understand everything in a manner which befits God (*theoprepōs*). Let us
understand 'God made' to mean 'God ordered.' God commanded them to
be clothed with skin tunics as a constant reminder of the transgression."[67]

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[64] Didymus, *In Gen.* 3:20 (1:105.21–22).

[65] Cf. Didymus, *In Gen.* 3:21 (1:106.26–107.20).

[66] On Didymus' debt to Philo in the Genesis commentary, see, e.g., Nautin, *Didyme l'Aveugle*, 1:26–27; Layton, *Didymus the Blind*, 98, 144–45.

[67] John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.* 18.1 (ed. B. De Montfaucon; PG 53.150).

Chrysostom does not identify how this command was carried out, but a comment by a Latin heresiologist, Filastrius of Brescia, may reflect how the Antiochene commentators explained the implementation of this order. Scripture does not, Filastrius asserts, declare that God fashioned the tunics. Instead, God granted to the man and the woman the wisdom "so that they might make for themselves clothing for the bodies, as it is written, 'Who gave to women wisdom to fabricate tunics'" (see Job 38:36 LXX). Filastrius, probably in dependence on a Greek source, correlates Genesis with Job to argue for a naturalistic reading of the narrative that would obviate the necessity for God's direct action.[68]

In singling out the moment when God *bestows* the garments on the couple, Didymus might anticipate this rebuttal to Origen. The additional phrase that "God clothed them" should alert the reader to the unique nature of garments which the humans would be physically incapable of donning themselves. Moreover, Didymus adds, "they, who stitched together girdles for themselves from leaves, were not ignorant of coverings." That is, if God supplied such "wisdom" as critics like Filastrius contended, the previous narrative has already demonstrated that such instruction was superfluous. In [B], Didymus does not simply restate Origen's exegetical investigation, but adds precision to sharpen the original critique of a naturalistic reading of the verse.

In the next section [C], Didymus anticipates and defuses a further objection from the *philistores*. The argument is that Scripture, in qualifying the tunics as *dermatinous*, could not be referring to the body itself, as the skin represents only the outermost layer of the body.[69] In reply Didymus references two verses from Job to argue that Scripture employs the term "skin" (*derma*) as a *synecdoche* for "body." The second verse [C2] is particularly important for Didymus. The saint, addressing God, holds that "you have clothed me in skin and flesh" (Job 10:11), and Didymus emphasizes that the same verb (*enduō*) is used in both Job and Genesis.[70] In Job,

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[68] Filastrius, *Diversarum Hereseon Liber*, 89 (ed. F. Marx; CSEL 38; Vienna: Tempsky, 1898, p. 82). Filastrius's citation of Job 38:36, *Quis dedit mulierbus sapientiam ad texendas tunicas*, varies significantly from the Vetus Latina: *Quis dedit texturae sapientiam, aut varietatis disciplinem* (cf. Ambrose, *Hex.* I.1.6; *Fid. Grat.*, II.prol.). This variation suggests that Filastrius obtained the citation as it was already embedded in a polemical argument against Origenist readings of Gen 3:21. Procopius, *in Gen.* 3:21 (PG 87.220) also cites Job 38:36 in the context of interpretation of Gen 3:21.

[69] Cf. Tertullian, *Res.* 7.

[70] Didymus, *Comm. Job* 277.28–278.4, makes a similar use of the Job text. Beatrice, "Le tuniche di Pelle," 442–43, notes that Macarius Magnes, probably a younger contemporary of Didymus, also links Job 10:11 with Gen 3:21.

God is said to "clothe" the human by fashioning his body, in a context that cannot be reasonably taken to refer to garments.

This compact response to the *philistores* is permeated by an awareness of the accusation that the allegorists fabricate myths. First, Didymus links the tunics directly to the preceding action of Adam, establishing a thread that binds his interpretation of the tunics to the entire Eden narrative [A]. Second, the rebuttal to the adversaries identifies perceived shortcomings in the conventional appropriation of that narrative [B]. Finally, Didymus attempts to demonstrate that the narrative as a whole is shaped by the idiomatic diction of the biblical writers [C]. At each of these points, Didymus strives not only to defend his particular exegesis of the tunics, but also to claim for an Origenist reading the authority of *historia*. It is especially telling that Didymus avoids framing the exegesis of Gen 3:21 as a choice between literal and allegorical interpretations. He advances a more radical proposition, namely that the soul is the proper *pragma* referred to in the Eden *historia*. The contrast with Philo in this respect is striking. In his dual exegesis of the tunics, Philo construed Scripture as conveying a moral lesson through the guise of the humble tunic. His allegory was premised on the view that by "skin tunics" Scripture *intended* the reader to visualize the familiar garment. Allegorical interpretation supplemented the "literal" meaning by supplying a motivation for the apparently anomalous action of God. Didymus, by contrast, holds that the *intent* of the text is to convey with its own idiomatic vocabulary the investiture of humans with the bodies they now experience in this fallen existence. If this is an "allegorical" reading, Didymus refuses to reduce it to the function of supplementing the literal. Didymus is not content to allow the opposition—the *philistores*—to determine the "literal" meaning of the text. In his comments on Gen 3:21, Didymus does not simply defend his exegesis, he also contests the concept of what *constitutes* the "literal" meaning of the text.

Conclusion

I have argued that Didymus' critique of the *philistores* is best understood against the advocacy for the primacy of *historia* as it emerged in anti-Origenist exegesis of commentators such as Diodore of Tarsus. While it is not possible to define with precision this group of opponents, they did influence how Didymus defended the Origenian theological and exegetical legacy. In these two skirmishes with the *philistores*, Didymus contests conceptions of both the nature of biblical language and the grammar that

controls its expression. Didymus responds vigorously to his critics, mounting a defense that aims to expose his rivals as pursuing a false literalism that does violence to the coherence of Scripture. For the *philistores*—at least insofar as they are represented by Didymus—biblical language approximates everyday speech. The position of the *philistores* is more than simple advocacy of the "literal" meaning: it also relates to the nature of biblical language and the prerequisite knowledge required by the reader. Their reading of Job's curse and the skin tunics is premised on the conviction that the *intent* of Scripture is to depict the usual things that are referred to with such terms. To the extent that accurate exegesis conveys the intent of the divine author, it is necessary to remain true to these terms.

Didymus, by contrast, forcefully argues for accepting scriptural language as defined by its own idiom. He aims in part to demonstrate the inadequacy of seeing a simple correspondence between scriptural language and everyday speech. Didymus shifts the exegetical process from the explanation of the referentiality of words to the explanation of the interconnection of narrative elements. Nevertheless, Didymus does not simply champion narrative over words, the whole over the part. A coherent reading of Job could be sustained on the basis of the understanding that the hero curses his actual, physical birth. A coherent reading of Genesis likewise could be sustained on the basis of assigning to the protoplasts actual leather garments. Critical to Didymus's conception is the principle that the narrative be "worthy of the Holy Spirit." The formal principle of narrative coherence requires the material substance of the Spirit's infusion into the structure of that narrative. This pneumatological principle governs what is "suitable": a narrative is suitable if it cultivates the virtues of the believers and imbues them with the spiritual gifts that enable their maturation in the *ekklēsia*. Consequently, a *historia* authored by the Holy Spirit has as its object the unfolding of the hidden history of the soul.

EXEGETING THE ESCHATON:
DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE AND THE APOCALYPSE

Sergio La Porta

The corpus of works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian convert of Paul mentioned in Acts 17:34, consists of five texts: the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the *Divine Names*, the *Mystical Theology*, and the *Letters*.[1] This body of work forms one of the more controversial collections of texts in the history of Christian literature. The authorship, dating, structure, meaning and impact of the texts remain debated nearly fifteen hundred years after their introductory circulation. I accept the general scholarly consensus that the texts were composed around the year 500 CE and that they were probably written by someone in Syria who was Greek speaking.[2] Over twenty possibilities have been forwarded revealing the true identity of the Areopagite, although none of them is entirely convincing.[3]

Dionysius's most renowned contributions to Christian thought consist of his clear formulation and application of *kataphatic* and *apophatic* theology,[4] as well as his hierarchical arrangement of the universe, which

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[1] Henceforth, the tractates are abbreviated as follows: *CH, EH, DN, MT, Epp. CD* designates the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. It is generally agreed that the corpus reflects the conscious arrangement of its author, who intended the individual treatises to be understood within the context of the entire *CD*; the exact order of the works remains contentious, see n. 7 below. All citations of the *CD* are from the two-volume critical edition, *Corpus Dionysiacum. 1: De divinis nominibus* (ed. B. R. Suchla; PTS 33; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1990); *2: De coelesti hierarchia; De ecclesiastica hierarchia; De mystica theologia; Epistulae* (ed. G. Heil, A. Ritter; PTS 36; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991). All references in this paper first provide the column number and section of the edition of B. Corderius (Antwerp: Plantin-Moretus, 1634), as printed in PG 3, followed by the volume, page, and line number of the critical edition. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[2] On these issues see *DSAM* 3: 245–64; A. Louth, *Denys The Areopagite* (London: Chapman; Wilton, Conn.: Morehouse–Barlow, 1989), 1–16; R. Roques, *Structures théologiques de la Gnôse à Richard de Saint-Victor: Essais et analyses critiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 63–91.

[3] See the list of conjectured identities for Dionysius published in R. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius: A Study in the Form and Meaning of the Pseudo-Dionysian Writings* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), 31–35.

[4] H.-C. Puech, "La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique," *Études Carmélitaines* 23/2 (1938): 33–53; V. Lossky, "La théologie negative dans la doctrine de Denys l'Aréopagite," *RSPT* 28 (1939): 204–21; R. Roques, "Symbolisme et théologie negative chez le Pseudo-Denys," *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé* 1 (1957):

provided his readers with the names and order of the nine ranks of angels.[5] Of yet greater impact, particularly in Eastern Christianity, was the Areopagite's exegetical methodology for interpreting scripture and the liturgy,[6] an approach that Dionysius termed anagogical, "uplifting." This anagogical exegesis employed interpretative strategies in order to uplift the soul of the reader from the physical symbols of the biblical text and the liturgical activity to the incorporeal and intelligible Divine realities.[7] This method was not original—he obviously benefited from earlier exegetes such as Origen—but his ability to present it in a systematic and cohesive manner was groundbreaking.[8]

97–112; P. Scazzoso, "Valore del superlativo nel linguaggio pseudo-dionisiano," *Aevum* 32 (1958): 434–46; idem, "La terminologia misterica nel Corpus pseudo-areopagitico," *Aevum* 37 (1963): 406–29.

[5] R. Roques, "La notion de hiérarchie selon le Pseudo-Denys," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 17 (1949): 183–222; H. Goltz, *Hierà mesiteia: Zur Theorie der hierarchischen Societät im Corpus Areopagiticum* (Erlangen: Lehrstuhl für Geschichte und Theologie des christlichen Ostens an der Universität Erlangen, 1974). For the placement of Dionysius's angelology within a broader trajectory, see P. S. Alexander, "Qumran and the Genealogy of Western Mysticism," in *New Perspectives on Old Texts: Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 9–11 January, 2005* (ed. E. G. Chazon, B. Halpern-Amaru, and R. A. Clements; STDJ 88; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 215–35; see esp. 233–35.

[6] By liturgy I denote the texts read and, even more importantly within a Dionysian context, the actions performed during ecclesiastical services.

[7] Dionysius's aim to establish an effective hermeneutical approach is evident from the opening three chapters of *CH*, which provide a methodological introduction not only to that work, but to *EH* and *DN* as well. I subscribe to the ordering of the books (*CH EH DN MT Epp.*) found in the edition of Corderius; in the oldest manuscript of *CD* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Cod. Gr. 437, dated to 827; this codex is missing *MT*); and in several other good witnesses to the text; over against the unattested sequence (*DN MT CH EH Epp.*) adopted by M. de Gandillac in his French translation, *Oeuvres complètes du Pseudo-Denys L'Aréopagite* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1943; repr. 1980). This latter sequence, based on internal indications, is also argued for by Roques in *Structures théologiques*, 132–34, and followed by C. Luibheid and P. Rorem in their English translation, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (CWS; London: SPCK; Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1987). I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Pseudo-Dionysius," in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (ed. H. Armstrong; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 460 n. 6, considers *DN* to have served as an introduction to the entire corpus. He is supported in this contention by the Syriac translation of Sergius of Reš'ainā (d. 536) (*DN CH EH MT Epp.*); this is also the sequence adopted by the editors of the critical edition of the Greek text of the *CD*. The order *CH DN EH MT Epp.* is also well attested in the Greek tradition, however (see the remarks of B. R. Suchla in the introduction to her critical edition of *DN*, 36–38), which further lends support to the primary position of *CH*.

[8] E. von Ivánka, "La signification historique du 'Corpus Areopagiticum,'" *RevScRel* 36 (1949): 5–24; V. Lossky, "La notion des 'analogies' chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 5 (1930): 279–309; P. Rorem, "The Uplifting Spirituality of Pseudo-Dionysius," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (ed. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff; New York: Crossroad, 1986), 132–51. A similar

While much early scholarly attention had been devoted to the issue of Dionsyius's identity as well as to the degree of Neoplatonic influence upon his work,[9] more recent work has explored the significance of his exegetical methodology.[10] Although a comprehensive assessment of Dionysius's impact upon later biblical and liturgical exegetical traditions remains a *desideratum*, progress has been made in the evaluation of the corpus's

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exegetical methodology is employed, for example, by Ephrem the Syrian; cf. S. P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian, 1992), ch. 2. On the relationship between Dionysius and earlier Syriac writers, see A. Golitzin, "Hierarchy versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994): 152–72; and idem, *Et introibo ad altare dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius the Areopagite, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Analecta Blatadon 59; Thessalonike, Greece: Patriarchikon Idruma Paterikon Meleton, 1994), 368–85. On Dionysius as a reader of Origen, see I. Perczel, "Denys l'Aréopagite, lecteur d'Origène," in Bienert and Kühneweg, *Origeniana Septima*, 673–710; see also R. Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins de la divine liturgie du VIIᵉ au XVᵉ siècle* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Byzantines, 1966), 65–72.

   [9] There is a vast literature on the relationship of the corpus to Neoplatonism; see, for example, H. Koch, "Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre des Bosen," *Philologus* 54 (1895): 438–54; idem, *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinem Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen: Eine litterarhistorische Untersuchung* (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1900); S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); E. von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus: Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), ch. 6: "Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita"; E. Corsini, *Il trattato "De Divinis Nominibus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide* (Torino: Giappichelli, 1962); M. Schiavone, *Neoplatonismo e cristianismo nello Pseudo-Dionigi* (Milano: Marzorati, 1963); J. Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagiten in der Lehre vom Übel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895): 253–73, 721–48; C. Steel, "Denys et Proclus: L'existence du mal," in *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa posterité en Orient et en Occident* (ed. Y. de Andia; Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 1996), 86–116; H.-D. Saffrey, "New Objective Links Between the Pseudo-Dionysius and Proclus," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought* (ed. D. O'Meara; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 64–74; idem, "Un lien objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," in *Papers Presented to the Fourth International Conference on Patristic Studies held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1963* (ed. F. L. Cross; StPatr 7–9; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1966), 9:98–105; J. M. Rist, "Pseudo-Dionysius, Neoplatonism, and the Weakness of the Soul," in *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honor of Edouard Jeauneau* (ed. H. Westra; STGM 35; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 135–61.

   [10] See in particular, P. Rorem, *Biblical and Liturgical Symbols within the Pseudo-Dionysian Synthesis* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984); Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare dei*. A notable but short study of the exegetical framework of Dionysius's methodology was completed by G. Horn, "Comment Denys le pseudo-Aréopagite interprète l'Écriture d'après la Hiérarchie Céleste, Ch. II," *RSR* 20 (1930): 45–48.

influence on specific authors, particularly, in Western Christendom.[11] The Areopagite's contribution to Eastern Christianity, especially in its non-Greek-writing forms, and to the development of biblical and liturgical hermeneutics, has received less treatment, though appreciation of *CD*'s significance within these traditions has slowly increased.[12]

One of the remarkable features of Dionysius's work is the number of allusions to the Apocalypse of John (Revelation). The Apocalypse was certainly not the most frequently interpreted biblical text in late antiquity. With the exception of Origen, whose commentary on the Apocalypse has survived in fragments, there is a clear avoidance of this text by

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[11] There are a number of studies, for example, of the influence of the Dionysian corpus on the thought of John Eriugena, the Victorines and Thomas Aquinas. For a general survey of its impact in the West, see *DSAM* 3: 318–430. Cf. also the valuable collection of essays edited by de Andia, *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa posterité en Orient et en Occident*; and *Die Dionysius-Rezeption im Mittelalter* (ed. T. Boiadjiev, G. Kapriev, and A. Speer; Turnholt: Brepols, 2000). In both volumes, however, in the section concerning Dionysius and the East there is hardly any attention paid to the non-Greek reception of the corpus. See also P. Rorem, "The Early Latin Dionysius: Eriugena and Hugh of St. Victor," *Modern Theology* 24/4 (2008): 601–4; and idem, *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005). Rorem also remarks on the medieval *nachleben* of the CD in his *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[12] See, e.g., *DSAM* 3: 286–318, which, however, focuses on Greek and Syriac authors and concludes that Dionysius's influence on eastern spirituality was not extensive. For more positive assessments of the Areopagite's influence on Eastern Christianity, see A. Louth, "The Influence of Denys the Areopagite on Eastern and Western Spirituality in the Fourteenth Century," *Sobornost* 4 (1982): 185–200; and more recently, "The Reception of Dionysius in the Byzantine World: Maximus to Palamas," *Modern Theology* 24/4 (2008): 585–99. In the same volume of *Modern Theology*, which is dedicated to a reevaluation of Dionysius, I. Perczel has looked at the reception of the corpus in the early sixth century in the Syriac tradition, "The Earliest Syriac Reception of Dionysius," *Modern Theology* 24/4 (2008): 557–71; and see also the earlier study of J.-M. Hornus, "Le Corpus Dionysien en Syriaque," *Parole d'Orient* 1 (1970): 69–93. P. Rorem and J. Lamoreaux have published a study and translation of the Greek scholia on CD by John of Scythopolis, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998). For studies of the reception of the Corpus in Armenian, see R. Thomson, "The Armenian Version of Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita," *Acta Jutlandica* 27 (1982): 115–23; S. La Porta, " 'The Theology of the Holy Dionysius,' Volume III of Grigor Tat'ewac'i's *Book of Questions*: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 2001); idem, "The Reception and Influence of the Corpus of Works Attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite in the Medieval Armenian Spiritual Tradition," *ARC: The Journal of the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University* 35 (2007): 211–26; idem, *Two Anonymous Sets of Scholia on Dionysius the Areopagite's Heavenly Hierarchy* (CSCO 623–24; Scriptores armeniaci 29–30; Leuven: Peeters, 2008); idem, *The Armenian Scholia on Dionysius the Areopagite: Studies on their Literary and Philological Tradition* (CSCO 625; Subsidia 122; Louvain: Peeters, 2008).

Greek exegetes until the sixth century.[13] The aversion to the Apocalypse was even greater in the non-Greek East, where its canonical status was in doubt until the seventh century or later.[14] In purely quantitative terms, Dionysius alludes to the Apocalypse more than any other biblical text save the Psalms.[15] There are, of course, a few caveats to that statement. First, the Apocalypse itself contains a number of references to other biblical books, particularly the Pauline epistles. Thus, it is not always possible to know which reference Dionysius had in mind. Second, a quantitative analysis is not necessarily the best way to judge the importance of a text for an author. A long citation and prolonged discussion of a verse from Isaiah could mean more than seven references to the Apocalypse in a list of adjectives culled from a variety of places that describe angelic beings.

Dionysius's familiarity with and high estimation of the book is nonetheless evident.[16] In his final letter (*Ep.* 10, *To John*) he praises John, exiled on Patmos, as a truly beloved and blessed soul whose tormentors Dionysius criticizes.[17] There is no doubt that Dionysius values John as the author of the Apocalypse no less than as the author of the Gospel. The title of the letter designates John not only as "apostle" and "evangelist," but also as "theologian" and "an exile on the island of Patmos," echoing Rev 1:9. In the body of the letter, Dionysius is concerned with the fate of souls "in the times to come" (ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσι τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις), intimating that it is the author of the Apocalypse that he has in mind in this context.[18] It is possible that the Areopagite's criticism of those who abuse John constitutes a veiled attack on those who did not accept the Apocalypse as

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[13] Cf. B. Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (2d ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2003), 49, 168; for a summary of the complex status of the Apocalypse in the early Greek Church, see B. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 216–17.

[14] B. Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 219–24.

[15] P. Rorem, "The Biblical Allusions and Overlooked Quotations in the Pseudo-Dionysian Corpus," in *Papers Presented to the Tenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford, 1987* (ed. E. Livingstone; StPatr 19–23; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 23: 61–65, p. 62.

[16] We may note that in his *Commentary on Revelation* Andrew of Caesarea (563–614) includes Dionysius the Areopagite among patristic authors who had studied the Apocalypse; this remark is repeated in Nersēs Lambronac'i's (1153–1198) colophon to his Armenian translation and adaptation of this work; see R. Thomson, *Nerses of Lambron: Commentary on the Revelation of Saint John* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 14.

[17] *Ep.* 10 (1117A=2:208.4–9). The *Epp.* are pseudepigraphic, of course, but recall the early Christian epistolary tradition of the Pauline letters and of those found in the first three chapters of the Apocalypse of John.

[18] 1117B=2:208.10.

canonical. The explicit esteem accorded the author of the Apocalypse further suggests that when Dionysius cites or alludes to a verse that may be from a text other than the Apocalypse, the latter context was prominent if not necessarily foremost in his mind.

   Despite the Areopagite's reverence for John and the Apocalypse, his exegetical technique of anagogical symbolism strips that text of any literal import and particularly of any mythological power.[19] It is fitting that Dionysius's evocation of the Apocalypse comes in *Ep.* 10, the final text of *CD*;[20] by this point, his anagogical methodology, which precludes the possibility of reading and understanding the Apocalypse literally or dramatically, has long been assimilated by the reader. For example, when discussing the judgment of humanity in the letter, Dionysius emphasizes that it will not be God who will separate himself from the wicked, but the wicked who will separate themselves from him.[21] The violent and dramatic depiction of God's wrathful judgment presented in the Apocalypse is transformed into the individual's self-destruction and turning away from God.[22] This reading of the Apocalypse conforms to Dionysius's concept of salvation and to his eschatological vision. The majority of research dedicated to his soteriology has focused upon the salvation of the individual through union with God or through divinization.[23] This dimension is particularly pronounced in the Areopagite's writings, but he also depicts a more communal or universal salvation, to which I now turn.

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   [19] In this letter Dionysius reminds his reader of the Pauline dictum (Rom 1:20) that the power of the visible rests in its ability to reveal the invisible; in other words, that the power of the text is unleashed through decoding its invisible (i.e., nonliteral) meaning. See *Ep.* 10: "Truly the visible is the manifest image of the invisible," Ἀληθῶς ἐμφανεῖς εἰκόνες εἰσὶ τὰ ὁρατὰ τῶν ἀοράτων (1117B=2:208.9–10); cf. Rom 1:20: τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθορᾶται, ἥ τε ἀΐδιος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θειότης, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους. Dionysius had explicitly invoked this Pauline passage in the previous letter, *Ep.* 9, *To Titus* (1108B=2:199), which is specifically concerned with his approach to biblical and liturgical symbols; see Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary*, 24–27; Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order*, 104–25.
   [20] Although there is some dispute regarding the exact order of the books within the corpus, the consistent position of the *Epp.* as the last text in the *CD*, and the regularity of their particular internal order in the manuscript tradition, suggest that this sequence represents a conscious decision on the part of the author; on the different arrangements of the texts in the *CD*, see n. 7 above.
   [21] *Ep.* 10: Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσι τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις αἴτιος ἔσται τῶν ἐξ αὐτοῦ δικαίων ἀφορισμῶν ὁ Θεός, ἀλλ' οἱ τοῦ Θεοῦ παντελῶς ἑαυτοὺς ἀφορίσαντες (1117B=2:208.10–12).
   [22] Other such statements may be found particularly concentrated in *CH* 15, *DN* 1, and *Ep.* 9.
   [23] See, with extensive bibliography, Y. de Andia, *Henosis: L'union à Dieu chez Denys L'Aréopagite* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

Dionysius's eschatology has received little scholarly consideration. Since Stiglmeyer's treatment of the subject in 1899,[24] only Daley, in his handbook of patristic eschatology, has revisited this topic.[25] His examination of Dionysius's eschatological thought, however, remains limited to a discussion of the important passage in Chapter 7 of *EH* that explains the funeral rite (PG 3:551–69=2:120–32). Dionysius's presentation of the afterlife in this chapter is very "orthodox": he defends the doctrine of the physical resurrection[26] and regards as foolish notions of a purely spiritual resurrection,[27] of the transmigration of souls,[28] as well as of the idea that the beatitude promised to the saints is of the same order as material happiness in this world.[29] Dionysius is not very explicit about the rewards and punishments of the world to come, except that the righteous person looks forward in anticipation at the end of his life to the eternal joy he will experience,[30] while the wicked one will look on in dread as he comes to the realization of his error.[31]

This presentation of the meaning of the funeral rite occurs in the first part of the chapter. The Areopagite divides his analysis of the rite into three parts: a basic introduction to the ritual, an overview of the liturgical action, and a deeper penetration into its hidden meaning, designated *theōria* by Dionysius.[32] In the third section of the chapter, Dionysius returns to the question of reward and punishment; he makes clear that the individual's reward and punishment will be proportionate to the degree to which he imitated God in this life.[33] For this reason, he says, the bishop sends up a prayer of thanksgiving for God's just judgment during the ritual.[34] Dionysius also notes, alluding to the biblical descriptions of heaven in the funeral rite, that the reward for the just will be immortality "in the light and land of the living" (ἐν φωτὶ καὶ χώρᾳ ζώντων), "in the place where pain and grief and lamentation shall flee away" (ἐν τόπῳ, οὗ ἀπέδρα

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[24]   J. Stiglmayr, "Die Eschatologie des Pseudo-Dionysius," *ZKT* 23 (1899): 1–21.
[25]   Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 183–84.
[26]   *EH* 7; 553AB=2:120.22–121.4.
[27]   *EH* 7; 553BC=2:121.10–12.
[28]   *EH* 7; 553C=2:121.14–15.
[29]   *EH* 7; 553C=2:121.17–21.
[30]   *EH* 7; 553D=2:121.23–122.3.
[31]   *EH* 7; 556A=2:122.6–11.
[32]   Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins*, 67–69; Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 57.
[33]   *EH* 7; 557A=2:123.22–124.2.
[34]   *EH* 7; 557B=2:124.3–5.

ὀδύνη καὶ λύπη καὶ στεναγμός).[35] Here, the saints will live in heaven's age-less and most blessed fulfillment which is beyond human understanding.

This is what the Areopagite divulges in *EH* 7; but there is another passage that discusses such matters in *DN* 8.9 that, to my knowledge, has not received detailed examination and sheds light on how we are to interpret Dionysius's vision of the afterlife and salvation.[36] In contradistinction to the passage in *EH* 7, which focuses on the individual, this passage attempts to redefine a cosmic notion of salvation.

Dionysius here remarks that divine justice (ἡ θεία δικαιοσύνη) is sometimes called in scripture "salvation of the whole" (σωτηρία τῶν ὅλων).[37] He further explains that it is so called because it maintains (ἀποσώζω) and preserves (φυλάττω) each thing in that which is proper to it and pure of any other essence and order.[38] He then notes that if one were to praise salvation (σωτηρία) as that which snatches up (ἀναρπάζω) everything from evil, he would not object to such a definition;[39] however, he would fundamentally define salvation as

> that which preserves (διασώζουσαν) all things immutable in themselves and without strife and without inclining towards evil, guarding (φρορεῦσαν) everything, arranging (διακοσμούμενα) each thing without battle and without war according to its proper reason, and banishing all inequality and foreign conduct (ἀλλοτριοπραγίαν) from the whole, and establishing (συνιστάνουσαν) the proportion (τὰ ἀναλογία) of each without changing to its opposite and without changing its place.
>
> τὴν πάντα ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν ἀμετάβλητα καὶ ἀστασίαστα καὶ ἀρρεπῆ πρὸς τὰ χείρω διασώζουσαν καὶ πάντα φρουροῦσαν ἄμαχα καὶ ἀπολέμητα τοῖς ἑαυτῶν ἕκαστα λόγοις διακοσμούμενα καὶ πᾶσαν ἀνισότητα καὶ ἀλλοτριοπραγίαν ἐκ τῶν ὅλων ἐξορίζουσαν καὶ τὰς ἀναλογίας ἑκάστου συνιστάνουσαν ἀμεταπτώτους εἰς τὰ ἐναντία καὶ ἀμεταχωρήτους.[40]

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[35] *EH* 7; 560B=2:125.12–14; Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 184.

[36] Schiavone, *Neoplatonismo e cristianismo*, 116, briefly discusses the attributes of salvation and redemption within the context of Dionysius's discussion of justice.

[37] *DN* 8.9 (896D=1:205.16): Αὕτη γοῦν ἡ θεία δικαιοσύνη καὶ σωτηρία τῶν ὅλων ὑμνεῖται; cf. Rev 19:1.

[38] *DN* 8.9 (896D=1:205.17–18): τὴν ἰδίαν ἑκάστου καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίαν καὶ τάξιν ἀποσώζουσα καὶ φυλάττουσα.

[39] *DN* 8.9 (896D–897A=1:205.20–206.1): Εἰ δέ τις τὴν σωτηρίαν ὑμνοίη, καὶ ὡς ἐκ τῶν χειρόνων τὰ ὅλα σωστικῶς ἀναρπάζουσαν, πάντως που καὶ τοῦτον ἡμεῖς τὸν ὑμνῳδὸν τῆς παντοδαπῆς σωτηρίας ἀποδεξόμεθα. Cf. *TDNT* 7:966, for the classical notion of *sōtēria* as a "snatching up."

[40] *DN* 8.9 (897A=1:206.2–7).

Dionysius thus posits two definitions of salvation. One is the more commonly accepted notion that salvation constitutes deliverance *from* evil. The other defines salvation as that which maintains the good and proper order of all things and preserves them from falling into error and chaos. While Dionysius does not object to the prior, more common definition of salvation, it is the second one that he believes truly elucidates the meaning of salvation.

The dominant element in Dionysius's definition of *sōtēria* is that of stasis.[41] It is a hierarchically ordered vision that directly corresponds to the present celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchies. In this passage, Dionysius uses the verb *diakosmeō* to explain that salvation arranges all things; in *CD*, the nouns *diakosmos* and *diakosmēsis* refer to the arrangement of both the angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies.[42] The present hierarchy, then, approximates or reflects as closely as possible, and has as its goal, the fixed, immutable hierarchy of the world to come.

Although *sōtēria* in Greek can mean, "deliverance," "preservation," and "maintenance," nowhere in the Bible does it refer to the preservation of the cosmic order. In the LXX, *sōtēria* normally conforms to the first definition, signifying deliverance from something, but it can also denote preservation in the midst of danger.[43] Generally in the NT, *sōtēria* indicates deliverance from sin or from eternal condemnation.[44] The closest NT parallel to Dionysius's understanding is 1 Pet 1:3–5, where salvation is implicitly equated with an unchanging inheritance:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are

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[41] Dionysius's depiction of salvation has an iconic quality to it; see also the remarks of P. Scazzoso, *Ricerche sulla struttura del linguaggio dello Pseudo-Dionigi Areopagita* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1967), ch. 4 (esp. 136–37). On the later use of Dionysius for the defense of icons, see G. Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), esp. ch. 3. In a different manner and context, J. Baun has explored the possibility of experiencing a medieval Byzantine apocalypse "iconically," in her *Tales from Another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 151–67.

[42] See the discussion in R. Roques, *L'Univers dionysien: Structure hiérarchique du monde selon le Pseudo-Denys* (Paris: Cerf, 1954; repr. 1983), 55–56.

[43] *TDNT* 7: 970–80.

[44] *TDNT* 7: 989–98. In the Benedictus of Luke 1, however, *sōtēria* denotes deliverance from the hands of one's enemies. Dionysius's understanding of *sōtēria* similarly does not find any parallels among the postapostolic Fathers, *TDNT* 7: 998–99.

guarded (φρουρουμένους) through faith for a salvation (σωτηρίαν)—ready to be revealed (ἀποκαλυφθῆναι) in the last times (ἕν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ).

Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ κατὰ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος ἀναγεννήσας ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐλπίδα ζῶσαν δι᾽ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν, εἰς κληρονομίαν ἄφθαρτον καὶ ἀμίαντον καὶ ἀμάραντον, τετηρημένην ἕν οὐρανοῖς εἰς ὑμᾶς τοὺς ἕν δυνάμει θεοῦ φρουρουμένους διὰ πίστεως εἰς σωτηρίαν ἑτοίμην ἀποκαλυφθῆναι ἕν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ.

We may note in particular the similar use of the verb *phroureō* in both Dionysius and the biblical passage.[45] The emphasis in 1 Peter, however, is that inheritance or salvation is protected and kept in heaven for the souls of the faithful; not that salvation itself, by definition, is the protection and maintenance of that inheritance.

The Areopagite's particular understanding of *sōtēria*—and, I would argue, of this passage in 1 Peter—is informed by the concept of the preservation of cosmic harmony in classical antiquity. We may notice an analogous use of *sōtēria* in Aristotle's *de Caelo*. At the beginning of Book 2 of this work, Aristotle argues that the entire universe or heaven (ὁ πας οὐρανὸς) is unique and eternal, and the origin and goal of all motion. He further notes that the universe does not suffer from any of the ills of a mortal body and that

> its motion involves no effort, for the reason that it needs no external force of compulsion, constraining it and preventing it from following a different motion which is natural to it. Any motion of that sort would involve effort, all the more in proportion as it is long-lasting, and could not participate in the best arrangement of all. There is no need, therefore, in the first place to give credence to the ancient mythological explanation according to which it owes its preservation (τὴν σωτηρίαν) to an Atlas.

> τούτοις ἄπονος διὰ τὸ μηδεμιᾶς προσδεῖσθαι βιαίας ἀνάγκης, ἥ κατέχει κωλύουσα φέρεσθαι πεφυκότα αὐτὸν ἄλλως· πᾶν γὰρ τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐπίπονον, ὅσῳπερ ἄν ἀϊδιώτερον ᾖ, καὶ διαθέσεως τῆς ἀρίστης ἄμοιρον. διόπερ οὔτε κατὰ τὸν τῶν παλαιῶν μῦθον ὑποληπτέον ἔχειν, οἳ φασιν Ἄτλαντός τινος αὐτῷ προσδεῖσθαι τὴν σωτηρίαν·[46]

In this passage, Aristotle equates "preservation," *sōtēria*, with notions of eternity, consistency, and the heavens following their natural motion

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[45] On the importance of this verb in Dionysius with regard to "guarding scripture," see Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 212 (and n. 3).

[46] Aristotle, *On the Heavens* (ed. and tr. W. K. C. Guthrie; LCL; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 132.15–21 (text), 133 (translation).

without deviation. According to Aristotle, this preservation is inherent in the universe and does not require an external entity.

Another parallel may be found in Philo of Alexandria's *On the Eternity of the World*, where Philo argues that the cosmos will not be destroyed by transmutation because there is a balance between the elements that results in "unswerving stability" (ἀκλινοῦς βεβαιότητος) and "unshaken permanence" (ἀσαλεύτου μονῆς). This "exchange and reciprocity of powers equalized according to the rules of proportion creates health and endless preservation/well-being (σωτηρίας)."[47] A similar idea can also be found in the ps.-Aristotelian *De mundo*.[48]

The Aristotelian notion of the term *sōtēria* as cosmic preservation in these contexts resembles Dionysius's portrayal of salvation in *DN* 8.9. Again, however, there are differences. In the Areopagite, *sōtēria* is the divine power that preserves cosmic harmony and not a description of the maintenance of that order. Furthermore, for the Aristotelian tradition, what is preserved is the incorruptibility of the present cosmos; by contrast, the Areopagite suggests through the evocation of the language of 1 Peter a future, eschatological expectation of a permanent cosmic order.[49]

Dionysius thus employs a nuance of the term *sōtēria* that is ultimately indebted to the Aristotelian tradition, but falls within the New Testament context of future expectation as expressed in 1 Peter. The Areopagite's eschatological vision posits a future transformation of the present cosmic order, but it is one that stands in stark contrast to that depicted in the Apocalypse. Against the vivid drama of the Apocalypse, in which the present order will be overturned, Dionysius lays out an evolutionary trajectory towards the perfection of the eschatological hierarchy that will be accomplished "without battle and without war" (ἄμαχα καὶ ἀπολέμητα).[50]

The Areopagite's spiritualized interpretation of the Apocalypse may thus have served as a counterreading to the reception of the text by a number

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[47] *Eternity* 116.3–5: ἡ ἀντίδοσις καὶ ἡ ἀντέκτισις τῶν δυνάμεων ἀναλογίας ἐξισουμένη κανόσιν ὑγιείας καὶ ἀτελευτήτου σωτηρίας δημιουργός (*Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* [ed. L. Cohn and S. Wendland; Berlin: Reimer, 1915], 6:108); translation is my own. In addition to the Aristotelian notion of cosmic preservation, Philo clearly refers to the meaning of *sōtēria* common in the medical tradition; see, for example, *TDNT* 7: 967–68.

[48] *De mundo* 5 (396b); cited also in Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 44.

[49] The eschatological dimension is also brought into relief by Dionysius's prior discussion in *DN* 8.8 (896B–C; 1:205.2–15) concerning the truly pious, who do not seek after mundane things but after divine things; see Schiavone, *Neoplatonismo e cristianismo*, 115–16.

[50] *DN* 8.9; (see above, p. 276).

of his contemporaries.[51] Recent scholarship has brought attention to the flurry of apocalyptic thought that arose around the year 500 in Byzantium.[52] On the basis of Hippolytus of Rome's calculations in his commentary on the Apocalypse, many considered that year to mark the beginning of the seventh millennium. Although Dionysius accepted the canonical status of the Apocalypse as well as its symbolic power, his exegetical approach clearly rejected an interpretation that perceived in the text a literal portrayal of the tribulations to come.[53]

Dionysius's eschatological vision may be indicative of the transformation in the relationship between the spheres of the sacred and the secular that occurred in both halves of the Empire during the fifth and sixth centuries. R. Markus has shown how, between Augustine and Gregory the Great, the sense of secular authority had eroded in the western Empire;[54] A. Cameron has illustrated the gradual incorporation of imperial social life within the religious sphere during the late sixth century, notwithstanding

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[51] His intention to provide an alternative interpretive revelation is also suggested by a number of literary strategies employed by Dionysius that are common to revelatory literature in general and apocalyptic literature in particular. I call attention to the following tactics: The author frames his work with an autobiographical narrative in which he narrates to Timothy his own experience of revelation; he employs a pseudonym; he communicates a revelation of a transcendent reality; his revelation is mediated through other agents (Hierotheus and Paul); he plays on the conceal/reveal dichotomy central to revelatory literature. On these characteristics of revelatory and apocalyptic literature, see D. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting* (ed. A. Y. Collins, Decatur: Scholars Press, 1986) = *Semeia* 36: 65–96; and idem, "The Apocalypse of John and Ancient Revelatory Literature," in *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (ed. Wayne A. Meeks, Library of Early Christianity 8; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 226–52.

[52] See, for some examples: P. A. Alexander, *The Oracle of Baalbek: The Tiburtine Sibyl in Greek Dress* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1967), 116–20; R. Scott, "Malalas, The Secret History, and Justinian's Propaganda," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 39 (1985): 107–09; P. Magdalino, "The History of the Future and Its Uses: Prophecy, Policy, and Propaganda," in *The Making of Byzantine History: Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on his Seventieth Birthday* (ed. R. Beaton and C. Roueché; Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 4–15. See also S. La Porta, "The Seventh Vision of Daniel: A New Translation and Introduction," in *More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. R. Bauckham and J. Davila; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, forthcoming); this last text presents a translation of the Armenian version of a lost Byzantine apocalypse dated to the end of the fifth century.

[53] This signals a very different approach than that taken, for example, in the commentaries of Oecumenius (early sixth century) and Andreas of Caesarea (late sixth–early seventh century), which, as Magdalino has noted, represent attempts "to rehabilitate the Book of Revelation as a canonical guide for the future; and Andreas, at least, tries systematically to relate its prophecies to the Roman Empire," Magdalino, "History of the Future," 9.

[54] R. Markus, "The Sacred and the Secular: from Augustine to Gregory the Great," *JTS* 36 (1985): 84–96.

the continuation of secular institutions of authority in the East.[55] In addition, P. Magdalino has convincingly argued that Eastern Christian culture at the turn of the sixth century may be characterized as "a complex of trends whose common factor can be identified as the idea that the Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Heaven were in the process and on the point of becoming one."[56] Among these trends he lists the elimination of psychological barriers between heaven and earth, and points to Dionysius's anagogical theology as a prominent example.

With the breakdown between the secular and sacred and the Christianization of both the *mundus* and the *saeculum*—to use Peter Brown's terminology[57]—the Areopagite is able to imagine a cosmos from which all "inequality and foreign conduct" (ἀλλοτριοπραγία)[58] is banished—not only in the world to come, but in this world as well:[59] Dionysius's hierarchical universe constitutes a solely Christian one. The lowest rank he admits into his hierarchy is that of the catechumen, those who are about to become Christian. Dionysius imposes onto the existing world order an eschatological vision of the universe in which only Christians exist, hierarchically ordered like the angelic ranks according to the sacred activities of purification, illumination and perfection. The procession of the "Christianization" of the Empire rendered any revolutionary change of the world order obsolete. We may add that Dionysius's vision is more aligned with that of Gregory the Great than with that of the emperors of the later sixth century.[60] Both the eschatological hierarchy and the earthly one are

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[55] A. Cameron, "Images of Authority: Elites and Icons in Late Sixth-Century Byzantium," *Past and Present* 84 (1979): 3–35; repr. in eadem, *Continuity and Change in Sixth-Century Byzantium* (London: Variorum, 1981), no. 18.

[56] Magdalino, "History of the Future," 11.

[57] P. Brown, *Authority and the Sacred: Aspects of the Christianisation of the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), ch. 1, "Christianisation: Narratives and Process."

[58] ἀλλοτριοπραγία can mean "meddling in the affairs of others"; Luibheid and Rorem have rendered it as "interference" in their translation. I have chosen to translate it more literally in accordance with its compositional elements—ἀλλότριος and πρᾶξις—as did Gandillac in his French translation. See also the description of the possessed in *EH* 3; noted by Bornert, *Les commentaires byzantins*, 70–71.

[59] The word rendered as "banishing" in the translation of *DN* 8.9 (above, p. 276), is ἐξορίζουσαν < ἐξορίζω; lit., "send beyond the limit or boundary." Although this verb conjures the notion of expulsion, it also suggests that of inclusion, as the boundaries of Christianity expanded to encapsulate more and more of the secular and "foreign."

[60] W. Hankey has suggested that Gregory the Great, who is known to have read Dionysius, may have been influenced by the Areopagite to move away from Augustine in his perception of the role of religious power, see "Dionysius dixit, 'Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere': Aquinas, hierocracy, and the 'augustinisme politique,'" in *Tommaso*

notable for their conspicuous lack of any secular dimension, particularly of secular power.[61]

In conclusion, I have endeavored to demonstrate that the Apocalypse held a prominent position within Dionysius's scriptural worldview, but that his exegetical approach to the text was contoured by his soteriological and eschatological concerns. These in turn were formulated at a significant point in the history of the Christianization of the Roman Empire, when the distinction between the spheres of the secular and the sacred was either disappearing or becoming blurred within the newly emerging imperial ideology. In addition, in the realm of the imagination of Eastern Christianity, the chasm between the heavenly and the terrestrial was closing, and an apocalyptic, eschatological perspective was prevalent in many circles. Dionysius articulated a vision that rejected a cataclysmic end to the cosmos, as depicted in the Apocalypse and entertained by his own contemporaries; instead, he projected the eventual perfection of the ecclesia and its hierarchy.

D'Aquino: Proposte nuove di letture. Festschrift Antonio Tognolo (ed. I. Tolomio; Medioevo. Rivista di Storia della Filosofia Medievale 18; Padova: Antenore, 1992), 119–50. The literature on Dionysius's impact on theories of ecclesiastical power in the West is large; in addition to the aforementioned article of Hankey, see Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary*, 30–36, for a general discussion.

[61] Magdalino notes the tension between eschatological thought and imperial ideology. He suggests that "the only eschatology which imperial ideology could accept was one which played down the significance of the events between the fall of the empire and the Second Coming but stressed, instead, the extent to which the Kingdom of God was already being anticipated, or even realized, in the Roman Empire," 10. He plausibly contends that such an eschatology did exist, as witnessed in Cosmas Indicopleustes' *Christian Topography* and in the lack of dread displayed by the Emperors with respect to the coming consummation.

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