



# JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

WINTER 2007

VOLUME 126, NO. 4

*Enūma Elish* and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation  
in Nascent Judaism

*Kenton L. Sparks* 625–648

The Two Maps of Israel's Land

*Rachel Havrelock* 649–667

The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs

*Michael V. Fox* 669–684

A Case of the Evil Eye: Qohelet 4:4–8

*Nili Wazana* 685–702

“Gleaning among the Ears”—“Gathering among  
the Sheaves”: Characterizing the Image of the  
Supervising Boy (Ruth 2)

*Jonathan Grossman* 703–716

The Responsibilities and Rewards of Joshua  
the High Priest according to Zechariah 3:7

*Michael Segal* 717–734

Shepherds, Sticks, and Social Destabilization:

A Fresh Look at Zechariah 11:4–17

*Robert L. Foster* 735–753

Biblicized Narrative: On Tobit and Genesis 22

*Tzvi Novick* 755–764

3 Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality,  
and Diaspora Identity

*Noah Hacham* 765–785

Reconsidering *Dikaiōma* in Romans 5:16

*J. R. Daniel Kirk* 787–792

The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Revisiting  
Paul's Anthropology in Light of Hellenistic  
Moral Psychology

*Emma Wasserman* 793–816



US ISSN 0021-9231

# JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE  
SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE  
(Constituent Member of the American Council of Learned Societies)

EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL

General Editor: JAMES C. VANDERKAM, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556

## EDITORIAL BOARD

### Term Expiring

- 2007: MOSHE BERNSTEIN, Yeshiva University, New York, NY 10033-3201  
JOHN ENDRES, Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94709  
MATTHIAS HENZE, Rice University, Houston, TX 77251  
ROBERT KUGLER, Lewis & Clark College, Portland, OR 97219  
TIMOTHY LIM, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH1 2LX Scotland  
STEPHEN MOORE, Drew University, Madison, NJ 07940  
STEPHEN PATTERSON, Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO 63119  
EMERSON POWERY, Lee University, Cleveland, TN 37312  
ADELE REINHARTZ, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON N2L 3C5 Canada  
RICHARD STEINER, Yeshiva University, New York, NY 10033-3201  
SZE-KAR WAN, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA 02459
- 2008: ELLEN B. AITKEN, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2T5 Canada  
MICHAEL JOSEPH BROWN, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322  
TERENCE L. DONALDSON, Wycliffe College, Toronto, ON M5S 1H7 Canada  
STEVEN FRIESEN, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211  
JENNIFER GLANCY, Le Moyne College, Syracuse, New York 13214  
A. KATHERINE GRIEB, Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, VA 22304  
ARCHIE C. C. LEE, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin New Territories, Hong Kong SAR  
DANIEL MARGUERAT, Université de Lausanne, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland  
RICHARD D. NELSON, Perkins School of Theology, So. Methodist Univ., Dallas, TX 75275  
DAVID L. PETERSEN, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA 30322  
YVONNE SHERWOOD, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, G12 8QQ, United Kingdom  
LOREN T. STUCKENBRUCK, University of Durham, Durham, England, DH1 3RS, United Kingdom  
PATRICIA K. TULL, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY 40205
- 2009: DAVID L. BARR, Wright State University, Dayton, OH 45435  
THOMAS B. DOZEMAN, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH 45406  
CAROLE R. FONTAINE, Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, MA 02459  
ELIZABETH STRUTHERS MALBON, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA 24060-0135  
MARTTI NISSINEN, University of Helsinki, FIN-00014 Finland  
EUNG CHUN PARK, San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA 94960  
TURID KARLSEN SEIM, University of Oslo, N-0315 Oslo, Norway  
BENJAMIN D. SOMMER, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60645  
LOUIS STULMAN, University of Findlay, Findlay, OH 45840

Editorial Assistant: Monica Brady, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556

*President of the Society:* Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ 08542; *Vice President:* Jonathan Z. Smith, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL 60637; *Chair, Research and Publications Committee:* Benjamin G. Wright III, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA 18015; *Executive Director:* Kent H. Richards, Society of Biblical Literature, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30329.

The *Journal of Biblical Literature* (ISSN 0021-9231) is published quarterly. The annual subscription price is US\$35.00 for members and US\$150.00 for nonmembers. Institutional rates are also available. For information regarding subscriptions and membership, contact: Society of Biblical Literature, Customer Service Department, P.O. Box 133158, Atlanta, GA 30333. Phone: 866-727-9955 (toll free) or 404-727-9498. FAX: 404-727-2419. E-mail: sblservices@sbl-site.org. For information concerning permission to quote, editorial and business matters, please see the Spring issue, p. 2.

The Hebrew font used in *JBL* is SBL Hebrew and is available from [www.sbl-site.org/Resources/default.aspx](http://www.sbl-site.org/Resources/default.aspx).

The JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE (ISSN 0021-9231) is published quarterly by the Society of Biblical Literature, 825 Houston Mill Road, Suite 350, Atlanta, GA 30329. Periodical postage paid at Atlanta, Georgia, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Society of Biblical Literature, P.O. Box 133158, Atlanta, GA 30333.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## *Enūma Elish* and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism

KENTON L. SPARKS

ksparks@eastern.edu

Eastern University, St. Davids, PA 19312

---

Human development depends on our tacit inclination to imitate the cultural patterns modeled by others. Though this mimetic behavior is obvious when we are young, the tendency to replicate our neighbor's conduct is very strong and continues throughout our lifetime. In fact, we could accurately say that mimesis is an essential ingredient in the human experience. Given that tacit imitation plays such a vital role in the development of human persons, it cannot be a surprise that more explicit, intentional acts of imitation are also important factors in the development and perpetuation of human culture. I have in mind a phenomenon known in the technical literature as *elite emulation*.

Elite emulation often appears in colonial or imperial contexts, when peripheral social groups are oppressed and threatened, or at least feel threatened, by a larger social core.<sup>1</sup> In these cases, it is common for peripheral cultures to seek legit-

This study was originally presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in San Antonio, Texas, in November 2004. I am very grateful for the thoughtful remarks of my colleagues in the Pentateuch Section, most especially for those offered by Victor Hurowitz (Ben Gurion University), David Wright (Brandeis University) and Jim Watts (Syracuse University).

<sup>1</sup> On elite emulation, see Carolyn R. Higginbotham, *Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine: Governance and Accommodation on the Imperial Periphery* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 2; Leiden: Brill, 2000). As for the literature on postcolonial theory, it is vast and always growing. For good introductions to the issue as it relates to both ancient and modern cultures, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (New Accents; London: Routledge, 1989); eidem, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* (Key Concepts; London: Routledge, 1998); Peter Childs and R. J. Patrick Williams, eds., *Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1997); S. N. Eisenstat, "Observations and Queries about Sociological Aspects of Imperialism in the Ancient World," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. M. T. Larsen; Mesopotamia 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk, 1979), 21–33; K. Ekholm and J. Friedman, "Capital Imperialism and Exploitation in Ancient World Systems, in *Power and Propaganda*, 41–59; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System*, vol. 1, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic, 1974).

imacy by symbolically imitating the prestigious culture that dominates them. Doing so is always an exercise in similarity and alterity, in seeking both to imitate and to differentiate oneself from “the other.”<sup>2</sup> The Cuna natives of Panama are a notable and interesting success in this regard, having preserved their distinctive identity into the twenty-first century in the face of European colonialism.<sup>3</sup> A powerful image of their mimetic response to colonialism is found in Cuna dress: the men are inclined to wear European attire with coats and ties, while the women wear traditional dress, with their nose-rings, vivid and strikingly beautiful blouses, and head coverings. Native and foreign imagery are here juxtaposed in a powerful mechanism of cultural survival. What I would like to explore in this article is a similar expression of elite emulation found in the Hebrew Bible, specifically in the Priestly material of the Pentateuch.

On this nearly everyone will agree. One of the Priestly Writer’s most important textual interlocutors was the non-P material in the Pentateuch. This opinion is commonly held both by those who view P as supplemental and by those who view it as an originally independent composition. I have no interest in challenging this very sensible consensus, but I believe that P’s intertextual relationships are more diverse and complex. This is one in a series of articles in which I will present evidence for the close relationship that obtained between the Hebrew Priestly Writer and the literary traditions of Mesopotamia. I will argue that the Priestly Writer was an avid student of ancient texts and that his anthology of Israelite tradition was deliberately shaped to follow patterns and motifs found in Mesopotamian literature. To my mind, elite emulation provides the best explanation for this feature in the Priestly literature.

The present article focuses on an example of this mimetic phenomenon drawn from P’s adaptation of the Babylonian *Akītu* festival. I am particularly interested in the way that P has used the myth recited during the festival, *Enūma Elish*, and also certain rituals used in conjunction with that myth. My argument will proceed as follows. First, I will offer a few comments about the special problems and challenges that inhere in evaluations of intertextuality. My aim will not be to resolve those problems, which are in some respects intractable, but mainly to highlight them for purposes of clarity. Second, I will adduce evidence to support the conclusion that important aspects of P’s narrative, and also some of its rituals, were designed to mimic traditions from Mesopotamia, especially from the *Akītu* and *Enūma Elish*.

<sup>2</sup> The classic study of mimetic phenomena in human culture is still Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). Contemporary bibliography on the topic is immense. Rebecca Moore Howard of Syracuse University provides an up-to-date bibliography at <http://wrt-howard.syr.edu/Bibs/Imitation.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> This example is from Michael T. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Taussig’s anthropological study of the Cuna provides a useful and practical introduction to the complexities and social dynamics of cultural mimesis.

I will then conclude my discussion by exploring the implications of my work for our understanding of P, giving special attention to the still-debated question of when and to whom it was written.

## I. THE PROBLEM OF INTERTEXTUALITY

Whether one embraces the radical deconstruction of Jacques Derrida or the tamer postmodernism of Hans-Georg Gadamer, there is general agreement among theorists that all texts are intertextual, that written words always draw on the precedent of earlier discourse and then become the fodder for future discourse.<sup>4</sup> That much is clear. But it would be reductionistic to leave things at that, as though there were no possible differences between the unconscious aping of inherited discourse and self-conscious efforts to take up that discourse and make explicit uses of it. It would be very significant if we could determine, for instance, that the Priestly traditions of the Pentateuch were intentionally shaped to compete with the traditions of Mesopotamia. Evidence confirming this would help us to understand better not only certain features in the biblical literature itself but also something more of the rich social context that gave rise to it.

Now the present article heads in precisely this direction, insofar as it argues for a close literary relationship between the Priestly Pentateuch and Mesopotamian tradition. But making an argument of this kind is fraught with difficulties. I cannot cite verbatim quotations of one text by another—of Mesopotamian texts by P—but only close similarities that require both descriptions and explanations. Suitable descriptions of the intertextual relationship might include “allusion,” “imitation,” “influence,” and “echo,” with the added dimension of deciding whether the weaker textual links—the so-called echoes—are deliberate or unconscious.<sup>5</sup> I would like to skirt the thorny detail of defining these terms by laying out the central claim of my study: that in some important respects, the Priestly Pentateuch is what Gérard Genette has called a “mimotext,” which imitates specific Mesopotamian textual

<sup>4</sup> Some scholars employ the term “intertextuality” in a general sense and others more narrowly. In its restricted sense, intertextuality may refer only to those instances in which one text explicitly quotes from or alludes to another text (so Genette), whereas its general sense has to do with a text’s relationship to all other discourse, whether written or verbal, obvious or concealed (so Elam). Here I intend the more general sense of the term. For discussion, see Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–7; Helen R. Elam, “Intertextuality,” *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (ed. A. Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 620–22.

<sup>5</sup> My list of possibilities is borrowed from Benjamin Sommer, but my approach to the matter is very different from what he suggests in his valuable discussion of intertextuality. See Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6–31.

traditions for polemical reasons.<sup>6</sup> Whether the evidence for this in certain cases is best described as an “allusion” by P, or “influence” on P, or an “echo” in P is not something that matters so much. But the overall case will depend on P’s true allusions to other literature, in which the author utilizes “the marked material for some rhetorical or strategic end.”<sup>7</sup> Any unconscious “echoes” of Mesopotamia in P would only reinforce (but not detract from at all) the argument that P has intentionally imitated Mesopotamian traditions.

Alongside the matter of description is the issue of explanation. If the biblical author both knew and imitated the Mesopotamian literature, how did he know it, and why did he imitate it? As for the question of how an author knows other traditions, Meir Malul’s typology lays out the options.<sup>8</sup> The parallel may be attributable to a *direct connection* (A depends on B), a *mediated connection* (A knows about B from source C), a *common source* (A and B used a common source, C), or a *common tradition* (A and B have no immediate connections but participate in the same tradition). To this I would add the possibility of a *phenomenological explanation*, in which similar traditions have arisen because of analogous but unrelated circumstances.

It is to my mind a matter of judgment that determines which of these five possibilities best suits the situation in question. This judgment cannot be easily reduced to any simple formulas, but three aspects of the judgment strike me as important. (1) Foremost in any judgment is consideration of the parallel itself. How similar are the two texts in question, in terms of their specific content and in terms of the broader generic context of the parallel. It is very significant, for instance, that the so-called bird episode at the end of the Genesis flood narrative occurs also at the end of the Mesopotamian flood stories. The fact that the parallel involves both the details of the episode and its larger narrative context makes a close relationship between the traditions very likely. (2) Any intertextual judgments will need to consider how the biblical author would have known the tradition in question. For instance, though there are obvious similarities between the list of antediluvian kings in the Sumerian King List and the list of patriarchs in Genesis 5, it is hardly plausible that the author of Genesis consulted an ancient Sumerian list. If arguments for intertextuality are to be made in this case, or in similar cases, then the onus is on the researcher to propose a feasible opportunity for the Hebrew author to have read or been influenced by the other text. (3) A third consideration involves the number of parallels proposed between the two documents. It will be one thing to argue that the Priestly Writer has depended on a Mesopotamian text in a single instance,

<sup>6</sup> Genette, *Palimpsests*, 81.

<sup>7</sup> Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Meir Malul, *The Comparative Method in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical Legal Studies* (AOAT 227; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990); Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 3–5.

but quite another if one can demonstrate many parallels between the two texts. If the parallels are really numerous, this would obviously suggest a more direct connection between the texts in question.

As for the other aspect of my explanation—not how but why P would have imitated Mesopotamian literature—I have already suggested that elite emulation is an important part of the answer. My evidence for this thesis is still to come and will have important implications for our scholarly judgments about the date and context of P. But let me conclude this part of my discussion by saying again that recognizing a relationship between two texts, and establishing the nature of that intertextual relationship, is a judgment of art, not of science. Gone are the days of Axel Olrik, who imagined that rigid “laws” governed our use of verbal discourse.<sup>9</sup> What we have instead are judgments within the hermeneutical circle. Readers of this article will have to decide whether my arguments suit this coherent circle of reference or fall into the vortex of a vicious and incoherent circle.

## II. PRIESTLY MIMESIS IN THE CREATION STORY (GENESIS 1)

Although the debate still lingers in some quarters,<sup>10</sup> scholars have for a long time suspected that the Priestly creation account in Genesis 1 is related in some form or fashion to the Babylonian creation epic, *Enūma Elish*.<sup>11</sup> In what follows I hope to firm up this conclusion and also extend it considerably, but doing so will require that I rehearse some of the well-known arguments for this position. When I do so, it is not to replough old ground but rather because these arguments are necessary for my overall case, or because I hope to improve upon them, or because

<sup>9</sup> Axel Olrik, “Epische Gesetze der Volksdichtung,” *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum* 52 (1909): 1–12.

<sup>10</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis* (2 vols.; NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990, 1994), 1:110–11; W. G. Lambert, “A New Look at the Babylonian Background of Genesis,” *JTS* 16 (1965): 287–300; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis* (2 vols.; Waco: Word, 1987, 1994), 1:8; Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (3 vols.; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984–86), 1:89.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 73–101; Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted* (trans. M. E. Biddle; Mercer Library of Biblical Studies; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 102–33; John L. McKenzie, “Myth and the Old Testament,” *CBQ* 21 (1959): 265–82; Lothar Ruppert, *Genesis: Ein kritischer und theologischer Kommentar*, 1. Teilband, *Gen 1,1–11,26* (FB 70; Würzburg: Echter, 1992), 61–63; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 43–48; E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 1; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 8–13. The myth itself is published in René Labat, *Le poème babylonien de la création* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1935); Philippe Talon, *The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth Enūma Eliš* (SAA Cuneiform Texts 4; Helsinki: State Archives of Assyria, 2005). Translations in *ANET*, 60–72, 501–3; COS 1.111, pp. 390–402; Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, 228–77.



some readers—say, scholars from Jewish studies or NT—may not be so familiar with some of the well-traveled comparative observations of scholarship on the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East. I believe that the net result of my discussion will be to dispel any lingering doubts about P's close relationship to *Enūma Elish*.

According to that ancient Mesopotamian myth, Marduk created the universe by defeating Tiamat—the primeval sea, personified as a dragon<sup>12</sup>—and by splitting her body into two parts, with the upper waters held in place by her stretched out hide. In this way Marduk distinguished the watery heavens from earth and provided a spatial context for the creation of heavenly bodies and human beings. Humanity itself originated as the design of the wise god Ea, but his son Marduk implemented this design when humanity was formed from the blood of the rebellious demon god whom Marduk had defeated in cosmic battle (Qingu). In accomplishing these marvelous deeds Marduk became the undisputed king of the gods. As I have mentioned, scholars have long suspected that this story influenced P's creation story in Genesis 1. If this is true, P would not be the first writer in antiquity to adapt *Enūma Elish* to a new cultural context. The Assyrians made a similar move when, in their version of the epic, the national god Assur replaced Marduk.<sup>13</sup> But Assyrian and Babylonian theologies were so close that this amounted to little more than a substitution. The theological differences between P and *Enūma Elish* were more profound and hence entailed more drastic adaptations, but the similarities are still quite visible, as I will try to show.

Both *Enūma Elish* and P's creation story are introduced by a temporal clause: in the first instance by "When on high" and in the second by "In the beginning." In *Enūma Elish* Marduk defeated the waters of Tiamat; in Genesis God tames the waters of תְּהוֹם (*tēhôm*).<sup>14</sup> In *Enūma Elish* creation was initiated by the splitting of watery Tiamat; in Genesis God did so by separating the waters.<sup>15</sup> In *Enūma Elish*

<sup>12</sup> In *Enūma Elish*, Tiamat does not sport the divine determinative and so should probably not be described as a goddess.

<sup>13</sup> W. G. Lambert, "The Assyrian Recension of *Enūma Eliš*," in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten: XXXIXe Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Heidelberg, 6.-10. Juli 1992* (ed. H. Waetzoldt and H. Hauptmann; Heidelberg: Heidelberger Orientverlag, 1997), 77–79.

<sup>14</sup> That Tiamat and תְּהוֹם are cognate terms designating the "sea" (in this case, the primeval sea) has been carefully argued in Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 8; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 301–6. Not long ago, David T. Tsumura made a similar observation about תְּהוֹם and Tiamat but drew from this an errant conclusion. According to Tsumura, because תְּהוֹם is a native Hebrew word rather than an Akkadian loanword, it is unlikely that the תְּהוֹם of Genesis 1 represents the demythologized Tiamat. This argument does not hold. There is nothing whatsoever to preclude a Hebrew author using his own term, תְּהוֹם, in a polemic against the obviously related cognate term Tiamat. For Tsumura's otherwise useful discussion, see *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation* (JSOTSup 83; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 45–83, 156–59.

<sup>15</sup> As David Wright pointed out to me, P regularly uses the *hiphil* of בָּדַל to distinguish the



the creation of heaven and earth was followed by the creation of the heavenly bodies and humanity; the same counts for Genesis. In its description of creation, *Enūma Elish* accentuates Marduk's role in establishing the boundaries of the created order, not only of space (such as the structures that hold back the heavenly waters)<sup>16</sup> but also of time, which is marked off by the stars and heavenly bodies; Yahweh does the same in Genesis. In *Enūma Elish* humanity was created from the blood of a slain god, while in Genesis humanity was created in God's image. To this list of thematic similarities we may add the striking structural similarities noted by Alexander Heidel: "The identical sequence of events as far as the points of contact are concerned is indeed remarkable. This can hardly be accidental, since the order could have been different. . . . There no doubt is a genetic relation between the two stories."<sup>17</sup> In the end, although some scholars dissent, it seems to me that there is good evidence that P knew *Enūma Elish* and adapted it to create his version of Israel's creation story.

Where significant differences separate the two stories, these arise especially when P asserts his views of anthropology and theology. Yet even these differences sometimes reveal the underlying influence of Mesopotamian ideas. In terms of anthropology, P goes beyond *Enūma Elish* by tracing humanity's divine animation to the creator rather than to the blood of a rebel demon. Humanity bears the "image of God." Now this conception of human identity was by no means foreign to Mesopotamia, but as Nahum Sarna has pointed out, in Mesopotamia the "image of god" was generally reserved for the king.<sup>18</sup> From this we can reasonably conclude that the Priestly Writer was drawing on Mesopotamian tradition in order to depict the first human couple as royalty; any doubts are dispelled by P's primeval genealogy in Genesis 5, where the list of patriarchs from Adam to Noah is fashioned precisely in the manner of a Mesopotamian king list.<sup>19</sup> So P draws on more than one Mesopotamian tradition in his work.

In terms of theology, many of the differences between P and *Enūma Elish* stem from the Priestly Writer's monotheism. Ea and Marduk were replaced by Israel's God (who now served as both designer and creator of humanity), the personified waters of Tiamat were replaced by the impersonal waters of תְּהוֹם, the hide of Tiamat was replaced by the inanimate רָקִיעַ ("firmament"), and the independent roles of Marduk and Qingu in creating human life were collapsed into the one God

---

ritual status of one thing vis-à-vis another. In this case, I suspect that P means to distinguish the sweet waters above the רָקִיעַ, which are the source of life-giving water, from the salt waters of the sea.

<sup>16</sup> See *Enūma Elish* IV.139–41; V.121.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation* (2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 130.

<sup>18</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis = Be-reshit: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 345–49, 58–59.

who both creates and animates human life. If there is a vestige of the old mythology in P, perhaps it appears in P's brief reference to the heavenly council: "Let us make humanity in our own image." But these details aside, the theological implication of P's story is clear. By imitating the Mesopotamian myth of divine sovereignty with a monotheistic setting, the Priestly Writer has clearly articulated the belief that his God is the king, not only because he is the creator but because he has no rivals at all.

Although I have adduced evidence that P's creation story was a mimetic response to *Enūma Elish*, the fact that P has purposefully altered features from the older myth to suit his Israelite theology makes it difficult to prove this point on merely thematic grounds. Given this reality, is there any circumstantial evidence, beyond that adduced here, that might suggest that P knew this Mesopotamian composition? Absolutely. *Enūma Elish* was recited annually by Mesopotamian priests during the *Akītu* festival, where its recitation was the last cultic act on day 4 of that New Year event. In the following section we shall see that P knew not only *Enūma Elish* from the fourth day but also the closely related *kuppuru* ritual from the fifth day of the *Akītu*. This evidence will make it much more likely that P knew and was responding to *Enūma Elish*. Only when Genesis 1 and *Enūma Elish* are compared in relative isolation from this circumstantial evidence is it possible to evade the fact that P has imitated this ancient myth.

### III. PRIESTLY MIMESIS IN THE DAY OF ATONEMENT RITE (LEVITICUS 16)

The *Akītu* of Marduk in Babylon was a twelve-day festival celebrated at the beginning of each year, but in Mesopotamia, as in Israel, there was a tendency to mark the passage of the year at both autumnal and vernal equinoxes.<sup>20</sup> For this reason two *Akītus* were observed in first-millennium Babylon, a primary New Year festival during *Nisanu* (month 1) and another during *Tashrītu* (month 7). The *Akītu* marked the occasion on which the god Marduk decreed the fates for the coming year. Its rites were designed to ensure that these decrees would be favorable. I have mentioned already that *Enūma Elish* was recited during the *Akītu*. Its role in the

<sup>20</sup> For discussions, see Mark E. Cohen, *The Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 400–453; Jacob Klein, "Akītu," *ABD* 1:138–40. The most important and relevant texts were published long ago by François Thureau-Dangin but are now available in the new edition of M. J. H. Linssen, *The Cults of Uruk and Babylon: The Temple Ritual Texts as Evidence for Hellenistic Cult Practices* (Cuneiform Monographs 25; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 184–96 (*Tashrītu Akītu* for Anu at Uruk), 197–200 (*Nisanu Akītu* for Anu at Uruk), 215–37 (*Nisanu Akītu* for Marduk at Babylon), 238–44 (*Akītu* for Ištar at Uruk). For other translations, see *ANET*, 331–34 (*Nisanu Akītu* for Marduk at Babylon); *TUAT* 2:223–27 (*Tashrītu Akītu* for Anu at Uruk).

*Akītu* rite is best described as *historiola*, as a mythological story that prefigures a magical result. In this case, Marduk's mythical victory over evil demons on day 4 of the *Akītu* prefigured the removal of demonic impurity in the *kuppuru* ritual of the following day. It is to that rite that I would direct our attention.

The *kuppuru* took place on the fifth day of the *Akītu*, in the sanctuary of the scribal god Nabu as he visited Marduk's temple in Babylon.<sup>21</sup> Its purpose was to protect Nabu from demonic influences as he copied down the decrees of Marduk. Thus, both Marduk and Nabu come to the fore in this ritual, as we might expect from the Neo-Babylonian period onward.<sup>22</sup> The ritual is not entirely understood, but it involved the cleansing of Nabu's sanctuary by slaughtering a ram and rubbing or wiping (*kuppuru*) the temple cella with its carcass. After completing this procedure, the ram's body was thrown into the river, and the *ašipu*-priest ("exorcist") who performed the *kuppuru* left the city for open country, accompanied by the ram's slaughterer. Because of their uncleanness, these two ritual figures could not return to Babylon until the *Akītu* was completed. The purpose of the ritual is expressed explicitly in its incantation: "They are purifying the temple . . . Marduk purifies the temple . . . Great demon, may Bel [i.e., Marduk] kill you! May you be cut down wherever you are!"<sup>23</sup> In terms of modern technical vocabulary, the *kuppuru* was obviously an elimination rite, an exorcism whose purpose was to cleanse the temple cella of demonic presences that might unduly influence the fate decrees for the coming year.

After the *kuppuru* was completed, the king and high priest entered Marduk's cella for a confirmation ritual known as the "royal ordeal." The king was stripped of his royal insignia and was symbolically forced to bow before Marduk while confessing, "I have not sinned . . . I have not neglected your divinity . . . I have not caused the destruction of Babylon," and similar exculpations.<sup>24</sup> After this declaration of innocence, the priest slapped the king's face in what amounted to a test: if tears came to the king's eyes, it was a sign of the god's pleasure; no tears portended evil. Following the rite, the king's insignia were restored, and he "seized the hand" of Marduk and led a public procession of the gods to the great convocation at the *Akītu* house just outside of the city. A still grander procession would mark Marduk's return.

Anyone familiar with P's annual atonement ritual, described in Leviticus 16,

<sup>21</sup> There were two Ezida sanctuaries, one in Marduk's Esagil temple and the other Nabu's main sanctuary at Borsippa. It is the first of these two that is meant here. For the relevant text, see Linssen, *Cults of Uruk and Babylon*, 215–37; translation in *ANET*, 331–34.

<sup>22</sup> On the late development of Nabu's prominence in Babylon and his rivalry with Marduk, see Francesco Pomponio, "Nabû, A. Philologisch," *RIA* 9:16–24; Alan R. Millard, "Nabu, נָבֻ," *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 607–10; Cecile Michel, "Nabû," *Dictionnaire de la civilisation mésopotamienne* (ed. F. Joannes; Paris: Laffont, 2001), 552–54.

<sup>23</sup> Translation from Cohen, *Cultic Calendars of the Ancient Near East*, 446.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

will already recognize the striking similarities between the Mesopotamian and Israelite rituals.<sup>25</sup> Both rites marked a transition to the New Year. Both rites involved the ritual slaughter of an animal and the use of its carcass or blood to cleanse the temple cella. In both cases the animal's body was removed from the temple precinct, and in both the carcass polluted those who touched it. The Mesopotamian rite was called the *kuppuru*; the Israelite ritual, כפר. The two terms are related both etymologically and morphologically, insofar as they share the same consonantal root (*kpr*) and are in a D verbal stem (with the doubling of the middle radical). In Akkadian the D-stem is reserved exclusively for ritual contexts.<sup>26</sup> In Hebrew the pattern is somewhat different, but in a way that is perhaps significant for my thesis. Though there is ongoing debate about the particulars, there is a consensus among scholars that כפר is employed differently in priestly and non-priestly texts.<sup>27</sup> In the latter כפר is not a formal ritual act but points directly to the appeasing or assuaging of anger, both divine and human. This is very different from priestly uses of the term in P, Ezekiel 40–48, and Chronicles. Here כפר is always a ritual act performed by a priest, and in at least some cases its function is to remove ritual uncleanness. The list of cleansed objects includes the altar, the sanctuary, the temple, the land, houses, and human beings (both individuals and groups). These priestly כפר rites are close to the Mesopotamian conception of *kuppuru* in ways that non-priestly uses of כפר are not. A possible explanation would be that Mesopotamian practice has to some extent influenced P's use of כפר. If this is right, then we have in P a semantic shift that is in some respects similar to what we see in the Qur'an, where *kafara* ("to cover") was pressed into service, under influence from Hebrew כפר, as *kaffara* ("to absolve").<sup>28</sup>

If it appears likely that the form of the Israelite כפר ritual has been intentionally fashioned to mimic the Mesopotamian *kuppuru* rite, then this conclusion is made still surer by the evidence that I have gleaned from P's creation story in Genesis 1. That evidence strongly suggests that P knew the Mesopotamian myth recited immediately before the *kuppuru*, that is, *Enūma Elish*. So P was familiar with both the rites and the myths of the *Akītu*. The conclusion that Israel adapted *Akītu* rit-

<sup>25</sup> The similarities are discussed in Baruch A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord: A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (SJLA 5; Leiden: Brill, 1974); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1067–70, 79–84; David P. Wright, *The Disposal of Impurity: Elimination Rites in the Bible and in Hittite and Mesopotamian Literature* (SBLDS 101; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

<sup>26</sup> CAD 8:178–80.

<sup>27</sup> Bernd Janowski, "Auslösung des verwirkten Lebens," ZTK 79 (1982): 25–59; idem, *Sühne als Heilsgeschehen: Studien zur Sühnetheologie der Priesterschrift und zur Wurzel KPR im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* (WMANT 55; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982); B. Lang, "kpr," TDOT 7:288–303.

<sup>28</sup> Lang, "kpr," 289.

uals for use in Jerusalem is further reinforced by the fact the Persians did the same in Persepolis.<sup>29</sup> Elite emulation can appear in many contexts, not only among the conquered but also among the conquerors.<sup>30</sup>

Now as so often happens, the similarities between the Jewish and Mesopotamian purgation rites underscore their profound differences. What are these differences? First, I suspect that an older substrate of native Israelite ritual is still visible in the text. It appears in the scapegoat, an elimination rite that finds its closest parallels in Eblaite and Hittite sources from the late third and second millennia.<sup>31</sup> Second, and perhaps more important for students of religion and social history, a comparison of the two rites reveals the unique theology of the Israelite priests. While the Mesopotamian kings proclaimed, "I am innocent," the Hebrew priest openly confessed the sins of Israel (Lev 16:21). While the Mesopotamian *kuppuru* cleansed the temple of demonic presence, the Hebrew כִּפֶּר atoned for the sins of Israel itself. These facts strongly suggest that P knew Mesopotamian temple ritual intimately and adopted its forms to bestow upon Israel, and upon Israel's religion, that air of cultural antiquity and authority that was attached to all things Mesopotamian.

#### IV. PRIESTLY MIMESIS IN THE EXODUS STORY (EXODUS 1–24\*)

Evidence for Mesopotamian influence on P appears not only in Genesis and Leviticus but also in Exodus. In a nutshell, the Priestly book of Exodus includes two parts: (a) the story of deliverance from Egypt, followed by (b) its meticulous account of the tabernacle's erection at Sinai. Structurally speaking, this narrative sequence is very close to the plot line of *Enūma Elish*, where Marduk saves the gods from Tiamat's gang and is then honored by the construction of his temple. Is this similarity a coincidence? In the first place, we should note that it has been suspected for some time that the story of Pharaoh's defeat at Yam Suph (Exodus 14–15) might be the demythologized version of an ancient cosmic conflict myth such as appears in Ugaritic, Mesopotamian, and Israelite traditions.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, when Frank Moore Cross suggested this connection he was interested primarily in the old

<sup>29</sup> J. M. Fennelly, "The Persepolis Ritual," *BA* 43 (1980): 135–62.

<sup>30</sup> One is reminded here of the Roman tendency to emulate Greek culture.

<sup>31</sup> For the Eblaite texts, see Ida Zatelli, "The Origin of the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual: The Evidence of Two Eblaite Texts," *VT* 48 (1998): 254–63. For the relevant Hittite texts, see COS 1.62, pp. 161–62; 1.63, p. 162; 1.64, pp. 162–63. For discussion, see Wright, *Disposal of Impurity*. Wright informs me that, in his opinion, the scapegoat element of Leviticus 16 is perhaps not so ancient as I am suggesting here. That discussion is for another time.

<sup>32</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 112–44.

Canaanite myths rather than in Mesopotamian texts such as *Enūma Elish*, but he also recognized that *Enūma Elish* shared this conflict theme. In the second place, we have already adduced considerable evidence that suggests P was not only familiar with *Enūma Elish* but also demythologized its features. Circumstantially, these facts make it more likely that a connection exists between Marduk's victory over Tiamat's forces in *Enūma Elish* and God's victory over Pharaoh's forces in P. With this background in mind, let us look more closely at P's account of Israel's deliverance at the sea.

It is commonly pointed out that P's account of the exodus features a sequence of six "wonders" (מוֹפְתִים) performed by God through Moses and Aaron.<sup>33</sup> While this observation is undoubtedly true in certain respects, perhaps it causes us to overlook an important feature in P's story. Some time ago Dennis J. McCarthy noted that the conceptual and thematic features in P's first five wonders link them more closely to the deliverance at the sea than to the death of Egypt's firstborn, which immediately follows them (P's sixth wonder).<sup>34</sup> When we attend to this narrative feature, we discover—as we might have expected—that P's account of Israel's deliverance actually features yet another of his many septenary structures.<sup>35</sup> The first five miracles are followed by a penultimate event (the plague that wins Israel's release, the death of the firstborn), and then by God's seventh and ultimate miracle at the sea. Conceptually, this sevenfold series features the defeat of Pharaoh's magicians (see wonders 1–5),<sup>36</sup> followed by the defeat of Egypt's gods (wonder 6; see Exod 12:12), followed by the defeat of Pharaoh himself (wonder 7).<sup>37</sup> More

<sup>33</sup> These signs/plagues include: (1) staff to a snake; (2) water to blood; (3) frogs; (4) gnats; (5) boils; and (6) Passover. For the standard enumeration of the P texts, see Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 131; Anthony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 38–39. Childs does not include the Passover in the sequences of מוֹפְתִים proper, but the thematic links between the Passover and the other Priestly plagues are strong: divine directions for Moses, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart, and the use of Moses's staff, the judgments on Egypt, and the protection of Israel.

<sup>34</sup> Dennis J. McCarthy, "Plagues and Sea of Reeds: Exodus 5–14," *JBL* 85 (1966): 137–58.

<sup>35</sup> For more on this feature in P, see Frank H. Gorman, Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology* (JSOTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, we could note that P's use of חֲרָטָם for "magician" suggests the relative lateness of his composition, since this Hebrew term was borrowed from Demotic Egyptian. See Alan H. Gardiner, "The House of Life," *JEA* 24 (1938): 157–79, esp. 164–65.

<sup>37</sup> This sequence of seven, which includes the staff becoming a snake, is by no means equivalent to the seven-plague sequence isolated in the "plague" Psalms (Psalms 78 and 105) by Loewenstamm, Jirku, Lauha, and others. See Samuel E. Loewenstamm, *The Evolution of the Exodus Tradition* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992), 79–88; Anton Jirku, *Die älteste Geschichte Israels im Rahmen lehrhafter Darstellungen* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1917), 110, 113; Aarre Lauha, *Die Geschichtsmotive in den alttestamentlichen Psalmen* (AASF 56.1; Helsinki: Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1945), 49–51, 55.

interesting for our purposes is that this account of Yahweh's final victory at the sea seems to be heavily colored by influences from *Enūma Elish*. Bernard F. Batto brought this out in his careful comparison of the Hebrew Yam Suph traditions with Near Eastern myths.<sup>38</sup> He pointed out that P's version of the Yam Suph conflict greatly accentuates Yahweh's sovereign power over the sea, which he splits (בקע) to create the two walls of water through which Israel would pass.<sup>39</sup> This water then becomes the instrument by which Yahweh destroys Pharaoh and his army. As Batto correctly notices, the motif of split waters and the passing of Israel through them does not appear so starkly in the earlier non-P account of Israel's salvation at the sea. From this Batto concludes, I think correctly, that P's rendition of Yahweh's victory at the sea provides a demythologized version of Marduk's victory over Tiamat and her henchmen in *Enūma Elish*. In both stories, the splitting of the sea provides the space for creation, be it for the creation of the cosmos (in *Enūma Elish* and Genesis 1) or for the creation of Israel (in Exodus).<sup>40</sup> As Samuel E. Loewenstamm expressed it, "In parting the sea and the Jordan, Israel's God re-enacts the very heroic deeds He performed in primeval days, thereby proving Himself to be the Creator of the world who founded the earth upon the vanquished seas and rivers."<sup>41</sup>

If this explanation of the facts is right, then we can expect that Yahweh's victory at the sea will be followed in P's narrative, as in *Enūma Elish*, by an account of the construction of Yahweh's holy dwelling—and that is precisely what we have in Exodus. But the comparative repercussions of P's tabernacle narrative go well beyond this. Although the narrative location of P's tabernacle account parallels very closely the narrative structure of *Enūma Elish*, the conceptual details of that tabernacle plan point in the direction of other Mesopotamian exemplars. One implication is that P's mimetic project depended not on a single myth but on a wider variety of Mesopotamian sources and traditions.

## V. PRIESTLY MIMESIS IN THE TABERNACLE NARRATIVE (EXODUS 25–40\*)

The second half of P's Exodus is composed of ritual prescriptions and descriptions relating to the construction of the tabernacle and its furnishings. This narra-

<sup>38</sup> Batto, *Slaying the Dragon*, 102–52.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. P's flood story, where God's intervention is marked by his splitting (בקע) of *têhôm* (Gen 7:11).

<sup>40</sup> A further connection between Exodus and *Enūma Elish* may be implied by P's creation story in Genesis 1, which makes no great distinction between the waters of תהום and ים. One could easily argue that the author means for them to be understood as equivalent, in which case we have in Exodus the same pattern as in Genesis: a subtle parallel between the waters of Tiamat and תהום (= ים).

<sup>41</sup> Loewenstamm, *Evolution of the Exodus Tradition*, 246.



tive account of the tabernacle's creation is conceptually similar to the *logos* creation of the cosmos in P's seven-day creation week, since here as well God speaks seven words of prescription to Moses that,<sup>42</sup> when carried out in seven distinct acts,<sup>43</sup> result in a place for God to dwell, just as the creation of the cosmos provided a home for humanity.<sup>44</sup> As Joseph Blenkinsopp has expressed it, "What P seems to have done is emphasize the building of the sanctuary . . . as the climax of creation."<sup>45</sup> Although these septenary structures surely reflect the uniqueness of P, the patterns in his temple narrative are perhaps not Israelite only. As I have pointed out already, the Priestly link between creation and the tabernacle parallels very closely the narrative links in *Enūma Elish*, a text that P seems to have known and in which Marduk's creation was followed immediately by the construction of his temple. Further evidence for foreign influence on P's tabernacle narrative has been adduced by Victor Hurowitz, who has demonstrated convincingly that P's account follows a five-step pattern that appears in many Near Eastern temple construction narratives.<sup>46</sup> Taken together, this evidence generally supports my thesis that P intended the tabernacle account to mimic the contours of a Mesopotamian pattern—and there is yet more evidence to consider.

According to Mesopotamian tradition, divine cult statues could be ritually fashioned only if one possessed their divinely revealed plans. This caused a great deal of trouble when the Sutians destroyed the cultic image of Shamash during the eleventh century.<sup>47</sup> For two hundred years afterwards, an image of a sun-disk was used in lieu of the statue. Fortunately, during the ninth-century reign of Nabu-apal-iddina of Babylon, priests of Shamash discovered a copy of the long-lost divine image along the bank of the Euphrates. Here we should probably place "discovered" in quotation marks, as it is very likely that the providential find was a pious fraud, proffered by priests who longed to restore the cultic image of their god.<sup>48</sup> At any rate, it is clear enough that ancient Mesopotamians ostensibly required divinely revealed blueprints for the preparation of cultic images.

<sup>42</sup> Exod 25:1; 30:11; 30:17, 22, 34; 31:1, 12.

<sup>43</sup> When Exodus describes Moses's actual construction of the tabernacle in Exod 40:17–33, it is said seven times that he did "just as Yahweh had commanded" (vv. 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32).

<sup>44</sup> For discussions, see Gorman, *Ideology of Ritual*, 47–48; P. J. Kearney, "Creation and Liturgy: The P Redaction of Ex 25–40," ZAW 89 (1977): 375–87; Moshe Weinfield, "Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord—The Problem of the *Sitz im Leben* of Genesis 1:1–2:3," in *Melanges biblique et orientaux en l'honneur de M. Henri Cazelles* (ed. A. Caquot and M. Delcor; AOAT 212; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1981), 501–12.

<sup>45</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," CBQ 38 (1976): 286.

<sup>46</sup> Victor A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup 115; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> For discussion, see Christopher Walker and Michael B. Dick, *The Induction of the Cult Image in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mesopotamian *Mis Pi Ritual** (SAA Literary Texts 1; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2001), 22–24.

<sup>48</sup> W. G. Lambert, Review of F. Gössman, *Das Era Epos*, AfO 18 (1957–58): 395–401.

Mesopotamian scholars were interested not only in the divine statue but also in the accoutrements of the temple and its cult, sacred features that they explored in a genre that modern scholars call *topography*.<sup>49</sup> The bulk of the texts are not geographical exercises so much as theological and cosmological explorations of various cult shrines. Temples are listed along with their furnishings and features, and these are in turn provided with theological interpretations. Some of the topographies are metrological, providing detailed measurements of temples and their floor plans. One such text, from the Neo-Assyrian period, carefully lays out the dimensions of Marduk's temple in Babylon (Esagil), beginning with a north–south cross section, followed by an east–west cross section and ending with the temple's overall dimensions and circumference.<sup>50</sup> Why were these detailed metrics so important? The ancients believed that sacred dwellings were suitable for the gods only if their designs—like the designs of their cult statues—were divinely revealed. For this reason, when Esarhaddon restored Esagil (Marduk's temple in Babylon), he claims to have consulted written blueprints that preserved its ancient design.<sup>51</sup> Says Esarhaddon: “According to the word of the plans I laid its foundation platform” . . . “I laid its foundation platform directly on top of its ancient footings, according to its original plan: I did not fall short by one cubit, nor did I overshoot by half a cubit.”<sup>52</sup> As we can see, architectural details that might appear mundane and pedantic to us could be theologically significant facts for the Mesopotamians.

In his recent edition of these texts, A. R. George has suggested that it is not terribly difficult to surmise the purpose of the topographies.<sup>53</sup> They were composed by Mesopotamian scholars to extol the religious and theological importance of Babylon's holy shrines and cities. In particular, the scribes wished to demonstrate that the religious heritage of Babylon surpassed that of older cities like Nippur. So it was in some measure a context of religious competition that prompted them to produce their detailed explanations of sacred space.

It is often commented that the Priestly tabernacle texts in Exodus are similarly painstaking in their detail.<sup>54</sup> To be sure, these texts were influenced by descriptions of Solomon's temple in 1 Kings, and hence their peculiarities should not be attributed entirely to Mesopotamian influence. However, there are some significant differences between the Hebrew accounts of the tabernacle and temple. Not only is P's

<sup>49</sup> For publication and translation of this text, as well as related texts, see A. R. George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts* (OLA 40; Leuven: Peeters, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> See text 14 in George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, 120–29.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>52</sup> First quotation from D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (2 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), 2:247. Second quotation from Riecke Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien* (AfO Beiheft 9; Graz: Im Selbstverlage des Herausgebers, 1956), 21 (translation from George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, 123).

<sup>53</sup> George, *Babylonian Topographical Texts*, 5–6.

<sup>54</sup> Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House*, 110.

tabernacle account more detailed, but its function and purpose are different. Whereas the description of Solomon's temple accentuated the magnitude of the king's accomplishments, the Priestly Writer's purpose was more profound: to demonstrate the primordial nature of Jewish tradition by showing that God's dwelling place—the tabernacle—was constructed according to ancient blueprints from God.<sup>55</sup> This is why the Priestly description of the tabernacle (Exodus 35–40), which is similar to Solomon's temple account in other respects, was preceded by God's prescriptions for the tabernacle's construction (Exodus 25–31).<sup>56</sup> Prescriptions for the holy shrine do not appear in the narrative of temple construction in 1 Kings. It follows that the detail of the tabernacle account in Exodus and its emphasis on a divine blueprint find their closest parallels in the Mesopotamian rather than Israelite literary traditions.

To retrace our steps for a moment, it seems to me very likely that the narrative location of P's tabernacle account, standing as it does after Yahweh's victory at Yam Suph, reflects the influence of Mesopotamia—especially from *Enūma Elish*. But was P's detailed presentation of the tabernacle's construction, with its emphasis on sacred "blueprints," inspired also by Mesopotamian tradition? My affirmative answer to this question cannot be so certain as in the cases of P's creation, rites of the Day of Atonement, and the narrative of the exodus. The notion that sacred space might have primordial origins, and that its design might be revealed by the gods, is too common in religion for us to isolate it to Mesopotamia and, through this, to the Priestly Writer.<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, it seems to me that the similarities

<sup>55</sup> Although P's tabernacle prescriptions may appear inadequate when judged by the standards of modern "blueprints," three factors suggest that P intended readers to conceive of his prescriptions in this way. First, Mesopotamian prescriptions for fabricating ritual items were similarly inadequate as "blueprints" and depended on other iconographic and priestly traditions for their proper execution. It was simply impossible to present in mere words the complex features of cult paraphernalia. Second, we are told explicitly in Exodus 25 that the prescriptions for the tabernacle reflect what Moses actually *saw* (Exod 25:9). Hence, P wants readers to understand that the tabernacle built by Moses corresponded very precisely to the pattern (תבנית) that God revealed to him on the mountain. Third, and perhaps most important, it is generally agreed that the purpose of P's tabernacle was to demonstrate that Yahweh's sacred space had existed from the earliest days of Israel, long before the Jerusalem temple was built. Given that P probably dates to the postexilic period, at a time when Jews were interested in rebuilding the temple itself, we can surmise that P was never interested in actually building the tabernacle (although he may have been interested in fabricating some of its furnishings).

<sup>56</sup> This is only one of many instances in which the Priestly Writer's work features a prescription/execution formula when describing the construction of sacred things. See Blenkinsopp, "Structure of P," 275–92.

<sup>57</sup> If Ahaz's copy of the Damascus altar in 2 Kgs 16:10–18 is not a Deuteronomistic or, more likely, a Priestly invention, as some scholars suspect, then this text provides preexilic evidence that the prescription/execution pattern of sacred space was known in Israel well before the postexilic era of the Priestly Writer, as we might expect. For a discussion about the date and provenance of this text, see Burke O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 175. An

between the Babylonian and Priestly prescriptions for holy things are more than fortuitous. Their common interest in the significance of prescription/execution patterns when defining and shaping sacred space is striking in a way that distinguishes them from earlier Israelite literature. Moreover, if we grant for the moment that P dates to or after the exilic era, as most scholars suppose, then my thesis receives additional confirmation from other Hebrew authors. When the postexilic Chronicler re-narrated Solomon's construction of the temple in 1 Chronicles 28, among the many things that he added to his Deuteronomistic *Vorlage* was the claim that David recorded the pattern for Solomon's temple by "writing from the hand of the Lord . . . all the work to be done according to the plan." Similarly, in Ezekiel's temple vision we find that God provided elaborate temple plans to the prophet through a vision.<sup>58</sup> Also in Ezra, the author was careful to relate that cultic restoration was undertaken according to the prescriptions "written in the Book of Moses" (Ezra 3:2; 6:18). So it is not only in P but in exilic and postexilic Judaism generally that we find an emphasis on divinely given plans for sacred space.

The argument for Mesopotamian influence on P's tabernacle account is in part circumstantial and contextual and in part derived from both general and detailed comparative evidence. An additional piece of evidence would be the potential motive of P's work. If the Priestly Writer has shaped his tabernacle account to follow the contours of Mesopotamian ritual prescriptions and theological texts, why did he do so? One clue is provided by the Babylonian topographies themselves. As George has pointed out, an important motive for their composition was undoubtedly to enhance Babylon's identity in comparison with the older, classical identities of cities like Nippur. To my mind this was also the motive at work in P, who wished to provide Judaism's sacred site with the same primordial origins that prominent Mesopotamian temples claimed for their own cults. In doing so, the Priestly Writer enhanced his community's identity by presenting Jewish culture as comparable to the classical culture of Mesopotamia—as Babylon trumped Nippur, so P trumped Babylon.<sup>59</sup>

---

Egyptian example of the prescription/execution pattern appears in the Neferhotep Stela. The text is published in W. Helck *Historisch-Biographische Texte der 2. Zwischenzeit und Neue Texte der 18. Dynastie* (2nd rev. ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), 21–29; translation in William K. Simpson et al., *The Literature of Ancient Egypt: An Anthology of Stories, Instructions, Stelae, Autobiographies, and Poetry* (3rd ed.; New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2003), 339–44.

<sup>58</sup> The setting of the vision is disputed, but there is general agreement that much of it dates after Ezekiel himself, toward the end of the exile or perhaps later. See Hartmut Gese, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Ezechiel (Kap. 40–48): Traditionsgeschichtlich untersucht* (BHT 25; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1957); Steven S. Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM 49; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 206–33; Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (2 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979, 1983), 2:547–53.

<sup>59</sup> In a forthcoming paper, David P. Wright will suggest that P did this in order to deny legitimate sacrifices to all peoples, save Israel.

If the narrative location of P's tabernacle account was inspired by *Enūma Elish*, and if the account itself was further influenced by Mesopotamian concepts of sacred space such as are expressed in the topographies and other texts, then this will signify something important about P's *modus operandi*. His agenda was not merely to imitate *Enūma Elish*; it was to imitate Mesopotamia in general. The limitations of space preclude me from offering additional evidence for this conclusion. At this point I will say simply that there is such evidence, which I plan to adduce in future discussions of the Priestly Writer.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS: ELITE EMULATION IN THE PRIESTLY PENTATEUCH—WHEN AND WHY?

I have argued in this article that the Priestly Writer was an avid student of ancient texts and that his anthology of Israelite tradition was shaped to follow Mesopotamian patterns. Biblical scholars will be little surprised by any of the particular parallels that I have noted between P and Mesopotamian literature. It is rather my overall claim—that mimicking foreign tradition was a strategic part of P's agenda—that is somewhat novel. P's methodology in this project is not hard to see. His imitations were not mere inventions but involved the reshaping of older Israelite traditions (perhaps much older in some cases) so that these traditions mirrored their Mesopotamian counterparts more closely. Especially interesting in this mimetic dance is the fact that, in almost every case, other Near Eastern cultures imitated the same texts as P.<sup>60</sup> Equally instructive is that the Mesopotamian traditions P imitated were sometimes imitations of, or responses to, still older Mesopotamian traditions.<sup>61</sup> Thus, it would seem that the Priestly Writer, whether he knew it or not, stood within an old and venerable Mesopotamian tradition that practiced literary mimesis.

The reason for P's mimesis can only be inferred, there being no explicit motivation provided in the biblical text itself. But I have suggested already that we can reasonably deduce that this was a case of elite emulation in which P sought to bestow upon Israel, and upon Israel's religion, that air of antiquity and authority that was attached to all things Mesopotamian. At this point we cannot go much beyond this level of analysis unless we can identify the narrower contextual milieu in which the Priestly Writer lived and worked. Who was P's audience? And where did they live?

<sup>60</sup> For example, Assyrian uses of *Enūma Elish* and Persian uses of the *Akītu* rituals.

<sup>61</sup> The Babylonian topographies responded to Nippur's prominence, and *Enūma Elish* mimicked the older myth of Anzu, as was pointed out by W. G. Lambert, "Ninurta Mythology in the Babylonian Epic of Creation," in *Keilschriftliche Literaturen: Ausgewählte Vorträge der XXXII. Rencontre assyriologique internationale, Münster, 8.–12.7.1985* (ed. K. Hecker and W. Sommerfeld; Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 6; Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986), 55–60.

Mesopotamian texts and languages were known in Egypt, Hatti, and the Levant long before Israel appeared on the scene;<sup>62</sup> there are even instances in which these foreign cultures adopted the genres and motifs of Mesopotamian literature, particularly its omen traditions but also, in the case of Hatti, its epic traditions.<sup>63</sup> So Mesopotamia enjoyed an elite reputation and identity, worthy of emulation, for a very long time. I suspect that early Israel, taking shape in the highlands of Late Bronze/Iron I Palestine, did not have much access to Mesopotamian literature. But certainly by the eighth and seventh centuries, as Assyrian imperialism extended its reach into Palestine, this situation changed dramatically, if it had not already done so. It is precisely from this period that we find the influence of Assyrian ideology on the prophecies of Isaiah and in the book of Deuteronomy (cf. the Assyrian vassal treaties).<sup>64</sup> All of this is to say that, generally speaking, the emulation of Mesopotamian literature by Judean scribes fits nicely into Israel's preexilic era. At the same time, Judean contact with Mesopotamia was much greater during the exilic and postexilic eras, for the obvious reason that Judeans exiled to Mesopotamia continued to copy and produce Hebrew literature in that new context while trying, with some success, to maintain communication with those back in Palestine.<sup>65</sup> It was from this point forward that Mesopotamian influence on Hebrew literature began in earnest. I have in mind the influence of the Akkadian language on Ezekiel,<sup>66</sup> of Mesopotamian royal inscriptions and Akkadian on Deutero-Isaiah,<sup>67</sup> of Mesopotamian theodicies on Job,<sup>68</sup> of Gilgamesh on

<sup>62</sup> For the relevant evidence from Amarna, Ugarit, *Hattuša* and other sites, see Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 25–55, esp. 36–37, 46–47, 51–52, 464.

<sup>63</sup> See Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 230, 233, 391.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983): 719–37; R. Frankena, "The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon and the Dating of Deuteronomy," *OtSt* 14 (1965): 122–54; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 59–157.

<sup>65</sup> E.g., Jeremiah 29. See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah* (2 vols.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986–89), 2.139–40.

<sup>66</sup> Isaac Gluska, "Akkadian Influences on the Book of Ezekiel," in *An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein* (ed. Y. Sefati et al.; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 2005), 718–37.

<sup>67</sup> Shalom Paul, "Deutero-Isaiah and Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions," *JAOS* 88 (1968): 180–86; Peter Machinist, "Mesopotamian Imperialism and Israelite Religion: A Case Study from the Second Isaiah," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palestine* (ed. William G. Dever and Seymour Gitin; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 237–64.

<sup>68</sup> Gerald L. Mattingly, "The Pious Sufferer: Mesopotamia's Traditional Theodicy and Job's Counselors," in *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature* (ed. W. W. Hallo et al.; Scripture in Context 3; Lewiston: Mellen, 1990), 305–48; H.-P. Müller, "Keilschriftliche Parallelen zum biblischen Hiobbuch: Möglichkeit und Grenze des Vergleichs," in *Mythos-Kerygma-Wahrheit: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Alten Testament in seiner Umwelt und zur Biblischen Theologie* (ed. H.-P. Müller; BZAW 200; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 136–51; Karel van der Toorn, "The Ancient Near

Qohelet,<sup>69</sup> and of Mesopotamian language and tradition on the language and religion of Judaism and the Talmud.<sup>70</sup> Many other examples could be cited from the Bible, but the point is clear enough: Mesopotamian influence was possible throughout much of Israel's history, but it was most prominent during and after the exile.

On the basis of this observation, we might at first suppose that any texts of disputed provenance that exhibit Mesopotamian influence—such as P—probably date to the exilic or the postexilic era. But this argument does not follow at all. Simply because the Mesopotamian presence loomed larger at certain stages in Israelite history does not in the slightest make it probable that a given text was written during those periods. The Priestly Writer could have lived in any period in which Mesopotamian influence was adequate to spawn his mimesis. So the question of P's provenance cannot be addressed superficially but rather must be approached by a careful consideration of the evidence. And this lands us at once in the still ongoing debate about whether P should be dated to the exilic or especially the postexilic period, as most scholars presume, or whether it dates to the preexilic period, as is argued by a minority of very competent and influential scholars.<sup>71</sup>

Before I bring the evidence of this article to bear on the issue, let me state very briefly where I see the commonly discussed evidence pointing. Though it is true

---

Eastern Literary Dialogue as a Vehicle of Critical Reflection,” in *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Mediaeval Near East* (ed. G. J. Reinink and H. L. J. Vanstiphout; OLA 42; Leuven: Peeters, 1991), 59–75; Moshe Weinfeld, “Job and Its Mesopotamian Parallels—a Typological Analysis,” in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham* (ed. W. Claassen; JSOTSup 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 217–26.

<sup>69</sup> John Day, “Foreign Semitic Influence on the Wisdom of Israel and Its Appropriation in the Book of Proverbs,” in *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J. A. Emerton* (ed. John Day et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 55–70; Jeffrey Tigay, “On Evaluating Claims of Literary Borrowing,” in *The Tablet and the Scroll: Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William W. Hallo* (ed. M. E. Cohen, D. C. Snell, and D. B. Weisberg; Bethesda, MD: CDL, 1993), 250–55.

<sup>70</sup> See Stephen A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (AS 19; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 161–63; Michael Sokoloff, “New Akkadian Loanwords in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic,” in “An Experienced Scribe Who Neglects Nothing”: *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of Jacob Klein* (ed. Y. Sefati et al.; Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2005), 575–85; A. Salvesen, “The Legacy of Babylon and Nineveh in Aramaic Sources,” in *The Legacy of Mesopotamia* (ed. Stephanie Dalley et al.; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 139–61.

<sup>71</sup> Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978); Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (CahRB 20; Paris: Gabalda, 1982); Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 3–35; Moshe Weinfeld, *The Place of the Law in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTSup 100; Leiden: Brill, 2004).



that the late date assigned to P by nineteenth-century scholars stemmed in part from a now defunct Hegelian (and sometimes anti-Semitic) view of history, their scholarly instincts were not wholly mistaken. If we collate the evidence from Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH), Ezekiel, and Chronicles, it is not at all difficult to recognize certain historical developments in the religious ideas and institutions of ancient Israel, nor is it difficult to see how P fits into that history. Regarding Israel's temple, sacrifices, and priesthood, and regarding other matters, including linguistic developments, the evidence strongly suggests that the Priestly Pentateuch dates after Deuteronomy, DtrH, and Ezekiel, so that P's theology fits precisely into that period where we find *the* text that is most like it: the postexilic Chronicler.<sup>72</sup> To my mind, the inevitable conclusion is that P and the Chronicler are similar (though not identical) attempts to view older Hebrew histories through a postexilic priestly lens; P is a priestly version of the non-Priestly Pentateuch, and the Chronicler, a priestly rendition of Samuel/Kings.<sup>73</sup>

Of course, those who date P much earlier have often produced fascinating and insightful critiques of the majority status quo. Haran, Hurvitz, Knohl, Milgrom, and Weinfeld, among others, would offer very different conceptions of P in terms of its language, ideology, and historical development vis-à-vis the non-Priestly traditions. But with all due respect to these fine scholars, I must confess that none of their arguments strikes me as finally persuasive. I would agree instead with Blenkinsopp: when the biblical and historical data are considered as a whole, it remains much more economical to handle the objections of the early-date school within the framework of P's late date than to embrace the difficulties that inhere in accepting the early date itself.<sup>74</sup> That is, the best approach to the early elements in P will not conclude that P is early; it will simply admit that P did not appear *de nouveau* but was itself a development of older traditions and texts, of the sort that stood behind the prophecies of Ezekiel and the laws of the Holiness Code.<sup>75</sup> Thus, it is my opinion that we already have sufficient evidence to determine that the Priestly composition is essentially a product of the postexilic era. As I see it, my thesis about P's mimetic character only reinforces the cogency of this conclusion.

What historical milieu suits P's mimetic work? Although Mesopotamian traditions influenced the preexilic literature of Israel, that preexilic context does not suit the mimetic work of P as I have presented it. The primary models for P's mimesis were the Mesopotamian *Akītu* and especially the closely related myth, *Enūma*

<sup>72</sup> For an annotated list of the standard discussions, see Kenton L. Sparks, *The Pentateuch: An Annotated Bibliography* (IBR Bibliographies 1; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 2–36.

<sup>73</sup> William Johnstone, "Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies with Special Reference to the Sinai Pericope in Exodus," *ZAW* 99 (1987): 16–37.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "An Assessment of the Alleged Pre-exilic Date of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch," *ZAW* 108 (1996): 495–518.

<sup>75</sup> See Rolf Rendtorff, "Two Kinds of P? Some Reflections on the Occasion of the Publishing of Jacob Milgrom's Commentary on Leviticus 1–16," *JOT* 60 (1993): 75–81.

*Elish*. Though the *Akītu* itself was celebrated in various places and at various times, the *kuppuru* rite on day 5, and the closely associated myth, *Enūma Elish*, simultaneously direct our attention to the city of Babylon and to the two gods so prominent in the Neo-Babylonian pantheon, Marduk and Nabu. Nabu, in particular, became prominent only during the Neo-Babylonian period,<sup>76</sup> and it is precisely in the exilic additions to Jeremiah and especially in the late-exilic prophecies of Second Isaiah that we first encounter polemic against Babylon, Marduk, and Nabu.<sup>77</sup> Given the brevity of Judah's preexilic conflict with Babylon, the sensible conclusion is that P's mimetic activity dates to the exilic or postexilic period, as was the case for Persian imitations of the Babylonian *Akītu*. To my mind one part of the question at hand is settled: insofar as it imitates Mesopotamian tradition, the Priestly composition dates to the exilic and/or postexilic era, when nascent Judaism lived in continuous contact with Mesopotamian (especially Babylonian) traditions and sought legitimacy by imitating those traditions.<sup>78</sup>

In this contextual milieu, P's elite emulation takes on a new kind of significance. It is one thing to imagine that P was miming Mesopotamian literature from afar, as we who live in America might imitate the décor of Old Europe or the Far East. But it is quite another thing for P to do so in the exilic or postexilic period, when many Jews—especially of the Diaspora intelligentsia—lived in close quarters with non-Jews. In this context, it seems to me more likely that P's mimetic strategy reflects a context of cultural competition, in which he labored to protect the identity and integrity of his Israelite community against the threat of cultural assimilation. And it is not terribly difficult to recognize the locus of those threats, nor P's strategy for quelling them.

<sup>76</sup> See Pomponio, "Nabû, A. Philologisch"; Millard, "Nabu, נְבוּ"; Michel, "Nabû."

<sup>77</sup> See Jeremiah 50–51 as well as Isaiah 46–47, where the rhetoric is aimed at two key players in the *Akītu*: the gods Marduk and Nabu. For discussion, see Martin Kessler, *Battle of the Gods: The God of Israel versus Marduk of Babylon: A Literary/Theological Interpretation of Jeremiah 50–51* (SSN 42; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2003). Regarding the late date of Jeremiah 50–51, see Holladay, *Jeremiah*, 2:391–444; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Jeremia* (HAT 12; Tübingen: Mohr, 1947), 256–82; Douglas R. Jones, *Jeremiah* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 520–52.

<sup>78</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith has suggested that *Enūma Elish* as we know it from our Seleucid-era copies may not reflect earlier versions of the myth. Given that the same can be said of many Mesopotamian ritual and mythic texts, this raises the question of whether P knew the texts in question in a version that differs from our late copies. The simple fact is that we cannot now prove that our late copies reflect more ancient traditions in every respect. Nevertheless, most scholars have concluded on the basis of the internal evidence, and on the basis of contextual fit, that these late copies are fairly good reflections of earlier ritual and mythic traditions. This conclusion is confirmed in at least one case, where copies of ritual texts from the Persian and Seleucid eras turn out to be very similar (see Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible*, 158–59). For Smith's comments, see "A Pearl of Great Price and a Cargo of Yams: A Study in Situational Incongruity," in his *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 90–101.

I think it no coincidence that the Hebrew Priestly Writer, by imitating the *Akītu* and *Enūma Elish*, has drawn upon traditions from the generic province of Mesopotamian priests and priestly scribes.<sup>79</sup> Like the priests of Persia who did the same,<sup>80</sup> this Jewish priest fixed his eyes on Mesopotamian tradition and adopted its images and forms as his own. The fact that Diaspora Jews were learning and mastering Aramaic would have made this cultural exchange feasible, and we can by no means rule out the possibility that some Jewish priests—perhaps *this* Jewish priest—knew Akkadian. Given the text's apparent association with priestly circles, it is likely that one of P's motives was to provide Jewish priests and scholars with a counterpart to Mesopotamia's priestly traditions. It remains difficult to discern whether the trouble P confronted was cultural assimilation (because Jewish priests and scholars were embracing Mesopotamian culture) or cultural inferiority (because Jewish priests and scholars found their tradition wanting in comparison with the venerable Mesopotamian tradition). Perhaps the truth includes some combination of these factors. But if we may judge from the concerns reflected in post-exilic Jewish texts such as the tales of Daniel and Esther, the assimilation of Diaspora Jews to foreign culture was a real threat to Judaism's existence during the exile and afterward.<sup>81</sup> Priests committed to their Jewish orthodoxy would have strongly resisted the tendency for their fellow Jews, and especially their fellow priests, to embrace foreign culture. The Priestly Writer attempted to quell this tendency by painting Israelite tradition—its history and institutions—as authentic and attractive alternatives to the dominant culture of Mesopotamia.

An objection may come to mind at this point. Does the evidence from P point unambiguously to the conclusion that his audience lived in the eastern Diaspora? It seems to me that P's mimetic response to Mesopotamian tradition is, at face value, substantive evidence that the Priestly Writer lived and worked in that eastern context. A reasonable objection to this implication might be that P was more interested in the cultic life of the Jerusalem temple community than in the life of Diaspora Jews, but this is perhaps less of a problem than it might seem. Whatever Ezra's mission was, it implies that Jewish priests in Mesopotamia believed themselves to have a better grasp on healthy ritual and religion than their counterparts

<sup>79</sup> For example, *Enūma Elish*, the rituals of *kuppuru*, the topographies, the omen literature, and the prescription/execution pattern for fabricating holy things.

<sup>80</sup> See Fennelly, "Persepolis Ritual."

<sup>81</sup> For relevant discussions, see W. L. Humphreys, "The Motif of the Wise Courtier in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1970); idem, "A Life-Style for Diaspora: A Study of the Tales of Esther and Daniel," *JBL* 92 (1973): 211–23; P. Meinhold, "Die Geschichte des Sinuhe und die alttestamentliche Diasporanovelle," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Ernst-Moritz-Arndt Universität* 20 (1971): 277–81; Daniel L. Smith, *The Religion of the Landless: The Social Context of the Babylonian Exile* (Bloomington, IN: Meyer-Stone, 1989), esp. 80–90, 139–78.

in Palestine.<sup>82</sup> If a Diaspora priest (or priests) created the Priestly corpus of the Pentateuch, then his composition would undoubtedly have addressed issues pertaining to both Mesopotamia and Palestine—including cultic issues pertaining to the Jerusalem temple. On this point, we should not overlook Erhard Gerstenberger's argument that P's readers seem to be the whole congregation of Jews rather than priests and Levites only.<sup>83</sup> Such an audience could have lived in the Diaspora as easily as in Palestine.

Yet, having taken my stand on P's eastern provenance, I must admit that the case for P's *Sitz* in the eastern Diaspora is not wholly conclusive but only highly suggestive. During the postexilic era, there were undoubtedly many channels of communication and dialogue between Jewish priests and scholars in the Diaspora and in Palestine. In this dialogical context, we can imagine that a Jewish priest(s) in Palestine could and probably would have addressed any pressing issues facing Jews in Babylon. In fact, the need to address issues in the eastern Diaspora would have applied in some measure to Palestine itself, since there were always Jews arriving in Palestine from Mesopotamia. So, while I think it more likely that the Priestly Writer lived and worked in Mesopotamia, it is still possible that he lived in the so-called *Tempel-Bürger Gemeinde* of Palestine. Consequently, the provenance of P remains for me a matter of some ambiguity.

Less ambiguous, I think, is the success of P's mimetic work. The Priestly Writer cast older Israelite traditions in a form that emulated the elite traditions of Mesopotamia, and he did so in order to enhance and preserve Jewish identity in the face of threats raised to it. The vibrant communities of Judaism that emerged in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the far-flung Diaspora suggest that the Priestly Writer would have been pleased with the results of this effort.

<sup>82</sup> On the variegated problem of Ezra's mission, see Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 1:94–98.

<sup>83</sup> Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Leviticus: A Commentary* (trans. Douglas W. Stott; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 10–14.

## The Two Maps of Israel's Land

RACHEL HAVRELOCK

raheleh@uic.edu

University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL 60607

---

The general space of the world becomes more familiar as specific places through demarcation and domesticating practices that include identifying and naming natural features, building memorial structures, and telling stories of pilgrim ancestors.<sup>1</sup> Such acts also play central roles in colonization and settlement and can, for example, be easily located in the book of Joshua.<sup>2</sup> Here I investigate the making of Israel's place on the national level or, said differently, how the map of a nation comes into being. The examples are taken from throughout the Hebrew Bible and therefore the context is antiquity, yet similar processes also determine the nature of maps from subsequent eras. Biblical maps display how spatial representation of the nation relies on intersecting mythic and political standards. My analysis of this dynamic is driven by the question of why there are two different maps of Israel's land. One set of maps spans from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to the Jordan River in the east and a second set reaches from the Sea to the River Euphrates. A conceptual stability results from the parallel of land spanning from river to sea, while conflicting notions of the state arise from their discrepancies. I argue that the seemingly paradoxical existence of two topographies illustrates how maps reconcile the idea of the nation with regnant mythic conceptions as well as how the nation borrows the means of self-presentation from empire.

The maps to which I refer are narratives that evoke place by consecutive enumeration of limits rather than by graphic symbols.<sup>3</sup> We know of pictorial maps

<sup>1</sup> For the dynamic through which space becomes place, see Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 179.

<sup>2</sup> The extensive geographical description in Joshua 15–21 is replete with acts of demarcation, identifying, and naming. Additional examples of naming as a mode of staking claim can be found in Josh 5:9 and 14:12–15. Memorial structures are erected in Josh 4:4–8; 4:19–24; 8:30–32; and 24:26–27. In addition to the chronicle of pilgrim ancestors represented by the book, Josh 24:1–13 tells of this generation's intrepid forerunners.

<sup>3</sup> Such boundary lists seem to be among the oldest cartographic relics; Sumerian documents of this nature from 2500–2200 B.C.E. have been discovered. See A. R. Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," in *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and*

from the ancient Near East such as the Babylonian *mappa mundi*<sup>4</sup> and the Egyptian map of Turin.<sup>5</sup> The maps of Israel's land, in contrast, are mediated in language as boundary lists. Although they first read like an inventory, a geographical corollary to the genealogy genre, the maps are rich in literary nuance and historical suggestion.<sup>6</sup> J. B. Harley, the historian of cartography who initiated theoretical consideration of mapping, has shown how maps can be probed for their silences as well as for the concessions made in the margins that haunt their hierarchies. From maps we learn how those in power such as monarchs or priests circumscribe space in order that institutions such as the court or the priesthood be perceived as the center of state and cosmos alike. At the same time, the grandiosity or over-compensation of maps often bespeaks the tremulousness of power, and acknowledgments made in passing can point toward fronts of contestation or resistance.

The structure of the article follows Harley's suggested dual analysis of reading for "the cartographers' rules" of how a map must be designed and for its "signifying system' through which 'a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored.'"<sup>7</sup> I discuss these issues in two sections: The first deals with the "role of measured maps in the making of myth" and the second with the imperial standards by which the smaller nations of antiquity measured themselves.<sup>8</sup> On the second count we will see the refusal of ancient Israel to measure itself against anything less than a great empire.

## I. MYTHIC GEOGRAPHY

### *Jordan Maps*

Although the Jordan maps exist in only two variations, they enjoy thematic dominance because they conform to the idea of the land produced in exodus nar-

---

*Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean* (ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 107.

<sup>4</sup> "The map is really a diagram to show the relation of (these) places to the world of the Babylonians. Each place is drawn as a triangle rising beyond the circle of the salty ocean. . . . Enclosed by the circle of the salt sea lies an oblong marked 'Babylon' with two parallel lines running to it from mountains at the edge of the enclosure" (Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 111).

<sup>5</sup> "Turin map of a gold-bearing region, dating from about 1150 B.C., remains the only map of interest from ancient Egypt" (A. F. Shore, "Egyptian Cartography," in *History of Cartography*, ed. Harley and Woodward, 117).

<sup>6</sup> Genealogies involve similar literary and historical complexities. See, e.g., Frank Crüsemann, "Human Solidarity and Ethnic Identity: Israel's Self-Definition in the Genealogical System of Genesis," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. Mark G. Brett; Biblical Interpretation 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 58–76.

<sup>7</sup> J. B. Harley (quoting Foucault), "Texts and Contexts I: The Interpretation of Early Maps," in *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography* (ed. Paul Laxton; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 45.

<sup>8</sup> Harley, "Maps, Knowledge, and Power," in *New Nature of Maps*, ed. Laxton, 77.

ratives where the experiences of wandering and homecoming are distinguished on the basis of the location of the people of Israel in relation to the Jordan River. Throughout these narratives, crossing the Jordan is synonymous with national reintegration. Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua alike stage the homeland west of the Jordan and employ the river as a temporal and legal as well as a spatial boundary. Numbers 34, for example, sets the Jordan as the eastern boundary.

God spoke to Moses saying: "Instruct the Israelites by saying to them: When you enter the land of Canaan, this is the land that will constitute your property, the land of Canaan as defined by its borders. . . . Your western border will be the Great Sea; this border will be your western border. . . . Mark your eastern border from Hazar-enan to Shepham. The eastern border will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain, from there the boundary will continue down to skirt the eastern edge of the Chinneret Sea (the Sea of Galilee). Then the border will descend along the Jordan until it reaches the Dead Sea; this will be your land as defined by its borders." (Num 34:1–2, 6, 10–12)

The specificity of the map transforms the land from a fantasy of nurture, "the land flowing with milk and honey," to a fantasy of power in "the land that will constitute your property" (Num 34:12). The borders allow the land to be graspable as a concept and a conquest. The place where Israel will claim its patrimony is twice termed the land of Canaan, and the borders here outlined are presented as those already associated with Canaan with or without the presence of Israel. The Mediterranean serves as the western boundary and the Jordan as the clearest eastern boundary, although the northeastern stretch cuts deep into Syria and Lebanon considerably beyond the river's edge. The inclusion of the northeastern section of the Transjordan within the land shows that the Jordan operates as the eastern border only from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. This stretch of the river defines the east and west banks and is the setting for all Jordan-crossing stories (Gen 28:10–22, 32; Joshua 1–4; Judg 12:1–6; 2 Sam 17:22; 19:16–41; 2 Kgs 2:2).

The other map in which the Jordan delimits the eastern frontier occurs in the concluding vision of the book of Ezekiel.<sup>9</sup> This exilic book assures the persistence of homeland by mapping it in scrupulous detail and portraying its borders as able to encompass overlapping claims.<sup>10</sup> Self-consciously utopian, the map homologizes the land, the temple, and paradise as interchangeable topoi of symmetry and abundance. The map moves from north to east to south to west delimiting "the land that the twelve tribes can claim as an inheritance" (47:13) and then allots territory

<sup>9</sup> Bodies of water set three of the four boundaries of Ezekiel's land, including the Mediterranean to the west and the waters of Meribah along with the river of Egypt to the south. While Ezek 47:19 speaks only of the "river" to the south, the parallel in Num 34:5 suggests that the river of Egypt is likely Wadi el-Arish.

<sup>10</sup> That Ezekiel's final vision presents an alternative to exile is suggested by the way in which rivers function as a framing device. The book opens by the Babylonian River Chebar (1:1) and concludes by the homeland's River Jordan (47:8, 18).



with exacting equality to twelve non-priestly tribes. Even the nettlesome “strangers in your midst,” who prove problematic in other biblical texts and other sections of Ezekiel, are granted citizenship and ceded territory in the virtual land (Ezek 47:22–23). The tribes of Israel are inscribed in “thirteen longitudinal strips” with the twelve territorial tribes stacked to the north and south around a central portion reserved for Yahweh, the Zadokite priests, the Levites, and the archetypal monarch called *nāsi* (48:1–29).<sup>11</sup> All tribes are stationed west of the Jordan with Dan (v. 1), Asher (v. 2), Naphtali (v. 3), the two Joseph tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (vv. 5, 6), Reuben (v. 7), Judah (v. 8) north of the sacred domain and Benjamin (v. 23), Simeon (v. 24), Issachar (v. 25), Zebulun (v. 26), and Gad (v. 28) to the south.<sup>12</sup> Although several tribes had likely been “lost” by the time of the composition of the book of Ezekiel, all have a place in the ideal social configuration. The articulation of natural boundary markers such as mountains and seas grants legitimacy to the map and thereby enables its reimagining of homeland. Indeed, such idealized mappings are characteristic of exilic communities who remember home in novel ways.

Jonathan Z. Smith understands Ezekiel’s maps as pragmatically survivalist. Their geographic and architectural images set up systems of distinction that do not depend on the places evoked. Instead, the distinctions can be overlaid on the calendar, on notions of kinship and identity, and onto ritual practice. The representation of sacred geography then operates to marry memory to transposable distinctions, not to communicate that the absence of place entails the demise of identity. Of the four maps that Smith identifies in Ezekiel 40–48, three (40:1–44:3; 45:1–8; and 47:13–48:35) outline “a hierarchy of power built on the dichotomy sacred/profane” and one (44:4–31) “is a hierarchy of status built on the dichotomy pure/impure.”<sup>13</sup> Stressing the transferability of the “complex and rigorous systems of power and status,” Smith intimates that their potential replication arises from their mythic character.<sup>14</sup> The dichotomies, not the places, are upheld as eternal and necessary. Ezekiel’s maps and their systemic boundaries are mythic not only in their apocalyptic promise of a future Eden and in their potential for reproduction, but also in the structural sense of homologous oppositions evident in other biblical myths and other mythic systems.

### *The Jordan and Creation*

Mythic allusions launch Ezekiel’s narrative of transport. God lets him down on “a very high mountain” whose panoramic views recall Moses’ final vision (Num

<sup>11</sup> Kalinda Rose Stevenson, *The Vision of Transformation: The Territorial Rhetoric of Ezekiel 40–48* (SBLDS 154; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 46.

<sup>12</sup> Hierarchy finds its place even amidst equality: “The sons of the concubines Zilpah and Bilhah are farthest away from the Portion” (Stevenson, *Vision of Transformation*, 86).

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (CSHJ; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 56.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

27:12; Deut 32:49; 34:1–4) and whose centrality emphasizes both the temple's sacredness and its similarity to the garden of God (Ezek 28:14).<sup>15</sup> The carved cherubs and accompanying date palms that line the temple interiors (41:18–20, 25) “re-create Eden's ambiance” (Gen 3:24; Ezek 28:14) and the presence of God moves in from the east, the primal direction, to illuminate the world and resonate like the crashing of water (43:1).<sup>16</sup> The new Eden is arable, with abundant trees (Ezek 47:7; Gen 2:9), swarming creatures (Ezek 47:9; Gen 1:20), and immortal possibilities offered by leaves that heal instead of withering and fruits that never rot (Ezek 47:12). The replenishing fruit trees beside sanctified waters promise an imminent and inclusive paradise.

Water is the dominant feature in the paradisaical vision. As a river rises from Eden and branches out into four courses (Gen 2:10), so a single stream bubbles from beneath the temple and swells into an uncrossable river (Ezek 47:5).<sup>17</sup> The surging waters of Jerusalem symbolize a future of surpassing Babylon, a teleologic cleansing, and national revivification catalyzed by a restored temple (Isa 33:21; Joel 4:18; Zech 14:8). Such a river, like the Jordan in the exodus narratives, bifurcates terrain while also marking an era of redemption distinct from the iniquities and humiliations of the past. Indeed this river that heals staid waters and revives fish and fruit trees (Ezek 47:9–12) morphs into the Jordan as it flows in the eastern region through the Arava and Dead Sea (Ezek 47:8).<sup>18</sup> As the unnamed, eschatological river assimilates to the Jordan River, the Jordan accrues apocalyptic associations. More to our purposes, however, the synthesis of the rivers imbricates the geographic and the mythic. Ezekiel 47 juxtaposes two visions with a coursing river, the burgeoning paradise of the restored temple, and the division of tribal territories. The river of the paradisaical vision follows the southern leg of the Jordan's path, and the Jordan of the territorial vision delimits the scope of the land

<sup>15</sup> For the similarities between Ezekiel's mountain and Sinai, see Jon Douglas Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* (HSM 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 43–44. In terms of the Edenic component: “Jerusalem's temple symbolized God's cosmic mountain towering into the cosmic expanse. There, humans came closest to Eden, God's holy realm” (Stephen L. Cook, “Cosmos, *Kabod*, and Cherub,” in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World: Wrestling with a Tiered Reality* [ed. Stephen L. Cook and Corrine L. Patton; SBLSymS 31; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004], 185).

<sup>16</sup> Cook, “Cosmos, *Kabod*, and Cherub,” 185.

<sup>17</sup> Picking up on the parallel between this “fructifying river” and the rivers of Genesis 2, Susan Niditch observes that the ideology of hierarchy expressed here is more in line with the bounded cosmos of Genesis 1. She saves herself source-critical somersaults with the brilliant proposal that Ezekiel 37–48 parallels Genesis 1–11, “the main corpus of cosmogonic material in the OT” (Niditch, “Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context,” *CBQ* 48 [1986]: 217, 216).

<sup>18</sup> Niditch's observation that “the slowly heightening description of the seer's immersion into a river which becomes knee-high, waist-high, and finally a torrent ‘impossible to cross’ is surely another initiation for Ezekiel with rich, symbolic possibilities” (“Ezekiel 40–48 in a Visionary Context,” 217) alerts me to another way in which the temple river assimilates to the Jordan, a site of initiation.

(47:18).<sup>19</sup> The twin rivers with a parallel course merge into a symbolic unity that endows the Jordan with eternal legitimacy as the eastern border of Israel's land. Thus, Ezekiel's serial visions lay bare a complex process always at work with borders in which authoritative accounts of origin compensate for their arbitrary nature.

As the Judean Desert and Jordan River Valley transform into the new Eden (Ezekiel 47), paradisaical themes from Genesis 1–2 and Ezekiel 28 coalesce. The political tenor of Ezekiel's map has most in common with the myth of Genesis 1 and with priestly programs in general.<sup>20</sup> Ezekiel's priestly status and the book's connection with the H source have long been recognized,<sup>21</sup> while less noted is the interchangeability of ritual and spatial boundaries.<sup>22</sup> The Priestly writers/ideological schools behind the maps of Number 34 (P) and Ezekiel 47–48 (H) desire that the Jordan be the border.<sup>23</sup> Putting aside the questions of if, when, and how the Jordan

<sup>19</sup> Kathryn Pfisterer Darr argues, contra Walther Eichrodt, that "the regions transformed by the river's healing waters are located within the boundaries of Israel's homeland" (Darr, "The Wall around Paradise: Ezekielian Ideas about the Future," *VT* 37 [1987]: 271–79).

<sup>20</sup> "Indeed, the cosmogonic process of creating and rightly ordering the new world of Ezekiel 40–48, in which Ezekiel participates, is a task that resonates with priestly overtones" (Iain M. Duguid, "Putting Priests in Their Place," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, ed. Cook and Patton, 56).

<sup>21</sup> "That there is a particularly close relationship between Ezekiel and the Holiness Code is undisputed" (Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* [Oxford Theological Monographs; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], 107). Jacob Milgrom notes that Ezekiel differs from P in its greater restriction of access to holy spheres (*Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991], 452). There are "point by point similarities between the instructions to the priests in Ezekiel 44:15–31 and the instructions to the priests in the Holiness Code (especially Lev 21:1–22:9), which make it clear at least that a common tradition underlies these two texts" (Steven Shawn Tuell, *The Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48* [HSM 49; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 139). For P's predating of Ezekiel, see Avi Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (CahRB 20; Paris: Gabalda, 1982).

<sup>22</sup> The architectural mappings in Ezekiel enforce the primacy of the Zadokites in Jerusalem, their proximity to the divine and their political centrality (Ezek 40:46; 43:19). Part of this positioning means that rigorous gradations of purity must be upheld. At the base of the gradations are three sets of distinctions: between Israel and Others, between Levites and Israelites/Judeans, and between Zadokites and Levites. While Ezekiel's map of the land accommodates Others as citizens (Ezek 47:22–23), "aliens, uncircumcised of heart and uncircumcised of flesh" are barred from the sanctuary complex and temple (Ezek 44:7, 9). Implicit in the formulation is a strategy for accepting equality with strangers on the civic level while maintaining Israel's distinction on an ethnic and religious basis.

<sup>23</sup> Steven Tuell highlights the discrepancies between the maps in Numbers and Ezekiel: "The two accounts are almost direct opposites, beginning at opposite points, moving in opposite directions, each strong where the other is weak and weak where the other is strong." He explains the fact that the "Ezekiel text is as fulsome on the northern border as Numbers is on the southern" as arising from the literary context of Numbers, which presents the land from the perspective of the migrating Israelites coming from the south, which in turn must reflect a southern or Judean

functions as a border, it can be said with certainty that the Priestly school in its various avatars would very much like this to be the case. The reasons why include that, as a topographical feature, a river naturalizes the sort of religious and ethnic divisions that the priestly class puts in place and because the Jordan, associated with Israel's beginnings, authorizes the very premise of necessary borders. "A certain circularity obtains here: cosmogonies reinforced existing power structures by presenting them as derived from the divine order asserted by the cosmogony."<sup>24</sup> Traditions of contamination trouble biblical representations of the east side of the Jordan (Gen 19:30–38; Numbers 32; Joshua 22), while notions of a river-bounded land clarify the scope of purity. Although the Jordan as a border narrows the land's midsection, when it is upheld, priestly systems of differentiation correlate with creation and appear unassailable. As we will see, mythic elements are equally at work in Ezekiel's territorial vision and in biblical maps as a category.

### *Euphrates Maps*

The second, more ubiquitous set of maps fixes the land's eastern boundary at the Euphrates and appears in Genesis, Exodus, and the Deuteronomistic History. To Abraham, God defines the land intended for his descendants as spanning "from the River of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates" (Gen 15:18). In the book of Exodus, God promises to set the borders of the land "from the Sea of Reeds to the Sea of Philistia and from the wilderness to the river" (Exod 23:31).<sup>25</sup> Solomon's rule is praised for extending "over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the boundary of Egypt" (1 Kgs 5:1). The Euphrates also figures as the eastern boundary in Moses' recapitulation of the promise of the land made at Sinai (Deut 1:7) and in God's delineation of the boundaries "from the wilderness to the mountains of Lebanon and from the River, the Euphrates, to the Western Sea" (Deut 11:24). As it is highly improbable that any configuration of ancient Israel included the northeastern expanse outlined in Numbers 34, it is even more implausible that Israel at any stage included land to the east of the Transjordan, let alone to the Euphrates.

The Euphrates maps offer a glimpse of an unfulfilled vision of military

---

perspective (*Law of the Temple in Ezekiel 40–48*, 155). I stress an element missing from his thesis—the Numbers map and the Ezekiel map both bound the land with water in three of four directions. Although one might want the northern border to be set with a river such as the Litani, it is associated in certain maps (Num 34:7) with a mountain. This notion of a northerly mountain reflects the Ugaritic topos of Zaphon, the gathering place of Canaanite gods (see also Isa 14:13). A mountain to the north or at least the lack of a river accommodates this local mytheme.

<sup>24</sup> Julie Galambush, "God's Land and Mine: Creation as Property in the Book of Ezekiel," in *Ezekiel's Hierarchical World*, ed. Cook and Patton, 91.

<sup>25</sup> "The river" indicates the Euphrates here as in Gen 31:21; Josh 1:4; 24:2, 3, 14, 15; 1 Kgs 5:4; 1 Chr 5:9.

strength and imperial influence. This vision runs alongside the insistence that the Jordan distinguishes the land from foreign lands. No matter the informing map, the east bank is always the other side of the Jordan and the Israelites cross over to enact a return. Whereas the Jordan map presents an image of the land that corresponds to other dichotomies, the Euphrates map generates tension between these dichotomies and the boundary of the land. Such tension becomes particularly apparent in chapters that include a map spanning from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates (Deut 11:24; Josh 1:4), yet proclaim that possession of the land begins only after the national, westward crossing of the Jordan (Deut 11:31; Josh 1:2).<sup>26</sup> This tension renders the space between the Jordan and the Euphrates, particularly the east bank, ambiguously both Israel and Other.<sup>27</sup> The Transjordan, included in one vision of the land and excluded from another, is suspended in the pull of conflicting ideologies.

Why does the Euphrates then persist as a represented border? This river is associated with the patriarchal place of origin (Gen 12:31), and Abraham's crossing inaugurates Israelite history.<sup>28</sup> The time of Israelite history is thus associated with the space to the west of the Euphrates.<sup>29</sup> Since the land to the east of the Euphrates is directly associated with Israel's dark beginnings in idol worship (Josh 24:15), it cannot be included in any definition of the promised land. The wanderings of Abraham and Jacob, however, are narratives that domesticate the land west of the Euphrates. The Euphrates maps, particularly those in which the "River of Egypt" or "Sea of Reeds" constitutes the southern border (Gen 15:18; Exod 23:31), include the lands of Israel's wandering as part of its territory.

### *The River as Cosmic Boundary*

In both sets of maps, the portrait of land bounded by water resonates with cosmological descriptions in which the world spans "from sea to sea" or "from the

<sup>26</sup> Despite the Euphrates map with which the book of Joshua opens, at book's end Joshua bequeaths the territory "from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea in the west" (Josh 23:4) to the tribes of Israel.

<sup>27</sup> David Jobling examines "the text's creation of Transjordan as ambiguous land. It belongs, at some level, to Israel; yet there is the suspicion of another level at which it belongs rather to someone else, so that Israel's occupation of it is not Yahweh's intention (this 'someone else' is Israel's affines, Moab and Ammon)" ("The Jordan a Border: Transjordan in Israel's Ideological Geography," in *The Sense of Biblical Narrative*, vol. 2, *Structural Analyses in the Hebrew Bible* [JSOTSup 39; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986], 116–17).

<sup>28</sup> Zechariah Kallai refers to the coordinates of the Euphrates map as "the patriarchal borders" ("The Borders of the Land of Canaan and the Land of Israel in the Bible: Territorial Models in Biblical Historiography" [in Hebrew], *Erlsr* 12 [1985]: 29).

<sup>29</sup> The Euphrates plays a central role also in the Babylonian world map. "Despite the absence of a name, it is clear that the parallel lines running to and from Babylon represent the river Euphrates" (Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 111–12).

river to the ends of the earth" (Zech 9:10; Ps 72:8). The image of the cosmos behind these descriptions is a three-tiered universe in which the sea encircles the disc of the earth and the heavens rest both beyond and above the earth and the sea.<sup>30</sup> This type of cosmic map is well documented in the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean. In the Babylonian *mappa mundi* dated around 600 B.C.E. and displayed at the British Museum (BM 92687), the earth is surrounded by a river from which otherworldly regions stem.<sup>31</sup> As examples of ancient cartography, the Phoenician bowl found at Praneste and Egyptian papyri depict the encircling ocean or river as a serpent that surrounds the world and swallows its own tail.<sup>32</sup> The "earliest literary reference for cartography in early Greece . . . is the description of the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* of Homer, thought by modern scholars to have been written in the eighth century B.C."<sup>33</sup> Achilles' shield shows "the Ocean River's mighty power girdling round the outmost rim of the welded indestructible shield" (*Il.* 18.606–8).<sup>34</sup> The combination of biblical allusions and parallels in other ancient Mediterranean cultures supports the idea that a mythic view of the world as encompassed by a world ocean/river is the common framework for the two biblical maps.

The designation of seas and rivers as boundaries conveys a sense that the order of the land reflects the structure of the cosmos. The parallel asserts that the land, implicitly associated with the state and the cult, is natural, divine, and as inevitable as creation. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's descriptions of his imperial influence similarly speak of a span "from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See Isa 40:22, 28; Job 22:7; 26:10; Prov 8:27. See A. J. Wensinck, *The Ocean in the Literature of the Western Semites* (Amsterdam: Johannes Müller, 1918), 23; and P. S. Alexander, "Geography and the Bible," *ABD* 2:977–87.

<sup>31</sup> The map "is universally admitted to be a copy made after 600 B.C." (Robert North, S.J., *A History of Biblical Map Making* (Tübingen Atlas des Vorderen Orients: Reihe B, Geisteswissenschaft 32; Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1979), 13. "The Babylonian Map of the World and The Bilingual Creation of the World by Marduk demonstrate that Babylonians, at least, believed that a cosmic ocean encircled the continental portion of the earth's surface. The most familiar parts of this ocean were the Upper Sea (Mediterranean) and the Lower Sea (Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean)" (Wayne Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 321. For the otherworldly regions, see Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 111; and Nanno Marinatos, "The Cosmic Journey of Odysseus," *Numen* 48 (2002): 9.

<sup>32</sup> See Marinatos, "Cosmic Journey," 4, 11.

<sup>33</sup> Millard, "Cartography in the Ancient Near East," 131. Also P. R. Hardie, "Imago Mundi: Cosmological and Ideological Aspects of the Shield of Achilles," *JHS* 105 (1985): 11–31.

<sup>34</sup> Homer, *The Iliad* (trans. Robert Fagles; New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 487. The Shield of Heracles in Hesiod's *Shield* 314–15 portrays a similar encircling ocean; see James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13–14. "The idea of an encircling Ocean was a very old one, perhaps inherited from early Babylonian maps and reinforced by Greek mythology as interpreted by Homer" (O. A. W. Dilke, *Greek and Roman Maps* [Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1985], 24).

<sup>35</sup> David Stephen Vanderhoof, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter*

Geography, here a subfield of cosmology, sanctions states through symbols of primordial beginnings.<sup>36</sup> As the boundary between the earth and the sea separates the order of creation from the primordial chaos associated with water, so the land is separated from the threat of the foreign by boundaries of water. The image of the Euphrates, like the parallel rivers of Ezekiel 47, further links the land with the Garden of Eden, the river's source (Gen 2:14).<sup>37</sup>

Since the social configuration of Israel claims divine order as its root, the correspondence between the land and creation serves as a necessary precondition for the territorialization of the divine promise. Therefore, even when the borders of the land are construed differently, the east–west axis must span from sea to river in order that the land appear as a microcosm of the cosmos itself.<sup>38</sup> These borders offer geographic proof of the enveloping character of God and state alike. The flexibility concerning which river forms the eastern boundary results from the fact that the mythic morphology prevails over cartographic specifics. The two sets of maps can coexist because their configurations of the land do not conflict, both corresponding to the authorizing cosmological system.

## II. IMPERIAL GEOGRAPHY

While ordering space and orienting conviction, maps also fuse locales with various forms of economic and military power. The cartographic impulse, it seems, arose from a dual motivation to demarcate ownership and survey lands for conquest. Mapping was tied up with kingship, which perpetuated itself through colonization, raids, and temporary alliances with future opponents. “Maps were used to

---

*Prophets* (HSM 59; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 36. Vanderhooft further picks up on some scribal dissent: “the rhetoric of universal hegemony in Nebuchadnezzar’s texts is meant to point to his newly expanded imperial power, but the scribes appear to have recognized a disjunction between the rhetoric and reality” (p. 40).

<sup>36</sup> Similarly in the *Aeneid*, the Roman Empire is prophesied to span the shores of the world ocean (1.287; 7.101). The America that extends “from sea to shining sea” in the patriotic song “America the Beautiful” likely operates under a similar cosmological/imperial premise.

<sup>37</sup> In the Babylonian world map, the Euphrates “within the inner circle is portrayed as a band nearly vertical and almost as broad as the ocean” (North, *History of Biblical Map Making*, 20). The equivalence between the Euphrates and the ocean thus appears as a trope in ancient Near Eastern geography. Josephus sees the rivers of Eden and the world ocean as constituting one waterway. In his map, the four rivers of Eden have their source in the “the one river which encircles the whole earth” and branches from the Garden of Eden (*Ant.* 1.1.3 §§37–39) (Philip S. Alexander, “Geography and the Bible: Early Jewish Geography,” *ABD* 2:979).

<sup>38</sup> Henri Lefebvre speaks of sacred spaces found in Thomas Aquinas and in the *Divine Comedy* in a similar vein: “Such spaces were interpretations, sometimes marvelously successful ones, of cosmological representations” (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* [trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991], 45).



legitimize the reality of conquest and empire. They helped create myths which would assist in the maintenance of the territorial status quo.”<sup>39</sup> Ancient monarchs’ sense of destiny, which elevated gods, drove urban architecture, and necessitated memorials as well as court literature, also found expression in the measurement of their spatial sovereignty. Territories were thus indexed as part of the royal core, the conquered or unconquerable, or part of an amorphous and unknown beyond. By creating a spectrum of proximity, maps emplaced home between enmity and alliance and brought variegated relationships into a unified spatial system. Perhaps their hyperbolic dimensions and approximations are not a result of inchoate cartographic technologies, but rather are born of the necessity that a range of incongruous relationships fit into a larger scheme.

Before I show how the maps of ancient Israel emulated those of local empires, let me concede to the ways in which they differed. To begin, the span of the promised land tends not to be associated with any one leader. Although the very notion of promise evokes ancestral recipients and the Euphrates as a border conjures up Solomon, the most mythic of Israel’s kings, the maps tend to be contextualized as future realizations rather than present accomplishments. In the book of Numbers, the map stipulates the place that the people of Israel will reach at the conclusion of their wanderings, and in Ezekiel it functions as an eschatological palimpsest. In their narrative contexts, the Euphrates maps predict the future in some cases (Gen 15:18; Exod 23:31; Deut 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:3–4) and declare the accomplishment or potential of a Davidic monarch in others (1 Kgs 5:1). For the most part, however, the maps do not describe an Israel as it is now, but point to a glorious state to come. Rather than exalting kings, the Jordan maps seem to sideline them in order to promote priestly ideologies. The Euphrates maps enunciate more support for monarchs, but only for the kind of whom the Deuteronomists approve. Biblical maps, then, concern the idea of the nation much more than they concern the manifestation of the nation under any one ruler. As we saw in the previous section, they promote a certain mythic worldview in line with a larger Mediterranean/Near Eastern pattern and, as we will see here, they measure Israel’s importance in imperial terms.

Moshe Weinfeld accounts for the two sets of maps as the products of divergent views held by different schools of biblical scribes. The Priestly school with geographic roots in Shiloh draws the maps in which the Jordan is a boundary, and the Deuteronomic school, comfortable with the idea of territorial expansion, extends the border to the Euphrates.<sup>40</sup> In Weinfeld’s opinion, it is the disputed status of the

<sup>39</sup> Harley, *New Nature of Maps*, 57.

<sup>40</sup> In his study of the geography of the Davidic state, Baruch Halpern explains the Euphrates map as a result of the intentional vagueness concerning the river at which David established a stela (2 Sam 8:3). The omission of the river’s proper name (filled in by the *qere* as the Euphrates), according to Halpern, aims to give the impression that David’s empire reached the Euphrates, when in fact it only spread to the Jordan or just beyond it. This missing name, in his estimation, is the seed that grows into the Euphrates maps. To begin, too much of this explanation rides on a

Transjordan that leads to the cartographic discrepancy. In other words, the Priestly school does not recognize the east bank as legitimate Israelite territory, while the Deuteronomic school both recognizes and includes the east bank in its conception of the land. As far as the Shilonite priests are concerned, the Jordan separates the holy and the profane and thus corresponds to other spatial and symbolic borders. The Deuteronomic writers, in contrast, are comfortable with a Transjordanian land claim and even associate it with their near-paradigmatic kings David and Solomon (1 Kgs 4:1–5:1).<sup>41</sup> Weinfeld does not explain why the Deuteronomists reach all the way to the Euphrates only to absorb the east bank, but I have accounted for why the eastern boundary must be a river. Building on his thesis, I want to push it a bit further and propose that the Jordan maps conceive of ancient Israel in Egyptian imperial terms and that the Euphrates maps configure Israel as a counterpart to Babylonia.

The maps are different because they measure ancient Israel against particular imperial forces. The Jordan maps correspond to ancient Egyptian maps of Canaan, but replace pharaonic rule with Israelite hegemony. The Euphrates maps imagine an Israel mirroring Babylonia, with vast stretches of terrain defined by a mighty river that originated with creation (Gen 2:14). The lexicon of empire then helps Israel, caught more often than not in the pull of its tides, to constitute and perpetuate a national identity.<sup>42</sup> Where the Jordan maps inscribe Israel's emergence and differentiation from Egypt in represented space, the Euphrates maps coalesce various sorts of Babylonian memories such as Abram's departure and Israel's exile.

### *Israel in Terms of Egypt*

The Jordan map of "the land of Canaan and its borders" in Numbers 34 is, according to scholars such as Benjamin Mazar, Roland de Vaux, and Weinfeld,

---

missing term. In addition, the Jordan is never referred to in the text of the Hebrew Bible as "the River Jordan," but only as "Jordan" or "the Jordan." Thus if, as Halpern believes, the stela was set up at the Jordan, then the omission of the proper name is an instance not of ambiguity but of outright deception, since the term "river" before the name of a river always indicates a river other than the Jordan. He makes a similar argument about the lack of specification of the river in 2 Sam 10:16. Again, the river here named cannot be confused with the Jordan since it is called "the river" —also a designation that never refers to the Jordan but more often to the Euphrates. See Baruch Halpern, *David's Secret Demons: Messiah, Murderer, Traitor, King* (Bible in Its World; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 164–259.

<sup>41</sup> The connection between David and Transjordan recurs; he rules the terrain (2 Sam 24:5–6), escapes there during Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam 17:16–22; 19:16–20:2), and requests sanctuary for his parents from the king of Moab (1 Sam 22:3–4) perhaps, as alleged in the book of Ruth, because of his Moabite ancestress (Ruth 4:22).

<sup>42</sup> For the intensity and *Realpolitik* of the pull, see Anthony Spalinger, "Egypt and Babylonia: A Survey (c. 620 B.C.–550 B.C.," *Studien zur Ägyptischen Kultur* 5 (1977): 221–44.

"simply the designation then customary for the Egyptian province in Syria and Eretz-Israel," which underwent a series of changes but was "more or less stabilized by the treaty signed between Ramesses II and the Hittite king in ca. 1270 B.C.E."<sup>43</sup> Biblical writers borrowed the Egyptian concept of Canaan and made it their own. This observation, according to Weinfeld, conveys literary as well as historical meaning.

The land of Canaan as given to Israel encompasses the same boundaries as the province of Canaan that had been delineated beforehand under the rule of Egypt. Just as God took the Israelites out of Egypt, so he took away the land of Canaan from the hand of Egypt and gave it to Israel. Therefore, "the land of Canaan with its boundaries" in Num. 34 corresponds to the land of Canaan as it was in the days of the Egyptian empire.<sup>44</sup>

By assuming the Egyptian map, the Priestly Writer stakes a claim in which the land belongs to Israel as reparation for the suffering of slavery. Because the corruption of the Egyptians caused them to lose the land, Israel is assured as it inherits the territory that, should they corrupt it, Israel too will forfeit the land.

The land due Israel does not exceed the Egyptian holdings in Canaan, nor does the claim diminish according to the outcomes of war and annexation.<sup>45</sup> According to textual and archaeological evidence, these were the borders of the Egyptian province of Canaan, not the borders of Israel at any particular historical moment. The Egyptian purview is significant, since the map is oriented around the relationship between Israel and Egypt.<sup>46</sup> It follows a kind of narrative logic that, in a story about Israel leaving Egypt for the land of Canaan, Canaan would conform to Egyptian standards. The Priestly writers, absorbing an Egyptian Canaan, initially exclude Transjordan in order to put Israel entirely in Canaan's place.<sup>47</sup> When placed in an Israelite context, the Jordan as the eastern border facilitates the cen-

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin Mazar, *The Early Biblical Period: Historical Studies* (ed. Shmuel Ahituv and Baruch A. Levine; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1986), 115.

<sup>44</sup> Weinfeld, *Promise of the Land*, 64.

<sup>45</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, "The Extent of the Promised Land—the Status of Transjordan," in *Das Land Israel in biblischer Zeit: Jerusalem-Symposium 1981 der Hebräischen Universität und der Georg-August-Universität* (ed. Georg Strecker; GTA 25; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 65.

<sup>46</sup> The ambivalent status of Transjordan may also be an inheritance from Egypt. According to Kallai, at least two Transjordanian cities (Pahal and Zaphon), and potentially the Transjordan as a whole, are claimed in some Egyptian sources and not claimed in others ("Borders of the Land of Canaan," 28).

<sup>47</sup> "Since Egyptian records never mention the Gilead or southern Transjordan—archaeology informs us that they were unsettled until the thirteenth century—it is clear that the Jordan was the eastern border of Egyptian Canaan" (Jacob Milgrom, "The Boundaries of Canaan," in *Numbers [=Ba-midbar]: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* [JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990], 501).

tral premise of a holy land distinct from other lands. The geographic border further serves Priestly notions of Israel's difference and the need for ritual separation from other peoples. The map in its Ezekielian context shows how the images of a bounded Israel and a holy land become ingredients in utopian imaginings.

At most narrative junctures, however, Egypt maintains the status of a paradigmatic Other. One is left asking why, then, Israel would take its map from, of all places, Egypt. Here I do not wish to debate whether some portion of an Israelite or later-to-become Israelite population actually lived in or served Egypt or whether memories of an anti-Egyptian uprising in the mountains of Canaan can be recovered from the biblical texts. Instead I want to make an alternate proposal that biblical writers, influenced and impressed by imperial Egypt, borrowed its map along with other cultural institutions as material with which to assert Israel's greatness.<sup>48</sup> I am not stressing that empires set the parameters of political discourse, although this is certainly true, but rather arguing that those who conceived and constructed ancient Israel did so with elements derived from empire. Yet Israel, for the most part, neither sought to become an empire nor saw itself as such. Disdain for Egypt and Babylon, the Assyrians and the Hittites runs through narrative and prophecy alike. This clever turn is a wonderful example of adaptation—cooptation even—in which biblical writers access the imperial lexicon in order to portray a nonimperial but nonetheless momentous and mighty nation of Israel. What Israel lacks in territory, it makes up in narrative.<sup>49</sup>

My argument here operates on a few levels. As I have shown, the old Egyptian map of Canaan became the map of Israel's land both because Israel's state institutions were influenced by Egyptian ones and because a tightly circumscribed land embodied priestly ideologies of Israel's ethnic and religious distinction.<sup>50</sup> Perpetu-

<sup>48</sup> Ideas of a centralized state and bureaucratic organization may have also been borrowed from Egypt. See Nili Fox, "Royal Officials and Court Families: A New Look at the *yeladim* in I Kings 12," *BA* 59 (1996): 225–32.

<sup>49</sup> The way in which the maps emulate empire while representing an Israel that is "strategically an insurgent counter-appeal" indicates an instance of what Homi Bhabha names mimicry. Resembling the maps of empire, Israel's maps diverge by replacing the colonists with the colonized. The ambivalence of mimicry, on which Bhabha also insists, arises from the maps' inherent difference from those of empire and the defense of Israelite hegemony on the one hand and the rights of conquerors to territory on the other. Both the presence of Israel in the land and the ubiquity of empire are justified through metonymy or, said differently, by the partial portrait of the map. See Homi K. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 85–92.

<sup>50</sup> For the argument of Egyptian influence on Israel, see R. J. Williams, "'A People Come Out of Egypt': An Egyptologist Looks at the Old Testament," in *Congress Volume: Edinburgh 1974* (VTSup 28; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 231–52. For the argument against such strong influence, see Donald B. Redford, "Specter or Reality? The Question of Egyptian Influence on Israel of the Monarchy," in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 365–94. Redford does, however, concede to parallel geographic divisions "between Solomon's

ated by priestly schools, the map persisted and, I argue, placed Israel in an imperial context from which it could maneuver among empires. The survival of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah depended on the ability to appraise correctly the ascendant empire and to position diplomacy, military, and economy accordingly. Although representative of a pre-Israelite period, Egypt's map of Canaan helped launch the territorial idea of Israel and remained a relevant point of reference. The question of Egypt's strength combined with speculation about whether it could match that of Babylonia was a particularly vital issue in the latter days of the Judean monarchy. Such speculation in tandem with the ongoing reality of vacillating alliances led to the coexistence and preservation of the two maps.

The bidirectional self-figuration makes sense, since "ancient Israel historically developed, came to an end, and was reconstituted within the bipolar system of political contestation in the Fertile Crescent between Egypt, on the one hand, and various Mesopotamian and Syrian states, on the other."<sup>51</sup> To face Egypt at some times and Mesopotamia at others, then, was born out of the necessity of managing the potential influence and military menace from either direction. Mapping Israel in grandiose terms can also be seen as a strategy of resistance, a refusal to let the idea of the nation be diminished by the loss of territory or autonomy or to be defined solely by the maps of emperors and generals. Rather than accept a peripheral placement or no notice on someone else's map, Israel appropriated the maps of empire and placed itself at the center. This kind of big thinking impacts the representational power of the Jordan. The Jordan maps put the river on a par with the Nile, and the comparative context of the two maps equates the Jordan with the Euphrates. As the Nile and the Euphrates respectively signify Egypt and Babylonia, the insertion of the Jordan into this category enables it to signify Israel and to assume a symbolic import incommensurate with its size.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to emulating empire, the maps speak to a complicated sense of origin. Alongside the tenet of a homeland west of the Jordan are concessions to ancestral beginnings east of the Euphrates, national burgeoning in Egypt, and the inevitable diasporic revisitation of both locations. A late chronology could offer an easy detour by proposing that the maps, along with most of the Hebrew Bible, were

---

twelve districts, designated one per month to supply the court with food, and the Egyptian practice of dividing the tax base into twelve parts to meet an ongoing budgetary requirement on a calendrical basis" (p. 372).

<sup>51</sup> F. V. Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map: Constructing Biblical Israel's Identity* (JSOTSup 361; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 3, rephrasing A. Malamat, "The Kingdom of Judah between Egypt and Babylon: A Small State within a Great Power Confrontation," in *Text and Context: Old Testament and Semitic Studies for F. C. Fensham* (ed. W. Claassen; JSOTSup 48; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988), 117–29.

<sup>52</sup> "A river may serve as an emblem of the landscape and, as such, may advertise the identification of people with place" (Prudence J. Jones, *Reading Rivers in Roman Literature and Culture* [Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005], 41).

written in exile in Babylon or during the homecoming sanctioned by Persia. According to this line of reasoning, the maps reflect the places to which Israelite/Judean communities and their scribes fled or were exiled rather than the empires with which Israel contended in an earlier stage.<sup>53</sup> Although the theory that the two maps reflect Egyptian and Babylonian sources of influence holds regardless of the precise chronology, I lean toward an earlier dating in both cases. The Jordan map corresponds to Egypt's Canaan holdings in the period just before Israel "appeared" on the scene and plays a formative role in Israel's self-definition. Furthermore, the idea that the Jordan delimits the land, traceable to the Canaan map, runs through texts of multiple periods.

### *Israel in Terms of Babylonia*

The Euphrates maps seem to reflect the political climate during the Neo-Babylonian period, when the threat to the kingdom of Judah peaked from beyond the Euphrates and alliance with the Transjordanian states was among the self-protecting tactics (Jer 27:2–3). The geographic schema within the Babylonian *mappa mundi* likely emerged from the Neo-Babylonian expansionist heyday under Nebuchadnezzar, who vaunted himself as "the protector of all humanity" and his capital as "the economic and administrative center of the world."<sup>54</sup> The Euphrates maps emulate these geographies and acknowledge Babylonian hegemony east of the river, while situating Israel as a kind of mirror image just to the west. With Babylon on the rise, the idea of Israel reaching to the Babylonian shore as a mighty counterpart would both lessen the fear of the growing empire and strengthen, depending on the moment, either allegiance or oppositional resolve. The Euphrates map can be explained as such a technique introduced by Deuteronomic (Dtr.) scribes and reproduced in later versions by their successors.

Where the Jordan maps appropriate the imperial terrain of Egypt, the Euphrates maps enact a parallel assimilation. Neo-Babylonian imperial geography referred to the sweep of land west of the Euphrates as Eber Nari or Transeuphrates.<sup>55</sup> This geography did not account for all of the differing peoples situated between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast, but rather marked them as

<sup>53</sup> Along with the exile to Babylon, Judeans seem to have fled to Egypt in the wake of the Babylonian attacks of 597 and 586. Jeremiah refers to Judean communities in Egypt; see chs. 40–43; 44:1.

<sup>54</sup> Bill T. Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* (SBLABS 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 96.

<sup>55</sup> This is the case, for example, in the Etemenanki cylinder, which "delineates the cities and regions that contributed corvée laborers or raw materials for work on Marduk's ziggurat in Babylon" (Vanderhoof, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 36, based on the edition of F. H. Weissbach, *Die Inschriften Nebukadnezars II im Wādi Brisā und am Nahr el-Kelb* (WVDOG 5; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 44–48.

conquered people distinct from the “true” Babylonians east of the Euphrates. The biblical writers seem to pick up on this map and reformulate it from their own perspective. The amorphous land west of Euphrates becomes the realization of the great Hebrew nation, and along the way the reality of Babylonian subjugation is erased. In another twist, the otherness conferred by being on the wrong side of the river is also refigured. In the biblical maps, it is not the non-Babylonian peoples who are separated from the Babylonians by the Euphrates but rather Israel that is distinguished from its neighbors by the Jordan. Not only is the Babylonian empire scaled down in the biblical writings, but since “the vanquished wrote the history” they also “produced perhaps the most influential portrait of Babylon to survive antiquity.”<sup>56</sup> Babylon is most remembered as Judah's archetypal foe. For the empires that inherited a biblical legacy, the Judean hierarchy of west over east certainly trumped the Babylonian hierarchy of east above west.

### *Israel between Egypt and Babylonia*

The Euphrates maps of Deut 1:7 and 11:24, which fail to provide a southern border, perhaps leave the question of Egyptian influence open in the wake of Babylonia's rise. In the other Euphrates maps as well as in Jordan maps, Egypt remains a point of reference abutting Israel at the southern border. Some maps reach to the Nile (Gen 15:18); some more specifically recall the exodus by using the Red Sea as a marker (Exod 23:31); and others halt more generally at the desert (Josh 1:4) or “the border of Egypt” (1 Kgs 5:1), or more specifically at the wadi of Egypt (Josh 15:4, 47). It is possible that the omission of an Egyptian boundary in Deuteronomy speaks to perceived Egyptian quiescence.

With the rise of the Neo-Babylonian empire and the Egyptian challengers of the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, “the small state of Judah, located at the particularly sensitive crossroads linking Asia and Africa, was influenced more than ever before by the international power system, now that the kingdom's actual existence was at stake.”<sup>57</sup> The enmity between Egypt and Babylonia was determined by Egyptian participation in the Assyrian challenge to Babylonian predominance.<sup>58</sup> With the decline of Assyria, the antagonistic relationship was played out on various fronts, including Judea, which became a site of contestation as well as a bellwether for the

<sup>56</sup> Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Malamat, “Kingdom of Judah,” 119. “The latter years of the Judean monarchy were dominated internationally by the collapse of the Assyrian empire and the emergence of a bipolar system of confrontation between the rising Neo-Babylonian empire and the Saite or 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty of Egypt” (Greifenhagen, *Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map*, 249).

<sup>58</sup> “In the late summer of 616 B.C. as Nabopolassar and his troops ravaged the land of the middle Euphrates, an Egyptian expeditionary force appeared and in concert with Assyrian forces pursued the retiring Babylonians partway down the Euphrates” (Redford, “Egypt and the Fall of Judah,” in *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 430–69).



two. Josiah, the Deuteronomic hero, lost his life in the battle to impede Pharaoh Necho II from reaching the Euphrates (2 Kgs 23:29–30; 2 Chr 35:20–27). Donald Redford interprets Josiah's actions as proof that he correctly understood the defeat of Assyria and the Babylonian advance as "the wave of the future."<sup>59</sup> Necho's setback at Megiddo brought consequences of Egyptian hostility and an unchecked Babylonia. The pharaoh exacted his vengeance by imprisoning Jehoahaz and instating Eliakim, reinvented as a vassal to the pharaoh rather than a son to Josiah, with the name Jehoiakim (2 Chr 36:1–4).<sup>60</sup> Against prophetic admonition (Ezek 29:6–7; 17:17), the Judean leadership remained invested in Egyptian alliance. Not even Nebuchadnezzar's successful march on Jerusalem convinced Jehoiakim to resign himself to subordinate status. Following an unsuccessful Babylonian bid for Egypt, he led a successful rebellion that further imperiled Judah (2 Kgs 24:1). Jehoiachin, the next king, surrendered to Babylon and allowed Nebuchadnezzar's troops to skim off the treasures and notables of Jerusalem and carry them into exile. At this time, Nebuchadnezzar had his opportunity to name and install a vassal, yet Zedekiah, nee Mattaniah, still looked to Egypt for signs of Babylonian weakness.<sup>61</sup> The Babylonian eclipse of the Egyptian empire combined with the false sense of Judean security as an Egyptian protectorate led to the first destruction of Jerusalem.

The struggle for hegemony between Egypt and Babylonia took form in the battle for the land "from the Egyptian wadi (Wadi al 'Arish) and the River Euphrates" (2 Kgs 24:7), the very territory at stake in the Euphrates maps. In the midst of imperial machinations and clash, Judah/Israel was defined both in terms and in place of the dueling powers. This portrait does not express imperial aspiration as much as it functions as an ideological safeguard in the face of attenuating territory and autonomy. If the armies of Babylonia and Egypt could not be ousted from the land, then at least they could be confined behind their own waterways in symbolic renderings. The simultaneous dynamic of using its hegemonic tropes in order to negate empire at work in the maps has additional manifestations. Weinfeld recognizes the attributes of Assyrian emperors and characteristics of Mesopotamian royalty in the Isaianic depiction of the ideal king who will reign in the redemptive era to come.<sup>62</sup> Even visions of a divine kingdom arising from the humbled ground of

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 448.

<sup>60</sup> The Judean population was itself divided along pro-Egyptian versus pro-Babylonian parties (Redford, "Egypt and the Fall of Judah," 449).

<sup>61</sup> "Nebuchadnezzar's failure to invade Egypt in 601 only underscored the feeling that the supremacy of Babylon under the Chaldeans was a passing phenomenon. . . . Consequently, the 'triumphal progress' of Psammetichus II to Palestine in 592, though basically a peaceful journey was intended . . . 'to galvanize his allies and subjects in hither Asia by his presence against the Babylonian menace'" (Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 11; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988], 323).

<sup>62</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, "Protest against Imperialism in Ancient Israelite Prophecy," in *The*

annexed territory are spun of imperial language. Without the images of an oppressor's glory, utopia has no legs on which to stand. The Euphrates maps offer such a utopia on a spatial plain. Beyond historical specifics, the two sets of maps situate Israel in the midst of a pull between Mesopotamia to the east and Egypt to the south and employ the standards of imperial cartography in order to map a nation.

The insistence on borders marking the land from neighboring peoples and engulfing empires brings into being a contiguous national space. Once the space is emblazoned in collective memory and enlists adherents, it need no longer correspond to actual dimensions of sovereignty. As I have discussed, symbolic potency and mythic allusion trump topographic accuracy to begin with. In the case of Israel, geographic borders signified practices and rituals that maintained a manner of separation within intercultural interaction. The two maps communicate the complicated message that we are part of Egypt, Babylonia, and the empires yet to rise; however, we belong to a group whose uniqueness is indelible. One might think that the double message combined with the alternate identities outlined by two maps would be too complicated to remember and transmit or that the more definite the sense of home, the easier its preservation. Israel, however, is a case of the opposite. Jan Assmann remarks that during the Persian period Israel alone emerged as a "nation" "able to separate itself from the outside world and create an internal community entirely independently of political and territorial ties."<sup>63</sup> I suggest that this was the case in imperial epochs prior to the Persian. It seems, then, that the more fluid the sense of home, the easier it is to establish discrete community structures both at home and elsewhere.

---

*Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilizations* (ed. S. N. Eisenstadt; SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 181–82.

<sup>63</sup> Jan Assmann, "Five Stages on the Road to Canon: Tradition and Written Culture in Ancient Israel and Early Judaism," in *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies* (trans. Rodney Livingstone; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 72.

# All roads lead to **BOSTON!**



Come and join us in the historic  
city of Boston for the

## **2008 SBL Annual Meeting**

**November 22-25**



# The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs

MICHAEL V. FOX

mvfox@wisc.edu

University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706

---

Although knowledge (also called “wisdom” and “understanding”<sup>1</sup>) is at the center of Proverbs’ concern, little is said about how knowledge is created, where it comes from, and how truths-claims are verified.<sup>2</sup> Still, there must have been an implicit epistemology—ideas about what knowledge is and what its sources are. Some propositions were considered true and others false, and the authors of Proverbs believed that they had the means to distinguish them. That is to say, they had an epistemology, albeit unreflective and unsystematic. The present essay tries to describe its main lines.

<sup>1</sup> A variety of words are used for wisdom and knowledge—two concepts that are virtually identical in Proverbs. The most important wisdom words are חכמה (“wisdom”), בינה (“understanding”), תבונה (“good sense”), דעת (“knowledge”), and sometimes שכל (when it means “discretion,” “good sense” rather than “regard”). These words have their own nuances and syntactic constraints, and various scholars have drawn distinctions among them, including Michael V. Fox (*Proverbs 1–9: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AB 18A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 2000], 28–43) and Nili Shupak (*Where Can Wisdom Be Found? The Sage’s Language in the Bible and in Ancient Egyptian Literature* [OBO 130; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993], 31–53). But the wisdom words are pragmatic synonyms, conveying basically the same ideas and, in Proverbs at least, labeling the same phenomena. It is noteworthy that when wisdom is personified, it is given several names: חכמות (1:20), חכמה (8:1a), תבונה (8:1b), and בינה (8:14). Thus, the wisdom words form a lexical group that as a whole conveys the concept of wisdom. As Gerhard von Rad says, “Der Text scheint durch die Kumulierung vieler Begriffe etwas Umfassenderes, Grösseres anzuvisieren, das mit einem der verwendeten Begriffe unzureichend umschrieben wäre” (*Weisheit in Israel* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970], 26).

<sup>2</sup> This issue must be distinguished from the question of how knowledge is learned and transmitted. Tomas Frydrych includes “Collective Experience” in his chapter on the epistemology of Proverbs (*Living under the Sun: Examination of Proverbs and Qoheleth* [VTSup 90; Leiden: Brill, 2002], 52–82, at 57). But this collective experience belongs to pedagogy or cultural transmission and is a quite different issue from epistemology. Every epistemological system, including empiricism, recognizes that knowledge is transmitted collectively. Once a proverb was accepted as valid and included in a collection, it could be conveyed as knowledge and accepted uncritically.

## I. EMPIRICISM?

Before addressing the question of what wisdom epistemology is, it is important to determine what it is *not*. Contrary to the scholarly consensus, it is not empiricism, the philosophical principle that all knowledge ultimately derives from sensory experience. Scholars have considered wisdom to be empirical because the sayings are largely about daily life and thus presumably based on the experiences of daily life, and because they seem to reflect *Erlebnisweisheit*, the wisdom of experience. Moreover, since the sages never invoke divine revelation or a tradition claiming to derive from it, it might seem that only observation was available as the source of knowledge. Wisdom empiricism is understood to mean that the sages gained and validated their knowledge by looking at the world, observing what was beneficial and harmful, and casting their observations in the form of proverbs and epigrams.

Some sayings do seem to be based on experience. Assertions such as “Hatred stirs up conflict, while love covers up all transgressions” (Prov 10:12) seem like commonsense observations of people dealing with one another. The teachings about the danger of the king’s wrath and the prudence of appeasing it (14:35; 16:14; 19:12; 20:2) sound like something a royal official could have learned firsthand, the hard way. The warning against providing surety (Prov 6:1–5; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13) is probably a lesson of experience, because it teaches a strictly prudential, not moral, principle. Still, empiricism is not the epistemological foundation of wisdom. The experiences from which some teachings derive belong to the authors’ biographies, to a stage before epistemological standards decide just what is true.

Experience, as Gerhard von Rad emphasizes, is not an immediate source of wisdom. Experiences themselves are created. To be sure, experiential knowledge (*Erfahrungswissen*) is constructed from experiences, “[a]ber voraussetzungslose Erfahrungen gibt es ja nicht. Der Mensch macht weithin die Erfahrungen, die er erwartet und auf die er auf Grund der Vorstellungen, die er sich von seiner Umwelt gemacht hat, gerüstet ist.”<sup>3</sup> Experience does not translate directly into wisdom. An observation must meet some other test first. Consider the saying in Ezek 18:2 (called a מִשַׁל, like the sayings in Proverbs): “The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth stand on edge.” This conforms to the experience of the people who are using it, namely, the Jerusalemites, who are still reeling from the disaster of 597 B.C.E. Moreover, it conforms to the observable fact that some—or much—parental behavior harms the children, sometimes disastrously. Yet it is doubtful that this proverb would have qualified as wisdom by Proverbs’ standards. Proverbs insists on individual responsibility for one’s fate, and the idea of punishment trans-

<sup>3</sup> Von Rad, *Weisheit*, 13.

ferred between generations is contrary to the sapiential view of individual retribution.<sup>4</sup> In distinction, Prov 10:12 (cited above) is wise not so much because it is empirically based as because it warns against a social evil and affirms the accepted virtues of love and concord.

In any case, empiricism is irrelevant to most of Proverbs. It is inconceivable that proverbs such as the following were extracted from experiential data:

The Lord will not let a righteous man starve,  
but he rebuffs the desire of evildoers. (10:3)

No trouble shall befall the righteous man,  
but the wicked are filled with evil. (12:21)

When the Lord favors a man's ways,  
even his enemies make peace with him. (16:7)

To claim that these dicta describe an observed reality is simply to affirm the sages' beliefs. They are statements of faith, not abstractions from experiential data.

Many proverbs are assertions of consequences that do not even hint at an experiential basis:

Do not say, "I will repay (evil) with harm";  
but wait for the Lord, and he will give you victory. (20:22)

This is good ethics, but it could not have been inferred from multiple observations of people who eschewed revenge and were sometime later rewarded with God-given victory.

He who curses his father or his mother—  
his lamp will be extinguished in deep darkness. (20:20)

It must be extraordinarily rare to see someone curse his parents, and, even if that happens, the results would not be actually seen, especially if they occur "in deep darkness," which alludes to death.

Even in mundane matters, and even when the assertions are reasonable, the empirical base of most proverbs must be, at best, ambiguous.

Have you seen a man adept in his work?  
He will stand before kings.  
He will not stand before the lowly. (22:29)

This is likely to be something that courtiers often saw, or believed they saw. Still, it is improbable that the author of the saying came to this conclusion by following the career paths of numerous diligent men. Unless government has changed radi-

<sup>4</sup> Sons may benefit from their father's righteousness (Prov 13:22; 14:26; 20:7), but this is reckoned as *the father's* reward. Job's friends believe in transferred punishment (e.g., Job 5:3–5; 17:5; 20:10; 21:19; 27:14), but they differ from the sages of Proverbs in profound ways.

cally—and there is much testimony to the contrary (Isa 1:3–25, for example)—not all appointments were so judicious, nor was every aspirant for a position who was held back undeserving. The sages filtered their experiences and perceptions through expectations of what diligence and skill *should* bring.

The passages in which experience, or the claim of experience, is most important are those that report the speaker's observation. The scene with the Strange Woman in Proverbs 7 is often thought to manifest sapiential empiricism at its purest, because it recounts an event that the speaker himself has putatively witnessed. He claims to have watched a silly boy being sexually enticed and led away by a woman. But that is all that he observes. The punishment is beyond the vignette and foretold, not reported. The speaker is certain that this woman will be the death of the man, because

Many a victim she's laid low;  
numerous are those she has slain!  
Her house is the way to Sheol,  
descending to the chambers of Death. (7:26–27)

The sage does not say that he has seen this; he does not have to. It is something that will happen, that *must* happen. None of the sages of Proverbs musters observations, whether his own or his predecessors', to support the principle of retributive balance. That would be weak support, for human observation is flawed and often blind to the workings of God's wisdom.

Tomas Frydrych, favoring the empirical interpretation, says that the threat that the fool will pay with his life (7:23c) is based on past observation. "The father's claim that *she has caused the fall of many* (v 26) indicates clearly that the whole paradigm relies on reoccurring [*sic*] experience, so that even if some prior knowledge is used here in evaluating the story, it is based on observation of the same type."<sup>5</sup> But this is not clear at all. Just because the speaker claims that something happened does not mean that he saw it happen. In fact, he does not even make this claim. It is not feasible for the sage to have observed this recurring "experience." Could he have spied on numerous adulteresses in his city, then followed the lives of the men they seduced and discovered that they were eventually killed as a direct result of the seduction? For the author of Proverbs 7, it is a given that adultery kills, and he is only looking for ways to bring this home to the reader.

When the speaker in Prov 6:6–11 sends the sluggard to the ant, he is using the creature as a teaching device to illustrate diligence. It is unwarranted to assume (as does Frydrych<sup>6</sup>) that the author has studied ants for several seasons and knows the reward they earn. All that he could have seen was ants bringing bits of food to

<sup>5</sup> Frydrych, *Living*, 54.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.



the anthill. He “knows” the result because he presumes that hard work yields profit. The sage does not even claim to have gone to the ant. He just sends the loafer to see for himself. There the loafer will see only an exemplar: a creature that (the author wrongly assumes) stores up food in harvest. Similar rhetorical devices are applied in Ahiqar 1.1.89, 160.<sup>7</sup> What is at work here is analogy, not entomology.

Another passage that reports an observation is the anecdote of the lazy man’s field and vineyard in Prov 24:30–34.<sup>8</sup> According to Richard J. Clifford, “Verse 32 provides a glimpse of the learning process in Proverbs: one sees, stores what one sees in his heart, and draws a conclusion.”<sup>9</sup> There is indeed an observational component here. The sage saw the vineyard of a man he knew was lazy (that is the way he is defined in v. 30), noted its run-down condition, and “took a lesson.” But his observation does not ground his actual conclusion, which is that a bit more sleep (not necessarily a lifestyle of sloth) brings on poverty. What happens in v. 32 is not inference of a conclusion but the taking of a lesson. As always in the Bible, to “take a lesson” (לקח מוסר) means to take something (usually an admonition or a punishment) to heart, to take it seriously and apply it.<sup>10</sup> The anecdote reports not the discovery of knowledge but an experience that reinforces a known principle. The observation is an occasion for reflection, not inference, and the anecdote is a testimonial to an axiomatic belief.<sup>11</sup>

Saʿadia, commenting on Prov 24:30–34, explains precisely the function of such anecdotes:

It is not entirely necessary that the wise man passed by the field of the sluggard and saw it sprouting weeds and nettles. Rather, he knew this (event) conceptu-

<sup>7</sup> Numbering according to Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni, *Literature, Accounts, Lists*, vol. 3 of *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Actually, as Menahem Haran shows, the depiction focuses on the vineyard, with the field mentioned only for the sake of the parallelism (“The Graded Numerical Sequence and the Phenomenon of ‘Automatism’ in Biblical Poetry,” in *Congress Volume: Uppsala 1971* [VTSup 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972], 238–67, at 243–44).

<sup>9</sup> Richard J. Clifford, *Proverbs* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 218.

<sup>10</sup> See Fox, *Proverbs* 1–9, 34–35.

<sup>11</sup> James L. Crenshaw, who regards the standard wisdom epistemology as empirical, notes that in Prov 7:6–27 and 24:30–34 the speaker interposes his subjective consciousness between his experience and the reader, a phenomenon he compares to Qohelet’s empiricism (“Qohelet’s Understanding of Intellectual Inquiry,” in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom* [ed. A. Schoors; BETL 136; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998], 206–24, at 206). There is, however, a significant difference: In the passages in Proverbs, the subjective observer testifies to the teaching, whereas in Qohelet the observer *probes* the phenomena. Moreover, in Qohelet consciousness is reflexive and serves to test subjectivity itself, for the speaker is scrutinizing his own reactions and his own experience of wisdom; see Michael V. Fox, *A Time to Tear Down and A Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 71–83.

ally and shaped it into a *māšāl*, as if it were a report, because learning a lesson comes from whatever penetrates deeper (into the heart of the listener).<sup>12</sup>

Saʿadia mentions similar exemplary narratives in Qoh 9:14–15 and Prov 7:1–27. He explains that “these things, which wisdom conveys in *mēšālīm*, make a person (feel) as if he saw them and fully prepare him for obedience.”<sup>13</sup> In other words, such anecdotes belong to pedagogy, not epistemology.

The only sage who did embrace what may fairly be called empiricism is Qohelet, for he seeks to achieve new knowledge by means of observation.<sup>14</sup> He reports that he resolved to explore the world by wisdom, to “see”<sup>15</sup> all that occurs on earth. From the database he gathered he would discover—“see”—what is good for man (Qoh 1:13). But he was quickly frustrated, “For in much wisdom there is much irritation, and whosoever increases knowledge increases pain” (1:18).

Theodicy may use claims of personal experience. The sufferers insist that they have experienced the failure of divine justice on their own flesh, while its defenders insist that they have always witnessed its triumph. Eliphaz does the latter: “(It is) as I have seen: Those who plot iniquity and those who sow wrong harvest it. At the breath of God they perish, and at the blast of his anger they die off” (Job 4:8–9). Eliphaz musters his observations in order to underscore what he believes to be obvious, what *must* be true.<sup>16</sup> It is when old truths are being challenged that individual experience becomes most important, almost as a last resort. It may serve either to probe the givens or to confirm them. Neither happens in Proverbs.

The sages of Proverbs undoubtedly saw many things that provided ingredients for wisdom, but this is not the decisive factor in what counts for them as true. In the following deliberation, I seek to describe an epistemology that encompasses all passages in Proverbs, both those that grew out of observation and those that are expressions of prior principles and attitudes.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Saʿadia ben Yosef Gaon, *Commentary on Proverbs* (trans. into Hebrew from Judeo-Arabic and ed. Yosef Qafih; Jerusalem: n.p., n.d. [1975–76?], ad loc).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., introduction (15–16 in Qafih’s edition).

<sup>14</sup> I examine Qohelet’s epistemology in “The Inner Structure of Qohelet’s Thought,” in *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom*, ed. Schoors, 225–38, and in *A Time to Tear Down*, 71–83. I argue that Qohelet is empirical in the way he defines his quest, not necessarily in his practice. His claim to have derived his conclusions from his independent observations—and these alone—is the most radical proposition in the book.

<sup>15</sup> The verb רָאָה in the *qal* basically means “see” but also refers to nonvisual experiences. It is the most natural way to speak about observing “empirical” data. A comparison of frequencies (occurrences per total number of verses) of רָאָה in the *qal* is revealing. Qohelet: 45 of 222 verses = .20; Proverbs: 11 of 915 = .012; rest of the Bible: 1022 of 22,066 = .046. Qohelet has a vastly greater interest in perception (visual and mental) than the rest of the Bible and certainly more than Proverbs.

<sup>16</sup> Other examples are Ps 37:25, 35–36; see Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, 77–85.

<sup>17</sup> Agur’s Oracle (Prov 30:1–9) is a response to Proverbs’ nonrevelatory epistemology. Agur is a case apart and is not included in the references to Proverbs in the present essay.

## II. COHERENCE THEORY

While the book of Proverbs is far from systematic, it is not a haphazard bunch of adages propounding opinions on this or that topic. It grew by a long process of composition and collection, in which the editors wrote and gathered proverbs that served their goals. In this way the book achieved a fair degree of ideological unity. The author of the Prologue (Prov 1:1–7), certainly, understood Proverbs as a single book with unified goals.

Whenever there are claims to knowledge, as there most emphatically are in Proverbs, there are ideas about what constitutes it. There must be an underlying system of assumptions about knowledge for the book to hold together. This system—Proverbs' background epistemology—is best described as a *coherence theory of truth*. As James O. Young defines it, "A coherence theory of truth holds that the truth of any (true) proposition consists in its coherence with some specified set of propositions."<sup>18</sup> According to one version of this theory:

The coherence relation is some form of entailment. Entailment can be understood here as strict logical entailment, or entailment in some looser sense. According to this version, a proposition coheres with a set of propositions if and only if it is entailed by members of the set.<sup>19</sup>

Socratic epistemology, as Hugh Benson describes it, is a form of coherence theory. Benson's description is closely applicable to Proverbs:

Socrates understood knowledge as a kind of *dunamis*, that is to say, a power, capacity, or ability for doing a particular thing. . . . According to this theory, knowledge, wisdom, and expertise (*epistēmē*, *sophia*, *technē*) are one and the same. They are a power or capacity (*dunamis*) to make judgments resulting in an interrelated coherent system of true cognitive states involving a particular object or subject matter. The latter cognitive states, when coherently interrelated and resulting from judgments occasioned by such knowledge, are knowledge states. . . . Knowledge is both the power or capacity that occasions an interrelated coherent system of true cognitive states and one of those cognitive states.<sup>20</sup>

The philosophical terms used here, including "epistemology," "empiricism," and "coherence theory," are applicable to biblical systems of thought only by analogy to the modern philosophical concepts for which the terminology was devised. The application of modern labels to ancient thought is valid heuristically insofar as

<sup>18</sup> James O. Young, "The Coherence Theory of Truth," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.p., online: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2001/entries/truth-coherence> (accessed November 18, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Benson, *Socratic Wisdom: The Model of Knowledge in Plato's Early Dialogues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 220.

the basic definitions of the philosophical systems can help organize and encapsulate the ancient ideas. Rarely, however, will the subtleties and ramifications of the philosophical ideas, as developed by their modern advocates, apply precisely to the ancient concepts.

The propositions, stated and assumed, of the sayings and epigrams in Proverbs receive their validation by virtue of consistency with the integrated system of assumptions that inform the book (and the earlier wisdom from which it emerged). The propositions of sapiential knowledge (or the propositions on which sapiential advice is founded) are considered valid insofar as they are concordant with each other and supported by common principles. To the degree that actual experiences contributed to the knowledge store of wisdom, they themselves were shaped and interpreted by assumptions that were already considered wise and (synonymously) true.

It must be stressed that the “new knowledge” in wisdom thought is not radically innovative, in the way that a scientific theory can be. Wisdom was given in essence at the start, at least according to Proverbs 8, and only in details and formulations can further knowledge be drawn forth, expanded, and refined.<sup>21</sup> It is immediately clear that a coherence theory of truth is more amenable to this static concept of knowledge than empiricism would be. In empiricism, an individual may see radically new things, and these may be discontinuous with previous knowledge.

If coherence theory is accepted as a valid characterization of the implicit epistemology of Proverbs, we may still wonder where the axioms came from in the first place. The answer to this important question lies not in epistemology but in the realm of historical anthropology and related disciplines, which attempt to account for the innumerable assumptions and attitudes that are embedded in a society or cultural group and transmitted for generations. One society may admire assertiveness and initiative; another may esteem reserve and submersion of the individual in the collectivity. Each group assumes that its style is the way of wisdom. But the origin of each assumption lies outside epistemology, which is the study of the nature and validation of knowledge.

One immediate indicator of the coherence principle at work in Proverbs is the system of templates active in the formation of its sayings in a way unparalleled elsewhere in wisdom literature. A template is a recurrent pattern of syntax or wording that serves as a framework for constructing new couplets. Examples are the “better than” template and lines that are matched with different parallels to form new proverbial couplets.<sup>22</sup> The reuse of lines and patterns as the basis for new sayings is not just an artistic convenience. It is a means of incorporating accepted truths in

<sup>21</sup> See Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 355–56.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Prov 12:14a; 13:2a; and 18:20a are close variants and can be considered a single line or “template.” To it are paired three very different lines, and three different couplets are produced, all with the same premise.

new proverbs and thereby integrating the latter into the existing system of knowledge. The network of correspondences that these templates create is vividly graphed by Daniel Snell, who lists the verses of Proverbs and draws lines between the “duplicates,” as he calls them.<sup>23</sup> The dense and random web of crisscrossing lines thus formed reveals the numerous and intricate relationships among proverbs, and this is itself suggestive of conceptual cohesiveness.

The relevance of these relationships to epistemology can be explained in the terms that Theodore Perry uses to define what he calls quadripartite structures, which are most clearly exemplified in the “better than” proverbs. Quadripartite structures, Perry explains, are derived logically rather than experientially.

It is thus necessary to qualify Cervantes’ suggestion that proverbs are “short sentences drawn from long experience.” Rather, at least in one important sense they are drawn from wisdom’s own structures. In such experiments, where the goal is to discover rather than teach, the contribution of the author seems to lie especially in the skillful use and elaboration upon a comprehensive formula, and such conventional frames are to be considered, in Abraham’s (1983, 20) felicitous phrase, as “meaning-producing structures.” These are figures of thought rather than of speech, less literary structures than logical ones, less forms of expression than ways of thinking.<sup>24</sup>

The following discussion explores how new wisdom is “drawn from wisdom’s own structures.” It does not catalogue the axioms that constitute the truth grid into which new knowledge must be fit; the system is too vast and complex for that. We can, however, trace a single path to see how one idea flows into another in accordance with a framework of assumptions. There is no prime axiom from which all ideas are spun out; the system itself is primary. But, I suggest, an ideal of harmony is central to the system, and a sense for what is harmonious—the moral equivalent of a musical ear—is important in both the formation of a wise person and the validation of new wisdom.

To enter the web of assumptions we can begin with a pair of proverbs in the “better than” template:

Better to dwell on the corner of a roof,  
than with a contentious woman in a house  
with other people. (Prov 21:9 = 25:24)

Better to dwell in a desert land,  
than with a contentious and angry woman. (21:19)

<sup>23</sup> Daniel C. Snell, *Twice-Told Proverbs and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 42–48.

<sup>24</sup> Theodore A. Perry, *Wisdom Literature and the Structure of Proverbs* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 95. Perry is citing Roger D. Abrahams, “Open and Closed Forms in Moral Tales,” in *Studies in Aggadah and Jewish Folklore* (ed. I. Ben-Ami and Joseph Dan; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 19–33.

If living with a contentious woman is high on the scale of misery, then it is worse than other unpleasant ways of living, and the harshness of the latter miseries can serve to gauge the severity of the former. Instances of severe but lesser miseries—in this case living in the desert and living on the corner of a roof—are easily plugged into the template.

How does the author of a proverb like this “know” that living with a contentious woman ranks high among nasty experiences? Whether an author’s “life-experience” underlay the evaluation is indeterminable. Maybe he had a bad marriage, but maybe not. He need only place situations on a scale of values accepted by others. In any case, various experiences can give rise to the same maxims. A man with a pleasant wife can invert his experience and declare how hard it must be to live with a cantankerous one. (In fact, the sayings about cranky wives may be read as oblique appreciation for amiable ones.)

What made the contentious-wife sayings sound to the sages like wisdom (rather than like wisecracks or grouching) was that the collective enterprise that shaped the book of Proverbs repeatedly warns about the baleful effects of contentiousness. The large number of verses on this topic—thirty-one in all<sup>25</sup>—shows just how important this issue was to the sages. They knew that disharmony in marriage was grievous because they knew that harmony was precious.

From the ideal of harmony among persons, numerous interconnecting and mutually validating proverbs could be drawn. Advice is reckoned wise if it is felt to promote the vision of a concordant society, with appropriate and agreeable relations on all levels, ranging from the immediate family (husband–wife; father–son; brother–brother), to the residential unit (master–slave, mistress–maid), to the village and city, to the whole kingdom, to God’s realm (God–humans). Indeed, harmony *within* the individual is essential as well. This is called שְׁלוֹמָה, “security,” “composure” (1:32; 17:1), and שְׁלוֹמָה, “peace,” “well-being” (3:2, 17; 12:20). Every proverb that promotes harmony at any level is reckoned *true*.

The human guarantor of the harmonious society is the king. Subjects owe the king allegiance in the form of fear and obedience (24:21). The king is duty bound to maintain the social order (29:4). He should do so graciously (20:28; 31:8). When he must use harsh means (20:26), which are temporary “discords,” he does so to restore the harmony of justice. He must create cohesion and stability beneath him by justice (16:12; 29:14; 31:9), by showing favor to worthy people (14:35; 16:13), and by treating underlings and the poor graciously (20:28; 31:6–9). The social order is a hierarchy, one justified, according to wisdom, not by nobility of birth or wealth but by the concord and stability it creates and guards (29:4). Fathers over sons, masters over slaves, princes over commoners, kings over subjects, and God over all. Any violation of this order is not only dangerous but *ugly*. A slave lording it over

<sup>25</sup> These are Prov 3:30; 6:14, 19; 13:10; 15:18; 16:28; 17:1, 14, 19; 18:6, 18, 19; 19:13; 20:3; 21:9, 19; 22:10; 23:29; 25:24; 26:17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26; 27:15; 28:24, 25; 29:22; 30:33.

princes is “unlovely” (19:10). A slave coming to rule makes the very earth shudder (30:22), as do dislocations in private affairs, such as in marital and household relationships (30:23). The ideal that frames the social principles, though not often labeled thus, is *שלום*: peace in the sense of wholeness, with the parts of the whole intermeshing effectively and supportively.

Wisdom also promotes harmony between God and humanity. Little is said about God’s demands. More central in Proverbs are God’s *attitudes*: loves and hates, favor and disgust. People must cultivate good relations with God, just as a courtier must please the king. The wise man seeks and receives “the favor and high regard of God and man alike” (3:4).

Numerous proverbs offer moral direction by defining the polarities of divine attitudes.<sup>26</sup> For example:

The Lord loathes deceitful scales,  
while he favors an undiminished weight. (11:1)

The Lord loathes the plans of the evil man,  
but pleasant words are pure. (15:26)

The practical consequences of God’s feelings are easily inferred and sometimes stated, as in 16:5—“The Lord loathes every haughty-hearted man; hand to hand, he will not go unpunished”—but that is not the only consideration. Utilitarian concerns alone would not explain the emphasis on God’s likes and dislikes or the scarcity of explicit references to reward and punishment in the “loathing–favor” series. This series in effect demands sensitivity to God’s *feelings*, not just his commands and prohibitions. When God looks at the world, he should see a harmony in society and in every person’s deeds and soul. When he does not, he will through salvation or retribution set things aright.

Harmony is the rule and the ideal also in matters of justice, though here I would use the metaphor of balance, for balance is harmony between two parts, in this case deed and consequence.

Justice is understood to mean that God repays people in accordance with their deeds or—putting the same idea neutrally—that people are repaid according to their deeds.<sup>27</sup> The desideratum is balance: good deeds balanced by good results

<sup>26</sup> What Yahweh loathes (תעב): Prov 3:32; 6:16–19; 11:1, 20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:8, 9, 26; 16:5, 12; 17:15; 20:10, 23; 21:27; 26:25; 28:9. What he favors (רצה): 8:35; 11:1, 20; 12:2, 22; 14:9; 15:8; 18:22; 19:12.

<sup>27</sup> Lennart Boström argues convincingly against drawing a dichotomy between sayings that assign the retribution explicitly to Yahweh (“God-sayings”) and those that formulate the results impersonally (*The God of the Sages: The Portrayal of God in the Book of Proverbs* [ConBOT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1990], 134–40). The God-sayings are not necessarily late additions to secular wisdom, and the impersonal ones are not expressions of a concept of a mechanistic world order. Rather, even in the earlier sentence literature, “[T]he anthropocentric material already had a complementary relationship to the theological approach to reality” (p. 140). I would call



(for the doer and others), bad deeds by bad results (mainly for the doer), with divine correctives remedying any imbalance. Sayings can easily be constructed on this principle.

He who is kind to the lowly lends to the Lord,  
and he will pay him the recompense of his hands. (19:17)

He who digs a pit will fall into it,  
and he who rolls a stone—it will come back on him. (26:27)

The righteousness of the upright will save them,  
while the treacherous will be trapped by deceit. (11:6)

The righteous man is extricated from trouble,  
and the wicked comes into his place. (11:8)

And so on. The book is full of polar proverbs contrasting in binary fashion the fates of the righteous and the wicked. These proverbs are all expressions of the same axiom and all mutually validating.

To the modern ear, the long strings of righteous–wicked antitheses in Proverbs 10–15 may sound mechanical, if not tedious. But the back-and-forth, tick-tock quality of these series gives voice to the belief in the moral balance whereby God runs the world. The “tick” and the “tock” really say the same thing, count off the same pace, but the “tock” is necessary to complete the pair and tells us that things are right with the world. The ideal of moral balance must have been aesthetically pleasing to the sages, and these proverbs give it literary form.

The way of wisdom it is not only righteous and rewarding; it is also beautiful: straight, pleasant, smooth, and shining “like the glow of dawn” (4:18a). Wisdom will “place a graceful garland on your head; grant you a splendid diadem” (4:9); and “give . . . grace to your neck” (3:22b). The very first exordium or call to attention in Proverbs 1–9 describes the teaching as “a graceful garland for your head and a necklace for your throat” (1:9). This verse introduces a unit, 1:9–19, whose lesson is a distinctly ethical admonition: Avoid the temptation to get mixed up in crimes or you’ll die. This blunt demand with its grim warning is wisdom, and therefore it too is lovely and graceful.

The mind-set of wisdom, as Glendon Bryce notes, identifies the good with the beautiful.<sup>28</sup> (This is true also of Socrates, for whom the two kinds of good, both called *καλός*, were inseparable.) Bryce is on the mark when he says,

Right is extended to include the realm of aesthetics, and goodness is manifested by its pleasantness. The good is that which contributes to harmony and order in

---

these different kinds of sayings alternative formulations of a reality rather than different “approaches” to it.

<sup>28</sup> Glendon E. Bryce, *A Legacy of Wisdom: The Egyptian Contribution to the Wisdom of Israel* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1979), 151.

human relationships and thereby fosters a life-style in accord with the best standards of social etiquette.<sup>29</sup>

Bryce cites Prov 17:7 and 22:18, which use “not fitting” and “pleasant” to judge morally tainted and virtuous actions, respectively, rather than employing terms of moral evaluation, such as “wicked” or “upright.” He also adduces 23:1–11, which treats matters of etiquette alongside ethical behavior—and with the same gravity.

To be wise, one must acquire a sense of harmony, a sensitivity to what is fitting and right, in all realms of attitude and behavior. This may be called a moral aesthetic. “A righteous man tottering before a wicked one” (25:26b) is unjust, but it is also, to the moral aesthetic, repulsive, like “a muddied spring and a polluted well” (25:26a). The moral aesthetic is active even when no sin or crime is involved. There is no law forbidding arrogance, yet God loathes it, and it will not go unpunished (16:5). Arrogance is repugnant to the moral aesthetic, which prizes the right measure in all regards. An arrogant man’s self-esteem is out of line with his actual status, which for all mortals is very modest. Likewise it is foolish to boast of the morrow, meaning to feel smug about one’s ability to achieve success, because doing so is to ignore the limits of human knowledge (27:1). An excess of ambition is overweening and unseemly, for it violates the equilibrium between reasonable investment and respectable gain (this is the point of Prov 10:22).<sup>30</sup> But laziness too is arrogant; it is a way of “boasting of the morrow,” for the sluggard imagines that he can gain his needs without a commensurate investment of effort. Laziness is not only self-destructive; it is ludicrous (26:13–16), hence ugly.

Certain things just do not belong together, and joining them offends the sages’ sensibilities. “Excessive speech is not fitting for a scoundrel; how much the less so is false speech for a noble!,” according to Prov 17:7. The main point is in the second line, which declares that falsity does not *befit* the noble. Much worse could be said of dishonesty, but here the issue is viewed from an aesthetic perspective. It is likewise unsuitable for fools to receive honor (26:1) or even pleasure (19:10). Though it is not exactly *unjust* for a slave to become king or for a maidservant to disinherit her mistress, such things are *unseemly*, out of kilter (30:22, 23; similarly 19:10), and the earth’s shuddering (30:21) suggests that bad consequences will ensue.

The principle of balance is nicely encapsulated in Prov 16:11: “A just balance and scales are the LORD’s. All the weights of the purse are his work.” If Yahwism

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 151–52.

<sup>30</sup> Such striving is thus not only imprudent and useless but also impious, and he who does this is a sinner (19:2). His guilt is indelible: “A faithful man has many blessings, but he who hurries to get rich will not be held innocent” (28:20). Scrambling for wealth causes instability: “An inheritance gained in a rush at first—its future will not be blessed” (20:21). The suspicion of overwork and excessive striving is expressed in Prov 13:11 (as emended); 19:2; 20:21; 21:5; 23:4; and 28:20, 22.

were iconic, Yahweh could be pictured like the Egyptian Thoth, judging everyone by his balance scales. This is the essence of God's justice and his demands in Proverbs, and it is fully sufficient. No promises to the forefathers, no covenantal ties, demands, or rewards, not even divine laws, come into the picture. They are not rejected; they are simply unnecessary in Proverbs' system.

But what about the sayings that seem to concede violations of the right order without including assurance of rectification? What coherence could they claim with the axioms of Proverbs' truth system?

A muddied spring and a polluted well:  
a righteous man tottering before a wicked one. (25:26)

The rich man's wealth is his fortified city;  
the poverty of the poor is their ruin. (10:15)

The great man devours the tillage of the poor,  
and some are swept away without justice. (13:23)

A poor man is hated even by his fellow,  
while the friends of the rich are many. (14:20)

Similarly 18:23; 22:7; 28:3; 30:11–14; and more.<sup>31</sup>

First of all, these "anomaly proverbs" are inherently no more heretical or ideologically disruptive than any mention of the wicked. After all, the wicked must have succeeded in doing *something* bad to those who did not deserve it or they would not be reckoned wicked. Even theologically unproblematic sayings such as 28:6—"Better a poor man who goes in his innocence, than a man of crooked ways who is rich"—concede the obvious, that wealth is not proportionate to righteousness. Still, the anomaly proverbs do shift the focus from the agent of the injustice to the facts of the injustice and thereby sharpen the question of how there can be violations of God's order.

The answer is that even in the face of these anomalies, the principle of justice is still not defeated, because it is axiomatic and inviolable and any violation must be illusory or temporary: "For the righteous man may fall seven times, but he will rise, while the wicked will stumble in evil" (24:16). Recompense must come, even if it waits till death: "For there shall be no future for the evil man; the light of the wicked will go out" (24:20); that is, the wicked will die and leave no offspring. As Raymond Van Leeuwen says, the sages' global, confident insistence on eventual justice is an assertion of faith—"belief in something that experience does not verify,"<sup>32</sup> and as such it can withstand problematic facts.

Taken individually, the anomaly proverbs do not cohere with the axioms of

<sup>31</sup> See further Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Wealth and Poverty: System and Contradiction in Proverbs," *HS* 33 (1992): 25–36.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

wisdom. Originally they may have been independent sayings expressing bitterness or cynicism, like Ezek 12:22 and 18:2. At that stage they were not wisdom, at least not by the standards of wisdom literature. But once incorporated into Proverbs, they were put to a different use and are now to be read in the light of the rest of the book and, sometimes, reinterpreted within their immediate context. This happens in Prov 14:20, “A poor man is hated even by his fellow, while the friends of the rich are many,” which receives an immediate corrective in v. 21, “He who despises his fellow sins, while he who is kind to the poor—how fortunate is he!” Similarly 22:7 is controlled by 22:8.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes the remedy is built into the verse, as in 28:6: “Better a poor man who goes in his innocence than a man of crooked ways who is rich.” Here the “better than” template lets us know that, on some level, justice is being done or will be done.

Most fundamentally, the anomaly proverbs, when read in the context provided by the other proverbs, describe a stage before the eventual rectification, whose inevitability is asserted repeatedly. The moral order—which is the way that deeds are rewarded and punished, whether by divine intervention or the natural course of events—prevails and the violations are, in the larger picture, nullified. Moreover, the anomaly proverbs convey an ethical teaching, because they describe social evils that must be counteracted by human justice and mercy.

The book of Proverbs focuses on the normal—indeed, *sees* little but the normal. It sees an orderly world, without deep disruptions. Wisdom’s coherence system sifts out some realities that would be obtrusive in the orderly world it posits. It offers no advice about dealing with disaster or famine, invasion or plague. Such events are held in store as punishments, and the righteous may be confident of deliverance. The wise will have the advantage in crisis, but wisdom literature does not say what they should do to meet it. Disruptions are local and specific. A large-scale disaster is a “day of wrath” (11:4), which has the restorative purpose of sorting out deserts. More diffuse is the damage caused by a wicked ruler (28:15), but then the disruption is an extension of his individual wickedness. There are times when the wicked have the upper hand, but these are temporary disruptions and are mentioned to warn against wickedness and to emphasize the certainty of the triumph of the righteous (28:12; 29:16).

<sup>33</sup> The process of reinterpretation by contextual pressure has been noted by several scholars. Harold C. Washington describes its working with respect to the sayings on wealth and poverty (*Wealth and Poverty in the Instruction of Amenemope and the Hebrew Proverbs* [SBLDS 142; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994], 191–202). Sayings (which Washington thinks are folk sayings) that “describe objectively the situation of the poor without ethical evaluation” (p. 183) are, in context, employed in judgments of social ethics (pp. 171–202). See also Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, *Studien zur israelitischen Spruchweisheit* (WMANT 28; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1968), 182; R. N. Whybray, “Yahweh-sayings and Their Context in Proverbs 10:1–22, 16,” in *La Sagesse de l’Ancien Testament* (ed. M. Gilbert et al.; BETL 51; Gembloux: Duculot, 1979), 153–65; and Van Leeuwen, “Wealth,” 31–33.

The sages of wisdom recognized coherence not by logical testing but by their sense for what fits the system, what I have called moral aesthetics. Sensitivity to moral aesthetics is the quality I have elsewhere called *moral character* and described as “a configuration of soul.”<sup>34</sup> This configuration is wisdom itself. It is what the sages of Proverbs teach their disciples, not by pounding in doctrines, or not by that alone, but in the way that an artist conveys an ineffable sense of color, proportion, and shape to an apprentice: by pointing to what he himself sees. In fact, wisdom is an art, not a science, and the sages of wisdom are artists—חכמים, as artists are called in Exod 36:4. The sages are artists painting a world whose realities often lie beneath the visible surface. We can sum up this art by applying Socrates’ words, as cited by Xenophon:

For just actions and all forms of virtuous activity are beautiful and good. . . . Therefore since just actions and all other forms of beautiful and good activity are virtuous actions, it is clear that Justice and every other form of Virtue is Wisdom. (*Mem.* 3.9.5)<sup>35</sup>

Elsewhere I have written that wisdom has “an attitudinal or emotional as well as an intellectual component.”<sup>36</sup> But, to be more precise: These are not just *components*. They are, in wisdom epistemology, one and the same thing, only seen from different angles. Using Socrates’ holistic model of ethical epistemology, in which knowledge (or wisdom), desire for the good, and love of beauty are all one,<sup>37</sup> I would say that wisdom is by nature cognitive *and* emotional *and* aesthetic. No one can be wise who desires the good but does not engage his mind in absorbing and understanding it. No one can be wise who knows what is good but does not feel its beauty and love it. No one can be wise who knows what is good but does not desire it. Only together and inseparably can all these acts of mind and heart be wisdom.

This wisdom is something that humans can have only imperfectly. In the view of the sages of Wisdom literature—and the rest of the Bible—God alone has it all, in perfect fusion. The quintessence of his wisdom came at the moment when he crafted an elegant, well-ordered world, looked at it, and judged it “very good,” in Gen 1:31. We can see this moment of primal and paradigmatic wisdom in Prov 3:19 as well:

יהוה בחכמה יסד ארץ כונן שמים בתבונה	By wisdom Yahweh founded the earth, established the heavens by skill.
--	--

<sup>34</sup> Fox, *Proverbs* 1–9, 348.

<sup>35</sup> Xenophon, *Memorabilia* (trans. E. C. Marchant; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), ad loc.

<sup>36</sup> Fox, *Proverbs* 1–9, 348.

<sup>37</sup> See Benson, *Socratic Wisdom*, 220 (quoted above, p. 675).

## A Case of the Evil Eye: Qohelet 4:4–8

NILI WAZANA

wazana@mscc.huji.ac.il

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 91905, Israel

---

The evil eye—the belief that spiteful looks can damage one’s health, fertility, or property—is common in many cultures even today.<sup>1</sup> It was prevalent throughout the ancient Near East<sup>2</sup> and is frequently mentioned in rabbinic literature.<sup>3</sup> There is no direct proof that the Israelites were concerned about the power of the evil eye in biblical times, but no doubt they too sought means to defend themselves against

This article was presented as a paper at the SBL International Meeting at Edinburgh, July 3, 2006.

<sup>1</sup> See the articles collected in Clarence Maloney, ed., *The Evil Eye* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976). He notes seven common features of the belief (pp. vii–viii): “(1) power emanates from the eye (or mouth) and strikes some object or person; (2) the stricken object is of value, and its destruction or injury is sudden; (3) the one casting the evil eye may not know he has the power; (4) the one affected may not be able to identify the source of the power; (5) the evil eye can be deflected or its effects modified or cured by particular devices, rituals, and symbols; (6) the belief helps to explain or rationalize sickness, misfortune, or loss of possessions such as animals or crops; and (7) in at least some functioning of the belief everywhere, envy is a factor.”

<sup>2</sup> See bibliographical references in James N. Ford, “‘Ninety-Nine by the Evil Eye and One from Natural Causes’: KTU<sup>2</sup> 1.96 in Its Near Eastern Context,” *UF* 30 (1999): 201–78 (esp. 201–2 n. 1). The evil eye is connected to the more general concept of a divine powerful eye distributing justice—punishment and protection—which is manifested in the apotropaic use of the Eye of Horus in Egypt (Rivka B. Kern Ulmer, “The Divine Eye in Ancient Egypt and in the Midrashic Interpretation of Formative Judaism,” *Journal of Religion and Society* 5 [2003]: 3) and is perhaps related to the remarkable hundreds of figurines with pronounced eyes discovered at the “Eye Temple” in Tell Brak in northeastern Syria (ca. 3500–3100 B.C.E.; see Max E. L. Mallowan, “Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar,” *Iraq* 9 [1947]: 32–35; pls. xxv–xxvi, li), though these probably symbolize the worshippers.

<sup>3</sup> [Rivka] Brigitte Kern-Ulmer, “The Power of the Evil Eye and the Good Eye in Midrashic Literature,” *Judaism* 40 (1991): 344–53; Rivka Ulmer, *The Evil Eye in the Bible and in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1994). The dichotomy “good eye”/“evil eye” is parallel to the rabbis’ notion of another motivating power oscillating between two extremes—good and bad inclination (*yetzer*). Evil/good eye and inclination are joined together in *m. Pirke ʿAbot* 2:16 (Ulmer, *Evil Eye*, 9).

all kinds of threatening evil powers. Two silver amulets found in a burial cave in Ketef Hinnom in Jerusalem attest to the apotropaic function of the blessing of the priests (Num 6:24–26) in Judah at the end of the First Temple period (ca. sixth century B.C.E.).<sup>4</sup> According to the preamble to the blessing, the amulets protected their owners against “the Evil” qualified by the definite article: “May he [or she] be blessed by God, the rescuer and the rebuker of the Evil.”<sup>5</sup> Later, the midrash explicitly connects the apotropaic character of the priestly blessing with the evil eye: “When Israel made the Tabernacle the Holy One, blessed be He, He gave them the blessing first, in order that no evil eye might affect them. Accordingly it is written: ‘The Lord bless thee and keep thee’ (Num 6:24), namely, from the evil eye” (*Num. Rab.* 12.4; *Pesiq. Rab.* 5).<sup>6</sup> Given the evidence for the existence of the belief in the evil eye in the surrounding cultures, the acknowledgment of it in rabbinic sources, and its strong and persistent hold in Mediterranean and Near Eastern societies, it would be odd indeed if this were not an integral part of the worldview of the ancient Israelites in biblical times, one of various forms of magical powers to be reckoned with.

## I. TRACES OF THE EVIL EYE IN BIBLICAL LITERATURE

This belief, however, has left very few palpable traces in biblical literature. Some stories may refer to the evil eye implicitly, and this was picked up by later exegesis. Two examples will suffice. Rashi claimed that the census of Israel which was carried out via the payment of half shekels in order to avoid the danger of pesti-

<sup>4</sup> Ada Yardeni, “Remarks on the Priestly Blessing on Two Ancient Amulets from Jerusalem,” *VT* 41 (1991): 176–85; Gabriel Barkay, Marilyn J. Lundberg, Andrew G. Vaughn, and Bruce Zuckerman, “The Amulets from Ketef Hinnom: A New Edition and Evaluation,” *BASOR* 334 (2004): 41–71. Barry Ross’s suggestion to connect the use of the priestly blessing as an apotropaic text on amulets (in particular on *hamsas*) with the religious ritual of the priestly blessing carried out in synagogues, especially the lifting of hands by the priests and averting the eyes by the community, is interesting if conjectural. See Ross, “Notes on Some Jewish Amulets: ‘ayin ha-ra’ and the Priestly Blessing,” *Journal of the Association of Graduates in Near Eastern Studies* 2 (1991): 34–40.

<sup>5</sup> א[ר]ע, Ketef Hinnom II, lines 1–5 (according to the improved reading in Barkay et al., “Amulets from Ketef Hinnom,” 68). The other amulet reads ומהרע, Ketef Hinnom I, line 10 (*ibid.*, 61). For possible references to amulets in the Bible and later among the Jews, see Ludwig Blau, “Amulets,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk & Wagnells, 1901–5), 1:546–50.

<sup>6</sup> Translation following Judah Jacob Slotki, *Midrash Rabbah, Numbers* (3rd ed.; London/New York: Soncino 1983), 1:466; William G. Braude, *Pesikta Rabbati* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1968), 111–12. The blessing was used for various magical purposes such as a prescription against bad or incomprehensible dreams (*b. Ber.* 55b; see also *Cant. Rab.* 3.6) and was popular in amulets. It is documented from Babylonian material, through Geniza texts, to modern amulets; see Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), 25–27.



lence (נגף) alluded to the danger of the evil eye: “the census is controlled by the evil eye; and it happened in the days of David (II Sam 24:1–10)” (Rashi to Exod 30:12). Another implicit biblical indication of the power of the evil eye is to be found in the story of Balaam. Rashi interpreted Balaam’s act of lifting his eyes and seeing Israel dwelling in peace as “wishing to inflict them with the evil eye” (Rashi to Num 24:2). The story of Balaam indeed connects the act of cursing with high places overlooking the people (Num 22:41; 23:28; 24:2). Balaam himself is designated הגבר שֶׁתָּם הָעֵין, “the man whose eye is open”<sup>7</sup> or “true” (Jewish Publication Society Version [JPSV]; Num 24:3, 15), and the theme of seeing or not seeing is dominant in the account of his confrontation with the ass (22:21–35).<sup>8</sup> In such cases, the possible allusion to the evil eye is gleaned from the context, but is not corroborated by any direct mention.

The noun–adjective combination “evil eye” (עין רעה) or the construct “the eye of evil” (עין הרע) common in rabbinic literature is not attested as such in the Bible. When the substantive “eye” appears together with the verb designating evil (רעע), it reflects negative characteristics associated with human interactions such as stinginess, greed, and envy, and always refers to a person, rather than to an independent evil power. A case in point is the construction ורעה עינך, “show ill will” (Deut 15:9 NIV), literally, “your eye shall be evil” (KJV).<sup>9</sup> Similarly, in the Deuteronomic covenantal curses, the construction תרע עינו/עינה (“his/her eye shall be evil”) designates “begrudging” (Deut 28:54, 56).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See BDB, 1060. The English translation of the biblical texts are mine, unless otherwise identified.

<sup>8</sup> Already mentioned in the midrash (see Ulmer, *Evil Eye*, 119–20). The midrash introduced the motif of the evil eye into a large number of biblical accounts, attributing it to such figures as Cain, Sarah, and Esau (ibid., 105–31). John H. Elliott is similarly midrashic when finding “implicit traces of Evil Eye belief and practice” wherever the text refers to “the envy, miserliness, hatred, greed or covetousness of the eye or heart” (“The Evil Eye in the First Testament,” in *The Bible and the Politics of Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Norman K. Gottwald on His Sixty-fifth Birthday* [ed. David Jobling, Peggy L. Day, and Gerald T. Sheppard; Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1991], 152), leading to an extreme position that sees the evil eye everywhere. The opposite position is represented by Aharon Brav, who maintains that there is no mention whatsoever of the evil eye in the Bible (“The Evil Eye among the Hebrews,” in *The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook* [ed. Alan Dundes; New York/London: Garland, 1981], 44–54; repr. from *Ophthalmology* 5 [1908]: 427–35). I suggest that implicit traces of the belief in the evil eye may be recognized only when a number of evil-eye motifs appear in a passage, and when the notion of the evil eye sheds light on the meaning of that passage (see below).

<sup>9</sup> The text in Deuteronomy 15 deals with the directive to give a loan (practically “to give” [vv. 9–10]) to a needy kinsman and links the motifs of wealth, the open/closed hand (vv. 7–8, 11) with the combination ורעה עינך, “your eye shall be evil.” The text appears pregnant with the evil-eye belief complex, while rationalizing its magical element.

<sup>10</sup> During a famine, the most tender and dainty (רך וענג) people will eat the flesh of their own children and will begrudge this meat to their closest relatives. The same idea of extreme estrangement due to famine is expressed in Neo-Assyrian texts by the motif of the mother locking

Wisdom literature features another phrase that resembles the construct and adjectival forms. The book of Proverbs counsels against eating the bread of an evil-eyed person (רע עין), lest you vomit the food which in his heart he begrudges you (Prov 23:6–8).<sup>11</sup> The verse hints at the potential of the “evil-eyed” to harm and cause illness—concepts prevalent in the belief system of the evil eye—yet it does not ascribe explicitly independent demonic power to the eye. Another verse depicts “an evil-eyed person” (איש רע עין) running after wealth (נבהל להון [Prov 28:22]). Here the “evil-eyedness” represents greed. Ben Sira repeats this terminology. Chapter 14 deals with a tight-fisted, mean person, labeled “an evil-eyed person” (איש רע עין), parallel to “small (of) heart” (לב קטן) (Sir 14:3). In v. 10, “the eye of an evil-eyed (person)” (עין רע עין) is contrasted with a good eye (עין טובה).<sup>12</sup> The eye of this miserly person will pounce greedily on the bread at his table (תעטט על לחם).<sup>13</sup> Here the eye is the subject of the sentence, and its vulturelike activity is evocative of its demonic quality; but the text is still portraying the earthly table manners of a stingy person. Any demonic undertones are subdued. Sirach 34:12–13 is the only text in the book where the evil eye is mentioned explicitly. Ben Sira warns a guest at a

---

(*edēlu*) her door against her daughter (CAD E: 25; see Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972], 127). In the curses of Deuteronomy, the juxtaposition of motifs familiar from the evil-eye belief complex, such as eating human flesh and eye + evil, cannot be accidental and implies that complex. Ulmer suggests that the text here utilizes the evil-eye terminology “in order to describe outrageous human behavior” (*Evil Eye*, 2).

<sup>11</sup> The parallel section in the *Instruction of Amenemope*, commonly considered the source of this section of Proverbs, lacks reference to eyes altogether and warns against eating too fast: “The big mouthful of bread—you swallow, you vomit it, and you are emptied of your gain” (ch. 11, XIV 17–18; “Instruction of Amenemope,” translated by Miriam Lichtheim, COS 1.47, p. 119). Elliott notes that Aristotle refers to the effects of the evil eye when dining, generating vomiting (“Evil Eye,” 335 n. 38). Table manners, particularly at the table of a person of a higher status, is a favorite subject in wisdom literature (see also Prov 23:1–5). In this case, the *Instruction of Ptah-hotep* advised eating what is set before one and looking at it, not shooting glances at the host, since “molesting him offends the *ka*” (Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, vol. 1, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 65, #7 [= 6, 11–12]), perhaps hinting at the harmful potential of the glances of the jealous guest to the health of the rich host (I thank the anonymous reader for this reference and insight).

<sup>12</sup> The following remarks on the verses from Ben Sira are based on my discussion with Menahem Kister, to whom I am deeply grateful. The person alluded to in the extant text “the eye of an evil-eyed (person)” fits the suffixed masculine pronoun at the close of the verse, “his table.” It is also possible that the original text read “evil eye,” עין רעה, in parallel to “good eye,” and was emended because of the masculine suffix.

<sup>13</sup> Moses Hirsch Segal suggests emending the verb to תמעט (“reduce”), opposite to the good eye of the next verse, which shall increase the bread (תרבה הלחם) (*Sefer ben Sira ha-shalem* [Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1958], 90). Yet the words על לחם and the appearance of the same root in a similar context (34:16) lead me to prefer the existing text (for this verb, cf. 1 Sam 14:32 *qere*; 15:19).

“large [i.e., well-provided] table” to remember that an evil eye is evil (זכור כי רעה עין רעה), so that here the evil eye represents envy and is triggered by the abundance of food on display. The text further provides a poetic-scientific explanation of the phenomenon of tears: they are the wet antidote provided against the scorching glance of the evil eye.<sup>14</sup> As Menahem Kister notes: “The approach to the ‘evil eye’ in Ben Sira is not *in principle* [emphasis in original] as to a magical entity (‘evil eye’ in rabbinical literature), yet I am of the opinion that it is surely more than a metaphor of envy, etc., as in the Bible: this evil feeling directly affects reality.”<sup>15</sup>

The NT lists the evil eye among other human crimes and vices: “From within, out of the human heart, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye (ὁφθαλμὸς πονηρός), blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7:21–22).<sup>16</sup> Again, the evil eye is primarily a metaphor for meanness and not an independent evil force.

This dearth of mention and the tendency to rationalize possible beliefs in magical forces are in conformity with the paucity of references to other forms of magic, witchcraft, and spells in the Bible. Magic is neutralized or replaced by prayer, dressed in a Yahwistic cloak; it is thus attributed to God and not seen as an independent power.<sup>17</sup> Most practices of magic were “Canaanized”—regarded as foreign—and banned, particularly by the Deuteronomist (Exod 22:17; Lev 19:26; Deut

<sup>14</sup> Menachem Kister, “A Contribution to the Interpretation of Ben Sira” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 59 (1990): 312, 335.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 334 n. 113 (Hebrew; my translation). In my opinion this is pertinent also to many of the biblical wisdom texts referring to the evil-eyed person.

<sup>16</sup> Note also the list of three traits characterizing the followers of Balaam according to the Mishnah: evil eye (עין רעה, probably stinginess), high spirit (רוח גבוהה, pride), and wide appetite (נפש רחבה, hunger, desire, greed). These are contrasted with the traits of the followers of Abraham: good eye (עין טובה, generosity), low spirit (רוח נמוכה, modesty), and low appetite (נפש שפלה, humility; *m. Pirke ’Abot* 5:19). The evil eye is to be found in other lists of traits causing leprosy (e.g., *Lev. Rab.* 17:3; see parallels mentioned in Mordecai Margulies, *Midrash Wayyikra Rab-bah* [New York/Jerusalem: Maxwell Abbell Publication Fund, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993], 374; Ulmer, *Evil Eye*, 27–31).

<sup>17</sup> The expression “neutralization and domestication of power” refers to instances when miraculous deeds performed with the help of a prop of sorts, such as Moses’ parting of the sea with his staff (Exod 14:16) or Joshua’s javelin at Ai (Josh 8:18, 26), are depicted as acts ordered by God, the magical power thus being transferred to the prayer (Jean-Michel de Tarragon, “Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Canaan and Ancient Israel,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* [ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995], 3:2076). In the story of the ten plagues, Aaron turns his staff into a snake, and the Egyptian magicians do the same (Exod 7:8–12). Peter Schäfer rightly notes that this story is not about the question of the status of the acts themselves but about presenting God and his agents as better and more powerful than the Egyptian professional magicians. He concludes, “magic could easily be made presentable, if only it was subordinated to the will and power of God” (“Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism,” in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium* [ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans G. Kippenberg; SHR 75; Leiden: Brill, 1997], 29).

18:9–11).<sup>18</sup> However, this very ban indicates that these courses of action were known and practiced in ancient Israel.<sup>19</sup> According to the story of Balaam, magic was not supposed to have a hold on Israel (Num 23:23). Yet the belief in the magic powers of the evil eye probably underlies the biblical metaphor of envy, greed, and stinginess, providing another dimension for its meaning.

This article points to another biblical reference to the evil eye in wisdom literature, hitherto unnoticed. I suggest that the author of Qoh 4:4–8 implicitly, yet deliberately, refers to the evil-eye belief complex. The interpretation here offered reveals a new dimension of the message of this passage.

## II. QOHELET 4:5–6: THE PROBLEMS WITH CURRENTLY HELD VIEWS

In Qoh 4:5–6 there are two proverbs that are often regarded as expressing contradictory views about toil. The first describes the fool in two consecutive clauses, using participial verbs:

הכסיל חבק את־ידיו ואכל את־בשרו

The fool folds his arms together and eats his own flesh.<sup>20</sup>

Based on the advice in the book of Proverbs to avoid oversleeping and excessive rest, expressed by the same combination, *מעט שנות מעט תנומות מעט חבק ידיים*, “a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest” (Prov 6:10; 24:23), this adage is often understood as expressing the conservative view regarding laziness, perhaps even quoting a traditional wisdom saying. The two clauses are explained as being connected causally. The fool’s inactivity—folding of the arms—leads him to consume his own flesh. Most scholars understand this unique, unattractive image as metaphorical auto-cannibalism, scorning laziness. The fool is thus suffering the consequences of his inactivity, in the words of the medieval commentator Rashbam: “Because of this he has nothing to eat except his flesh which keeps degenerating, for he has done no work with which to support himself.”<sup>21</sup> Criticism of laziness is found in other wisdom texts. Oversleeping and laziness have

<sup>18</sup> Brian B. Schmidt, “Canaanite Magic vs. Israelite Religion: Deuteronomy 18 and the Taxonomy of Taboo,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Marvin Meyer; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 141; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 242–59.

<sup>19</sup> Schäfer, “Magic and Religion,” 27.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Gordis defines the verses as “diametrically opposed to each other” (*Koheleth—The Man and His World* [New York: Schocken Books, 1951], 240).

<sup>21</sup> Sara Japhet and Robert B. Salters, *The Commentary of R. Samuel Ben Meir (Rashbam) on Koheleth* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 124. See also Ibn Ezra: “it is as if he is eating his own flesh since he will die of hunger.”

dire consequences and lead to poverty and want (Prov 20:13; see also Prov 19:24, which mentions the עצל ["idle one"]); similarly 26:13–15).

The following verse is a "better proverb" that seemingly contradicts this traditional view:

טוב מלא כף נחת ממלא חפנים עמל ורעות רוח

Better is a handful with quiet than two fistfuls with toil.<sup>22</sup>

Yet the motif that a little gained in peace is better than a lot gained in strife is itself also not uncommon in wisdom literature. Examples are both biblical, such as Prov 17:1, טוב פת חרבה ושלוה בה מבית מלא זבחי ריב, "better a dry crust with peace than a house full of feasting with strife" (JPSV; cf. also 15:16–17; 16:8), and extrabiblical: "Better is bread with a happy heart than wealth with vexation" (*Instruction of Amenemope* 6: IX, 7–8).<sup>23</sup> As Michael Fox points out, the two verses can also be described as complementary rather than contradictory statements regarding effort, "the first condemning indolence, the second excessive work."<sup>24</sup>

This interpretation indeed matches motifs and concepts common in wisdom literature, as well as the use of the idiom "folding of arms" noted above. Both verses reflect traditional ideas, and the seeming tension is achieved by juxtaposing them (cf. Prov 26:4–5).

However, there are two problems with this common interpretation of Qoh 4:5–6. First, the association of the two verses with the larger literary unit is doubtful. The larger literary unit begins in 4:4 with an introductory formula in the first person: "and I saw." The first observation is a generalization about "all toil and all skillful enterprise,"<sup>25</sup> which Qohelet equates with "envy of one person of his fellow." Following are the two verses in question, and then we find another first-person statement introducing an extended discussion about the disadvantages of solitude versus the advantages of friendship (4:7–12). The famous "better proverb" links the two parts together: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil" (4:9 NRSV). The entire section deals thematically with human relationships. These interactions are between one and one's fellows, variously termed

<sup>22</sup> For the adverbial use of the accusatives here I follow Gordis, *Koheleth*, 241.

<sup>23</sup> Translation from Lichtheim, "Amenemope," 117.

<sup>24</sup> Michael V. Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions* (JSOTSup 71; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 202. This was already suggested by the medieval commentator Rabbi Yosef Kara: for he condemned and considered as *hebel* a man who exhausts himself and is too keen on money, and he also condemned the fool who folds his arms and is altogether idle. But what should he do? He should labor enough for the livelihood of his household in ease, and he should not labor too much in order to have many assets. See Berthold Einstein, *R. Yosef Kara und sein Kommentar zu Kohelet* (in Hebrew; Berlin, 1886; repr., Tel Aviv: Zion 1970).

<sup>25</sup> "Toil" (עמל) is an indefinite noun used as a collective noun. For collectives introduced with כל, see GKC §117c.

איש מרעהו; אחד ושני; אחד וחברו. The other is also referred to as one's brother or son (4:8).<sup>26</sup>

The discourse about social interactions is intertwined with reflections about a favorite topic—עמל (toil and its fruit, accumulated wealth). The key term עמל is repeated five times in the section (vv. 4, 6, 8 [twice], 9). Thematically, the interpretation of the adjacent proverbs about the fool and the handful with rest as observations on laziness and laborious effort (whether contradictory or complementary) may fit nicely into the context of toil and wealth, but it is strange in the context of the larger theme—contacts and relationships among members of society. Verses 4–12 are not about עמל (toil and wealth) and laziness but about toil and wealth in the light of relationships between individuals in society.<sup>27</sup>

The second problem with the standard interpretation is the idiom “eating his own flesh.” This outcome of the fool's inaction seems very extreme and unusual, “a strikingly crass image of self-destruction.”<sup>28</sup>

The fool determines his bad fortune by action or inaction, but throughout the entire wisdom literature there is no parallel to such a horrible—albeit metaphorical—fate. Granted, the fool walks in darkness (Qoh 2:14). He talks too much (10:13), and his own lips (words) trip him, וּשְׁפָתָיו כְּסִיל תְּבַלְעֵנוּ (10:12;<sup>29</sup> Prov 18:7). Yet even if he is a shame to his father (Prov 19:13) and a menace to himself, even if laziness and love of sleep lead him to poverty and hunger (Prov 20:13), even to death (Prov 21:25), nowhere is the fool driven to eating his own flesh. The use of the cannibalistic motif in this context is unparalleled and problematic.

The image is taken from an altogether different realm and leads me to suggest another explanation for the two verses, one that also fits the general theme of the

<sup>26</sup> Some scholars begin the unit in 4:1. Fox sees all of 4:1–16 as “a loose thematic cluster of five passages dealing with human relations” (Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 199). Thomas Krüger suggests 4:1 laments “lack of interpersonal solidarity” (*Qoheleth: A Commentary* [trans. O. C. Dean, Jr.; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004], 96).

<sup>27</sup> Scholars often regard 4:4–6 as one unit, entitling it “envy” (Krüger, *Qoheleth*, 96), “work and envy” (Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet* [HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2004], 294), or even “jealousy as the fuel for toil” (Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 199). Yet according to their own view, only v. 4 deals with envy, whereas vv. 5–6 deal with the desired amount of work and have no bearing on the relationship of work to envy.

<sup>28</sup> Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 202. Some scholars suggest a second possibility, seeing the second clause as undermining the warning against laziness, as if it reads: “(although) the fool folds his arms still he eats his meat.” See Norbert Lohfink, *Qoheleth: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 69–70; James L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 109; Schwienhorst-Schönberger, *Kohelet*, 295. Krüger lists others of this opinion (*Qoheleth*, 97 n. 75). Yet this interpretation is unlikely, as nowhere in the Bible does the term *bāšār* with a suffix denote meat as food, always the flesh (see Qoh 2:3; 5:5; 11:10 and elsewhere in the Bible); Job 31:31, listed by Krüger as the only example for this possibility, also means flesh.

<sup>29</sup> Compare וְכִסִּיל אָדָם יִבְלַעֲנוּ (Prov 21:20).

passage—social interactions and wealth. I suggest that Qohelet is here referring to the notion of the evil eye, one of the most fearsome yet common ailments afflicting humans. The more or less overt references to the evil eye are interspersed throughout the first part of the thematic unit dealing with relationships (4:4–8). The following issues in the passage are all motifs related to the notion of the evil eye.

### Envy

In v. 4, Qohelet considers “all toil and all skillful enterprise” and maintains that they are one person’s envy of another, *כי היא קנאת־איש מרעהו*.<sup>30</sup> Most commentators explain Qohelet’s identification of labor with envy as indicating that envy motivates all human effort. Fox’s title for this section is representative: “jealousy as the fuel for toil.”<sup>31</sup> Verse 4, then, is a statement about competition, which can be viewed as negative or positive in classical and rabbinic sources.<sup>32</sup>

Syntactically, the relationship between toil and the ensuing envy is one of identification, and it can also mean that envy is the result of, rather than the cause of, effort, as reflected in KJV: “Again, I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbour.” The notion that accumulating wealth for one’s own profit inevitably leads to envy among one’s fellows is a major component of the belief in the evil eye. The association of the two is explicit in the Greek text of Sir 14:10: *ὀφθαλμὸς πονηρὸς φθονερός*, “evil eye, envious.” I suggest that Qohelet’s observation that “wealth leads to envy,” envy emanating from blatant inequality between members of the same community (*אִישׁ מֵרֵעֵהוּ*), is the emotion symbolized by the evil eye. The evil eye is caused by envy; it is envy.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> For a similar grammatical formation in Qohelet referring to a person’s *חֶלֶק*, “portion” (JPSV), see 3:22; 5:17; 9:9. The linking pronoun *היא* indicates that the second clause is a clause of identification (see *IBHS*, 130–32, 297–98).

<sup>31</sup> Fox, *Qohelet and His Contradictions*, 199. See also NRSV, NIV. For the difference between envy (the desire to have what someone else has) and jealousy (the fear of losing what one already has to someone else, for example, a jealous husband), see George M. Foster, “The Anatomy of Envy: A Study of Symbolic Behavior,” *Current Anthropology* 13 (1972): 165–202. Biblical Hebrew *קנא* can denote both notions, for example, Prov 3:31 (*קנא בִּי*, “envy”); Num 5:14, 14, 30 (*קנא את*, jealousy). See BDB, 888.

<sup>32</sup> Compare JPSV: “that it is a man’s *rivalry* with his neighbor.” For classical sources denoting those opposite attitudes toward competition, see Rainer Braun, *Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Popularphilosophie* (BZAW 130; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1973), 81 n. 224; Krüger, *Qoheleth*, 96–97. The positive attitude toward envy is also reflected in the rabbinical proverb *קנאת חכמה חכמה*, “envy of authors increases wisdom” (*b. B. Bat.* 21b).

<sup>33</sup> See Elliott, “Evil Eye,” 152. In Italy the evil eye is also called *invidia*, which is the Latin word for envy (Lawrence DiStasi, *Mal Occhio (Evil Eye): The Underside of Vision* [San Francisco: North Point, 1981], 49). In Egypt “the eye of envy” is the evil eye (according to Winifred Blackman, mentioned in Pierre Bettez Gravel, *The Malevolent Eye: An Essay on the Evil Eye, Fertility, and the*



### Social Context

The belief in the evil eye has an important socioeconomic role. The evil eye is an informal restraining mechanism against solitude, selfishness, and separatism in zero-sum communities, encouraging egalitarianism: “wealth is not to be accumulated for keeping, but is to be redistributed. . . . If, instead, one accumulates wealth for one’s own profit, one not only disrupts the system, but is considered greedy and attracts the resentment of the community.”<sup>34</sup>

The Ugaritic text identified as an incantation against the evil eye (KTU<sup>2</sup> 1.96)<sup>35</sup> significantly calls the victim “brother” (*ʿaḥh*) of the evil eye (see the quotation below). Our text repeatedly refers to relationships with fellow members of the group termed רע (“friend”), שני (“other”), and בן ואח (“son or brother”).

In the light of the demonic undertones of envy, the first clause of v. 5, הכסיל חבק את ידיו, should not be interpreted as referring to inactivity or laziness. The proverb is not merely talking about *any* folding of arms, such as that indicated by the construct חבק ידיים (Prov 6:10; 24:23), but, by the pronominal suffix added to the object in both parts of the verse, is stressing the reflexivity of the action. The fool folds *his own* arms, and eats *his own* flesh. The so-called catalogue of times mentions the same root חבק: “a time for embracing, and a time for turning away from embrace” (עת לחבוק ועת לרחק מחבק [3:5b]). There, the root חבק, both in *paʿal* and *piʿel* forms, refers to human relationships, perhaps specifically to interactions between men and women (Ibn Ezra). It seems that our verse (Qoh 4:5) is criticizing human attitudes of aloofness represented by the act of self-embrace. The aloof individual removes himself from the social network and accumulates personal wealth. He is deemed foolish, as this inevitably leads to envy and violence. His “eating” his own flesh is the result of his antisocial behavior.

This interpretation is in good accord with the general tone of the larger unit (4:4–12). It underscores the disadvantages of loneliness weighed against companionship, both viewed in relationship to wealth.

### Eating the Flesh

The evil eye can be and often is hypostatized as a demon.<sup>36</sup> James Ford demonstrated that eating human flesh is a well-documented motif characterizing demonic

---

*Concept of Mana* [American University Studies, Ser. 11, Anthropology/Sociology 64; New York: Lang, 1995], 141 n. 7). For the evil eye and envy, see also *ibid.*, 7–9; for this connection in antiquity, see Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 224, esp. the material collected in n. 75.

<sup>34</sup> Gravel, *Malevolent Eye*, 8.

<sup>35</sup> Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 224.

<sup>36</sup> G. Del Olmo Lete, “Un Conjuro ugarítico contra el ‘mal ojo’ (KTU 1.96),” *Anuari de Filolo-*

activities. This activity is attributed to the evil eye in the Ugaritic incantation against the evil eye analyzed by Ford: “The eye, it roamed and darted; It saw its ‘brother’—*how* lovely (he was)! its ‘brother’—*how* very seemly! Without a knife it devoured his flesh (*tspʾi šʾirh*), without a cup it guzzled his blood.”<sup>37</sup> An amulet incantation from Arslan Tash (Upper Syria, seventh century B.C.E.) depicts a composite demon with a large round eye, who is swallowing a human being, with only the legs still dangling from its mouth.<sup>38</sup> This graphic personification of the evil eye is accompanied by an inscription mentioning seven eyes, among them *ʿn bdd* (“the eye of a loner”) and *ʿn ytm* (“the eye of an orphan”).

The sequence of motifs apparent in vv. 4–5—observation of beauty or wealth, leading to envy and culminating in violence—is characteristic of the evil eye,<sup>39</sup> although here these activities are attributed to three separate agents: Qohelet observes the wealth (“and I saw . . .” [v. 4a]); envy is by one person of his fellow (v. 4b); and the solitary fool eats his own flesh (v. 5).

Eating the flesh is a crude metaphorical depiction of the disease that strikes a person infected by the demon or the evil eye. The victim loses weight rapidly and eventually dies.<sup>40</sup> Death then eats the skin (Job 18:13). The Talmud strikingly connects the evil eye to all kinds of illnesses:

“And the Lord shall take away from you all sickness” (Deut 7:15a). Said Rab: By this the (evil) eye is meant. This is in accordance with his opinion. For Rab went up to a cemetery, performed certain charms, and then said: Ninety-nine (have died) through an evil eye (בעין רעה), and one through natural causes (בדרך ארץ). (b. B. Meṣiʿa 107b; cf. y. Šabb. 14, 3)

---

*gia* 15 (1992): 14, mentioned in Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 211. For the demonized evil eye, see Ford, 211–16.

<sup>37</sup> *KTU*<sup>2</sup> 1.96, lines 1–5; translation by Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 202. For his impressive collection of various texts describing demons as devouring the flesh (as well as guzzling the blood), see *ibid.*, 230–33. Note also the evidence of the Ethiopian belief that the evil eye attacks by “eating” its victims, “thereby causing sickness or death” (Ronald A. Reminick, “The Evil Eye Belief among the Amhara,” in *Evil Eye*, ed. Maloney, 88, mentioned in Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 252–53). Compare the same idiom in Lilith’s intention to eat the flesh, *wlʾkl ʾt bšrw*, in a medieval Hebrew incantation (mentioned by Ford, 215 n. 39).

<sup>38</sup> See Dennis Pardee, “Les documents d’Arslan Tash: Authentiques ou Faux?” *Syria* 75 (1998): 49, fig. 8 (illustration), 51, fig. 11 (photo). For illustration, see also Yitshak Avishur, “The Second Amulet Incantation from Arslan Tash,” in *Phoenician Inscriptions and the Bible* (Tel Aviv/Jaffa: Archaeological Center Publication, 2000; first published in *UF* 10 [1978]: 29–36), 225–43, illustration p. 281. For a defense of the authenticity of this and the other Arslan Tash amulet, see Pardee, 15–54; Jacobus Van Dijk, “The Authenticity of the Arslan Tash Amulets,” *Iraq* 54 (1992): 65–68.

<sup>39</sup> Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 224, 227.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 235. See, for example, Satan’s suggestion that God reach out and afflict Job “himself and his flesh,” *אֵל עֲצֻמוֹ וְאֵל בְּשָׁרוֹ*, followed by God’s afflicting Job with a terrible disease from his foot to his head (*קִדְקִדּוֹ* [קרי: ועד] *רַע מִכַּף רִגְלוֹ עַד* [Job 2:5–7]).

This demonic activity can also be turned against enemies and used for protection. Ford mentions the protective demon “Flame-(Comes)-from-His-Mouth” from the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu, who claims: “I repel those who come with evil intent toward thy seat. I devour their flesh, I gulp down their blood, I burn their bones with fire.”<sup>41</sup> A more developed image is found in God’s words in Second Isaiah: “I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine” (והאכלתי את מוניך את בשרם ובעסיס דמם ישכרו) [Isa 49:26a]). The protective act of God reverses the violent intention of the demon-like enemies, just as many charms against evil return it (evil glance, words, etc.) to their masters.<sup>42</sup> Our text likewise describes self-eating of the flesh, this time by the solitary fool. Separating himself from others, the fool has activated the powers of envy against himself. He is then left to deal with the consequences of his choice—the cause of his own misfortune—as the envy he has activated wastes his own flesh.

### *A Handful with Calm*

The “better proverb” weighs a handful attained calmly (נחת) against two fistfuls of wealth attained through toil and pursuit of wind. The noun נחת, derived from the root נוח, denotes peace, rest, calm,<sup>43</sup> and its adverbial use is attested in a proverb quoted in Qoh 9:17a: “words spoken softly (בנחת) by wise men are heeded.”

The “better proverb” is not simply about comparing one measure of rest, or, if taken as an adverbial accusative, about comparing one measure achieved *with* rest to double that measure achieved through struggle. Qohelet contrasts an open hand, כף יד, with a couple of fists, חפנים.<sup>44</sup> The clenched fist denotes (with)holding and signifies stinginess, strife, and struggle. It is a fitting antonym to “calm” (נחת). On the other hand, the open outstretched hand symbolizes the act of giving (see, e.g., Deut 15:7–8, 11; Prov 31:20). Furthermore, the open hand is a known apotropaic symbol, an antidote to the evil eye in North Africa and the Middle East (*hamsa*).<sup>45</sup> Amulets in the form of a hand were found in Egypt, and this symbol was inscribed on Egyptian scarabs and magical texts.<sup>46</sup>

Apotropaic use of the hand symbol in Judah probably finds expression in the open hand pointing downward, incised on the wall of a burial cave in Khirbet el-

<sup>41</sup> Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 232. Text from E. Naville, *Textes relatifs au mythe d'Horus recueillis dans le temple d'Edfou* (1870; repr., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), pl. V, upper right.

<sup>42</sup> See the concluding section of the Ugaritic incantation and parallels in Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 248–51.

<sup>43</sup> KBL (English version), 692. Compare Isa 30:15; Prov 29:9.

<sup>44</sup> Translations (such as NRSV, NIV, and Gordis [*Koheleth*, 241]) juxtaposing “one handful” against “two handfuls” miss the point.

<sup>45</sup> Geza Róheim, “The Evil Eye,” in *Evil Eye*, ed. Dundes, 219.

<sup>46</sup> For Egyptian amulets, see Carol Andrews, *Amulets of Ancient Egypt* (London: British Museum Press, 1994), 70, illustrations 67f, 74d.

Qom (identified as biblical Makkedah) in the lowlands, some twelve kilometers west of Hebron (ca. 700 B.C.E.).<sup>47</sup> The first line of the inscription scratched above the hand possibly identifies the writer as אֲרִיָּהּ הָעֵשֶׁר, “Uriyahu the rich.”<sup>48</sup> The content of the inscription is a request to bless the writer, imploring God and his Ashera to save him from his enemies.<sup>49</sup> Joseph Naveh pointed to the magical connotations of these graffiti, in which the text was often distorted intentionally in order to confuse the demons.<sup>50</sup> Taken together, the magical implications of the inscribed graffiti, the carefully carved hand, and the possible appellation of the writer as “the rich” belong to the same sphere as the belief in the evil eye.

In light of the open hand symbolic values, the mention of the handful of/with calm in Qohelet is more than a metaphor of tranquility versus strenuous work. No doubt the author is quoting a known idiom, yet his use of the proverb in this context is drawn from the magic apotropaic connotations of the open hand. Qohelet is stressing the message that the way to avert evil and achieve peace is through sharing and not aloof separatism.

### *The Insatiable Eye*

In Qoh 4:4–8, the author notes the loner, who will not share his fortune with anyone else, “and yet<sup>51</sup> his eye will not be sated with wealth” (4:8bβ). Insatiability

<sup>47</sup> Its possible apotropaic role was mentioned by Othmar Keel (*Monotheismus im Alten Israel und seiner Umwelt* [ed. Othmar Keel; Biblische Beiträge 14; Fribourg: Schweizerisches Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1980], 172), who referred to Egyptian scarabs (ibid., 173, abb. 14a). The motif of a hand as the divine apotropaic symbol is further developed by Silvia Schroer, “Zur Deutung der Hand unter der Grabinschrift von Chirbet el Qôm,” *UF* 15 (1984): 191–99, with a survey of iconographic evidence from Egypt and Mesopotamia since the Old Babylonian period.

<sup>48</sup> The inscription is difficult to decipher, and the suggested readings are varied. This reading was proposed by André Lemaire, “Les inscriptions de Khirbet el- Qôm et l’Ashéra de YHWH,” *RB* 84 (1977): 599–600, who refers to Exod 30:15 and 2 Sam 12:4 for parallels to the title “rich.” He is followed by Judith M. Hadley (*The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah* [University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 86) and Joseph Naveh (“Hebrew Graffiti from the First Temple Period,” *IEJ* 51 [2001]: 196 n. 15). Others disregard what looks like the letter *ayin* and suggest a reading of אֲרִיָּהּ הָשֶׁר, “Uriyahu the governor” (attributed to Nachman Avigad and Frank Moore Cross by William G. Dever, “Iron Age Epigraphic Material from the Area of Khirbet el-Kôm,” *HUCA* 40–41 [1969–70]: 160 n. 39); see Shmuel Ahituv, *Haketaf vehamiktav: Handbook of Ancient Inscriptions from the Land of Israel and Kingdoms Beyond the Jordan* [Jerusalem: Bialik, 2006], 197). See also other suggested readings surveyed by Hadley, 87–88.

<sup>49</sup> In Judah the open hand may have been a symbol connected with the goddess Ashera. For the hand in relation to Ashera, see Ruth Hestrin, “A Note on the ‘Lion Bowls’ and the Asherah,” *Israel Museum Journal* 7 (1988): 115–18.

<sup>50</sup> Naveh, “Hebrew Graffiti,” 194–97.

<sup>51</sup> נִגַּם is adversative; see Choon Leong Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18C; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 81.

expressed by negation of the verb derived from the root **שבע** (לֹא תִשְׂבַּע) is a recurrent theme in curse formulae in the ancient Near East, and pertains particularly to inadequate nursing. The Sefire treaty (KAI 222, lines 21–24) and the bilingual inscription from Tell Fekherye provide typical examples: “may one hundred ewes/cows/women suckle a lamb/calf/child but let it not be sated” (Akkadian: *lā ušabbā*).<sup>52</sup> In the curses, lack of satiation is seen as the result of a shortage of provisions and indicates hunger. A similar hunger, yet not for physical food, is depicted in the poem about the dreariness of repetition that opens the book of Qohelet: “All things (or words) are wearisome. No one is able to speak. An eye is not sated with seeing (לֹא תִשְׂבַּע עֵין מֵרְאוֹת), an ear is not filled with hearing” (1:8). The weariness and insatiability of the eye and the emptiness of the ear are the result of their poor “diet.” Finding nothing new to nourish their interest and fulfill their need of stimulation, since “there is nothing new under the sun” (1:9b), they are forever craving and empty.

Verse 7, however, seems to refer to dissatisfaction resulting not from dire conditions, but from the greedy nature of humanity. With no one to share his fortune, the loner accumulates sufficient wealth, yet paradoxically he is never rich enough. Elsewhere Qohelet expresses the same paradox without using the metaphor of the greedy eye: “he who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver” (אִהַב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׂבַּע [5:9a]). A similar idea is reflected in the positive mishnaic adage: “Who is rich? He who rejoices in his portion” (*m. Pirke ’Abot* 4:1). Therefore, Qohelet states elsewhere (5:10), even as provisions increase “those who consume them increase” (בִּרְבוֹת הַטּוֹבָה רַבּוֹ אוֹכְלִיהָ). As suggested by Choon Leong Seow, this statement is probably “referring to the expenses that the rich have to incur for the management of their estates and taxes. It is costly to be rich, as it were: the greater the wealth the greater the expenses.”<sup>53</sup> According to Qohelet, the fortunate person who has given birth to a hundred and lived many years “yet his appetite is not sated with the plenty” (וְנִפְשׁוֹ לֹא תִשְׂבַּע מִן הַטּוֹבָה [6:3]) is worse than the stillborn. The greedy nature of humankind leads people to spend as much as they earn without achieving any fulfillment: “all the toil of humankind is for their mouth, and yet the gullet is not filled” (כָּל עֲמַל הָאָדָם לִפִּיהוּ וְגַם הַנֶּפֶשׁ לֹא תִמְלֵא [6:7]).

In those examples greed is located in the throat (נֶפֶשׁ), the seat of human appetite. As the eyes were conceived as the seat of desire, their dissatisfaction is a

<sup>52</sup> For this motif in the Tell Fekherye inscription and its parallels in the Sefire stele and from the annals of Ashurbanipal, see Jonas C. Greenfield and Aaron Shaffer, “Notes on the Curse Formulae of the Tell Fekherye Inscription,” *RB* 92 (1985): 54–55. Interestingly, the evil eye is sometimes associated with production of milk and dairy products: “evil eye cultures emphasized milking, animal husbandry, and, in some cases, intensive agriculture” (John M. Roberts, “Belief in the Evil Eye in World Perspective,” in *Evil Eye*, ed. Maloney, 245). See also the Mandaic text mentioned in Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 227. The curses, themselves magical, unleash a harmful power with effects similar to the evil eye and other forms of magic and witchcraft.

<sup>53</sup> Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 219.

natural expression of human greed.<sup>54</sup> Significantly, though, when the idea of greedy eyes appears elsewhere in the book, Qohelet mentions eyes in the dual form: “whatever my eyes desired, I did not deprive them” (כל אשר שאלו עיני לא אצלתי מהם) [2:10a]). Our verse mentions an insatiate *eye*, in the singular.<sup>55</sup> This is compatible with the demonic nature of the evil eye, which is always rendered in the singular (or, when referring to many demons, in the plural), never designating duality.<sup>56</sup> It is also not surprising that the loner, who has no family, possesses the greedy eye: those without children were often considered to be emitting the evil eye.

A parallel in the Proverbs of Ahiqar (Syriac version) likewise affirms the human nature of greed through the metaphor of the eye: “My son, the eye of man is like a fountain of water, and is not satisfied with riches until filled with dust.”<sup>57</sup> A similar story is recounted in rabbinic sources. While conquering the world, Alexander the Great received a human eye. This eyeball, which was heavier than all the riches of the world yet lighter than dust (symbol of death) was human greed and desire (*b. Tamid* 32b).<sup>58</sup>

A huge appetite (for human flesh) and insatiability are known characteristics of Death.<sup>59</sup> Proverbs 27:20 compares insatiable human eyes to Sheol and death, who are always hungry for human flesh,<sup>60</sup> and again in the singular in Proverbs 30:

There are three things that are never satisfied (לא תשבענה), yea, four things say not, It is enough: The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled (לא שבעה) with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough. The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it. (KJV)<sup>61</sup>

In all these cases the concept of the insatiate, greedy eye is loaded with demonic undertones, typical of the belief in the evil eye.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>55</sup> The *ketib* (and the Vulgate version) is in dual form, yet the verb is in the singular in accordance with the *qere* (as well as LXX, Syriac, and Targum)—his eye.

<sup>56</sup> Gravel, *Malevolent Eye*, 5; Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 206 n. 13.

<sup>57</sup> *APOT* 2:737, mentioned by Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> Mentioned by Gordis, *Koheleth*, 241.

<sup>59</sup> Job attributes his ailment described as “eating his flesh” to El, probably hinting at a demonic quality, when asking his friends why they persecute him: למה תרדפני כמו אל ומבשרי (Job 19:22; cf. 31:31).

<sup>60</sup> Unlike the “eyes” in Qoh 4:8 (*ketib*), which refer to one person and are therefore dual, the “eyes” in Prov 27:20 belong to humanity (עיני האדם) and are best rendered in the plural, denoting the evil eyes paralleling death and אבדה in the first stanza. For the insatiable appetite of death, see Hab 2:5 (והוא כמות ולא ישבע), Prov 30:15–16, and parallels from Ugaritic myth (Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002], 29). See also Paolo Xella, “Death and the Afterlife in Canaanite and Hebrew Thought,” in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Sasson, 3:2059–70.

<sup>61</sup> Compare the Mandaic incantation against the evil eye quoted in Ford, “Ninety-Nine,” 238: “may a raven take it.”

## ענין רע

The passage finishes with the typical judgment that this too is *hebel*, but adds a less common articulation: וענין רע הוא. The noun ענין appears eight times in the book of Qohelet (1:13; 2:23, 26; 3:10; 4:8; 5:2, 13 [Eng. vv. 3, 14]; 8:16) and nowhere else in the Bible. It is translated, in view of later appearances, as “preoccupation,” “subject,” “business,” or “case.”<sup>62</sup> But in Qohelet it does not denote a neutral preoccupation. Seow rightly notes, “In Ecclesiastes *‘inyān* is associated with restlessness, obsession, worry, and human inability to find enjoyment.”<sup>63</sup>

In three cases it is defined by the adjective “evil”—ענין רע (1:13; 4:8; 5:13 [Eng. 14]). In two of these occurrences there seems to be an allusive punning with the infamous עין הרע.<sup>64</sup> In ch. 5 the author bemoans a “sickening tragedy” (Seow’s apt translation of רעה חולה).<sup>65</sup> A person hoards wealth, which is then lost on account of an evil business, ענין רע, ואבד העשר ההוא בענין רע (5:12–13 [Eng. 13–14]). The word-play with “evil eye” fits the context perfectly: as we have seen, the evil eye was often considered responsible for a change of fortune of people who accumulated wealth and thus became vulnerable to the evil eye. No wonder “there is no attempt to blame anyone or any event for the tragedy.”<sup>66</sup> The evil eye was nobody’s fault, not even the person responsible for it.<sup>67</sup> Alain Bühlmann cites this very text as proof of Qohelet’s rational line of thought: “Those who lose their money, he (Qohelet) says, for example in 5:12–16, ruin themselves because of a bad investment (rational explanation), and not because they have been struck by a divine chastisement or by a curse (superstitious explanation).”<sup>68</sup> His indication of Qohelet’s rationalism is correct, yet the very polemic of the passage is achieved by Qohelet’s neologism ענין רע. Similarly in 4:8, after the allusions to wealth, envy, solitude, eating of the flesh, and the insatiability of the eye—all related to the sphere of the belief in the evil eye—Qohelet states that not only is this *hebel*—absurd—as he repeatedly declares throughout the book, but that it is an evil business, ענין רע, alluding to the similar sounding עין הרע.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>62</sup> See Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> For this literary device in the book of Qohelet, see Scott B. Noegel, “‘Word Play’ in Qoheleth,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 7 (2007): 23–26. Among the examples he notes is the *hapax legomenon* הַמִּקְרָה (10:8), “the rafter,” which evokes the book’s more common word מִקְרָה.

<sup>65</sup> Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 201.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>67</sup> One of the features of the belief is that “the one casting the evil eye may not know he has the power” (*Evil Eye*, ed. Maloney, vii, point 3).

<sup>68</sup> Alain Bühlmann, “Qoheleth 11.1–6 and Divination,” in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon* (ed. Todd E. Klutz; JSOTSup 245; London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 64.

<sup>69</sup> The first occurrence of ענין רע in the book is in the opening (1:13). It is the “sore task” that



### III. CONCLUSION

Qohelet 4:4–8 is a passage critical of solitude. It is pregnant with images, motifs, and phrases reminiscent of the well-known belief complex of the evil eye. The evil eye is not mentioned explicitly, nor are its independent powers anywhere acknowledged. Elsewhere Qohelet mentions another magical element—a charm (לחש) used to ward off snakes—probably in order to undermine the significance of charms, as in this case of “a snake without charm”—“there is no advantage for a charmer” (10:11b).<sup>70</sup> It has also been suggested that Qoh 11:3 is an implicit reference to meteorological divination.<sup>71</sup> There too the allusion is mentioned with the purpose of undermining the importance of mantic praxes, as Qohelet reflects that the divine order of the world really is beyond the grasp of human beings (11:5).

The allusions in Qoh 4:4–8 to the evil eye likewise rationalize a contemporary common explanation of bad luck and illness. The passage deals with gathering wealth and losing it—favorite topics in the book. The emphasis is on the disadvantages of loneliness. This is in line with his advice not to be alone, given in

---

God has given to humanity, the text playing on the subsequent infinitive בו לענות, “with which to be preoccupied,” but possibly also “in order to torment/subdue them” (see Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, 121; Noegel, “Word Play,” 17). The meaning “subdue” was suggested by R. Yosef Kara (בו לענות) (פתי' להכניע בו את בני האדם) in comparison with the Targum to Exod 10:3. See in Einstein, Kara, 7–8. This sentence parallels 3:10, where it appears without the adjective “evil.” *Midrash Qoh. Rab.* 1:13 also links this sentence with greed and dissatisfaction: “R. Bun says: this is the nature of wealth. R. Judan said in the name of R. Aibu: Nobody departs from the world with half his desire gratified. If he has a hundred he wants to turn them into two hundred, and if he has two hundred he wants to turn them into four hundred” (*Midrash Rabbah, Ecclesiastes* [trans. A. Cohen; 3rd ed.; London: Soncino, 1983], 39). The image of all the rivers running into the sea is explained there as a symbol for the dead entering Sheol, which is never full.

<sup>70</sup> “Snakes that (know) no charm” are mentioned in Jer 8:17 and Ps 58:6, and are known from Mesopotamian sources, such as the Sumerian poem “Gilgamesh and the Netherworld” (muš.tu<sub>6</sub>.nu.zu.e; see Andrew George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh: A New Translation* [London: Penguin, 1999], 181:85) and in Old Babylonian incantations against snakes (še-ri la ši-ip-ti-im; see Irving L. Finkel, “On Some Dog, Snake and Scorpion Incantations,” in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives* [ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn; Groningen: Styx, 1999], 224:13; 226:2; Nathan Wasserman, “Dictionaries and Incantations: Cross-Generic Relations in Old-Babylonian Literature,” in *Wool from the Loom* [in Hebrew; ed. Nathan Wasserman; Jerusalem: Magnes, 2002], 10). Qohelet is not discussing a case of a snake which bites “because no spell was uttered” (NJPS) but a case of a certain type of snake that cannot be controlled by charms. The fact that this is the only type mentioned testifies to the author’s polemical view against the use of magical means.

<sup>71</sup> This is the cautious rendition by Bühlmann (“Qoheleth and Divination,” 55–65, esp. 60) of Akio Tsukimoto’s suggestion that many other statements in 11:1–6 criticize various divinatory methods (Akio Tsukimoto, “The Background of Qoh 11.1–6 and Qoheleth’s Agnosticism,” *AJBI* 19 [1993]: 34–52).

the next unit opening with the famous better proverb: “better are two than one” (4:9; see also “enjoy life with a beloved woman” [9:9]). The loner disturbs social stability twice: his accumulated wealth causes envy, and his insatiable greed is a threat. At the same time, his loneliness does not lead him to any advantageous position: because of the envy of others he is consumed by disease; because of his greed, his wealth does not afford him any desired calm and satisfaction.

In an absurd, enigmatic world, Qohelet recommends socially responsible behavior, befriending others, and sharing one’s fortune. This perhaps is not a meaningless and fleeting observation.

## “Gleaning among the Ears”—“Gathering among the Sheaves”: Characterizing the Image of the Supervising Boy (Ruth 2)

JONATHAN GROSSMAN

yonig@macam.ac.il

Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 52900, Israel

---

One of the difficult verses in Ruth, regarding which much ink has been spilt, is the verse that records the words of the supervising boy to Boaz about Ruth:<sup>1</sup> “and she said: Let me glean, I pray you, and gather after the reapers among the sheaves; so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, save that she tarried a little in the house” (2:7).<sup>2</sup>

I want to focus on the first part of the verse, where the boy quotes Ruth as asking to reap “among the sheaves.” The difficulty in interpreting this clause relates to two different realms: linguistics and content. Linguistically, the meaning of the prepositional letter ב within the context of this verse (בעמרים) is unclear. Most translations and commentators understand the letter to mean “between,” “among the sheaves.”<sup>3</sup> Syntactically, this reading is plausible and consistent with the frequent usage of the preposition ב in this sense in the Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> In light of this linguistic explanation, however, the second problem, involving content, becomes more acute. If Ruth indeed asks the boy to gather also among the sheaves, then her request is most peculiar.

<sup>1</sup> “The verse is undoubtedly the most difficult Hebrew in the whole book” (Tod Linafelt, *Ruth* [Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989], 31).

<sup>2</sup> Biblical passages are rendered according to the JPS translation (JPSV).

<sup>3</sup> JPSV; NASB; NAU (updated NASB); NEB; NIV; RSV; Edward F. Campbell, Jr., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 7; New York: Doubleday, 1975), 94; Wilhelm Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth, Das Hohe Lied, Die Klagelieder* (KAT 17; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1962), 46 n. b; Jack M. Sasson, *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and A Formalist-Folklorist Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Biblical Seminar 10; Sheffield: Almond, 1989), 38, 48; Yair Zakovitch, *Ruth: Introduction and Commentary* (in Hebrew; Mikra Leyisra'el; Tel Aviv: Am-Oved; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 71.

<sup>4</sup> BDB, 91.

According to Frederic W. Bush, "It stretches credulity to the breaking point to believe that Ruth would make a request so contrary to customary practice."<sup>5</sup> He emphasizes that, in both Ruth's report to Naomi (2:2) and the narrator's description (2:3), Ruth goes to "gather" stalks of grain "after the reapers," and so it is difficult to assume that Ruth suddenly received a special privilege that was not customarily granted to the other poor people who came to glean.<sup>6</sup> Bush explains that the "sheaf" in the Scriptures is a bundle of grain ready to be transported. The poor who circulate in the field gather from the single stalks and spikes that fall during the harvest.<sup>7</sup> It is highly unlikely that Ruth asked the boy to grant her the unique privilege of gathering also among the bundled sheaves. This problem is magnified in light of v. 15, where the special permission that Boaz gave Ruth to gather "among the sheaves" is mentioned. If Ruth gathered among the sheaves already at the beginning of her work in the field, why must Boaz grant her special permission to do so in v. 15?

As difficult as it is to understand the boy's remarks, these words clearly serve an important role in the shaping of the story and its underlying intent. The long, detailed formulation of the boy's answer to Boaz emphasizes this point; the special place accorded to the boy's answer can be detected already in the narrator's introduction to his remarks: "And the servant appointed over the reapers answered and said . . ." Since the reader is familiar with the dialogue, there is no need to repeat the identity of the person who answers Boaz. The more common phraseology in such cases is "He answered" or "He said" (ויאמר, ויען) and the like.<sup>8</sup> The repeated description of the boy's identity is intended to draw special attention to his words. Thus, on the one hand, the boy's words give rise to considerable difficulties;<sup>9</sup> but, on the other, their contribution to the understanding of the plot, or the characters, is also considerable.

Edward Campbell suggests viewing Ruth's request, as quoted by the boy, as an unanswered request. That is, Ruth indeed asked the boy to gather among the sheaves, but her request was held in abeyance because the field's owner was not in the area and it was not in the overseer's authority to grant her request. On the basis of this theory, Campbell suggests a literal interpretation of the boy's description of

<sup>5</sup> Frederic W. Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (WBC 9; Dallas: Word Books, 1996), 114.

<sup>6</sup> Regarding the possibility of changing the text from עמררים ("sheaves") to עמיררים (plural of "cut grain," "swath"), see Paul Joüon, *Ruth: Commentaire philologique et exégétique* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1953), 49; Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth*, 46. Michael Moore is likewise inclined to accept this emendation (*Ruth* [NIBCOT 5; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000], 330).

<sup>7</sup> Bush, *Ruth*, 114.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Joseph Roth-Rotem, "The 'Minor Characters' in the Story of the Book of Ruth" (in Hebrew), *Beit Mikra* 49 (2004): 80.

<sup>9</sup> The difficulty entailed in interpreting this verse is exemplified in Campbell's treatment: he does not translate it at all in the body of the text (*Ruth*, 85), and only in his annotation does he suggest the various possible readings (pp. 94–96).

Ruth as "standing from morning until now" (ותעמוד מאז הבקר ועד עתה): "she arrived and has stood"—Ruth stands in the field and awaits the answer of the owner of the field, which will be given with his return."<sup>10</sup> Jack Sasson adopts this approach and adds that Ruth "was deliberately presenting the overseer with a request he was not in position to grant." According to Sasson, Boaz initially refuses her request and only after dinner grants her permission to gather also among the sheaves (v. 15).<sup>11</sup>

Robert Hubbard agrees with this approach but, unlike Sasson, contends that Boaz had granted Ruth's request from the beginning. Verse 15 should thus be understood as Boaz's instructions to the reapers, in which he informs them of the permission Ruth had been granted earlier in the day.<sup>12</sup>

An alternative interpretation of the prepositional letter ב that solves the difficulty in content emerges from the Aramaic translation of Ruth: אצבור כען ואכנוש שובלין באלומיא. This means that Ruth wished to glean stalks of grain and gather them into sheaves (bundles). This reading is developed by Bush, who translates the verse such that the prepositional letter ב serves not as a description of place but rather as an adverbial expression of manner: "She asked, 'May I glean stalks of grain and gather them *in bundles* behind the reapers?'"<sup>13</sup>

Needless to say, this reading obviates the need to explain Ruth's peculiar request to gather among the sheaves—for she never made such a request. Her only intention was to take the stalks of grain that she would glean and then "gather in bundles."

The various readings of this verse that have been suggested are predicated on two underlying assumptions that, I believe, are not correct. I suggest that the story's presentation leads to a different reading, according to which Ruth did not ask the boy for anything, and the peculiarity of this scene is one of the important features that significantly impacts our understanding of the literary role played by the supervising boy.

The first assumption on which the aforementioned researchers' interpretations are based is that the supervising boy indeed cites Ruth's request, despite the fact that her request is not related by the narrator:

The narrator's clever withholding of the information, rather than reporting it when it happened (between vv. 3 and 4), enables him to introduce the notion of coincidence in vv. 3–4. Now, through a flashback in indirect speech, he finally

<sup>10</sup> Campbell, *Ruth*, 96.

<sup>11</sup> Sasson, *Ruth*, 47, 56; quotation from 47. For a critique of this method and a discussion of its inherent difficulties, see Bush, *Ruth*, 115–16.

<sup>12</sup> Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *The Book of Ruth* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 154, 176. For a critique of his reading, see Bush, *Ruth*, 116–17.

<sup>13</sup> Bush, *Ruth*, 117, 107; quotation from 107 (emphasis mine). Linafelt has also adopted this interpretation (*Ruth*, 32).

informed the audience, presumably since knowledge of her words was necessary to understand what followed.<sup>14</sup>

Adele Berlin calls attention to the narrative style in which the reader of Scripture is given a certain detail at a later point in the story. She cites Ruth's request from the boy as a typical example, as the reader learns of this request only from the boy's report to his master.<sup>15</sup> However, must we indeed understand the boy's words as a direct citation of Ruth's request? The verb "to say" in the Bible often expresses a thought or plan, especially when it refers to an explanation for the intentions underlying a certain action (an explanation given both by the narrator and one of the characters). Thus, for example, the narrator describes Jacob's actions before he meets Esau as follows: "And he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two camps; *and he said*: 'If Esau come to the one camp, and smite it, then the camp which is left shall escape'" (Gen 32:7–8). We may assume that Jacob does not speak to anyone in particular; rather, the narrator employs this image as a means of revealing the protagonist's thoughts, as if to say, "and he said to himself."<sup>16</sup> This style is used not only by the narrator but also by other characters in describing the actions of others. Thus, for example, Sasson suggests interpreting Ruth's report to Naomi about Boaz's gesture not as a direct citation of what Boaz had said but rather as her interpretation of his actions: "And she said: 'These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me: Go not empty unto thy mother-in-law'" (3:17).<sup>17</sup>

It seems that this biblical style should be adopted in order to understand the boy's words to Boaz, as well. Ruth did not say anything special and did not ask for anything. With her arrival at the field, she began gleaning stalks of grain, joining the other poor people of the city. The boy here intends simply to describe Ruth's actions, why she is doing what she is doing (gleaning);<sup>18</sup> the boy's remarks to Boaz do not add any detail of which the reader has yet to be informed. The discussion between Ruth and the supervising boy, which researchers thought to recreate in light of the boy's words, never actually occurred. Hence, Rudolph's translation of this verse (following Syriac and Vulgate) is the preferable rendition: "sie hat gebeten:

<sup>14</sup> Hubbard, *Book of Ruth*, 147–48.

<sup>15</sup> Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series; Sheffield: Almond 1983), 96.

<sup>16</sup> See BDB, 56. We similarly find later in the story of Ruth, "and I thought to disclose it unto thee, saying: Buy it before them that sit here, and before the elders of my people" (Ruth 4:4).

<sup>17</sup> Sasson (*Ruth*, 101), in contrast to Campbell (*Ruth*, 129) and Zakovitch (*Ruth*, 99), who view these words as a precise citation of Boaz's remarks. I prefer Sasson's reading. Not only is this Ruth's understanding of the events, but it is not at all clear that this was Boaz's intention in giving the barley. Similar ambiguity arises elsewhere, e.g., Gen 32:21; 2 Sam 17:3.

<sup>18</sup> Rashi already explained this verse to mean, "and she said—in her heart." Hubbard (*Book of Ruth*, 136) suggests this same approach in interpreting Ruth's words to Naomi in v. 2, "I am going to the fields," and I believe he is correct (see Hubbard's n. 1, and NIV).

Ich möchte gern mit lessen und Hakme sammeln hinter den Schnittern her, dann ist sie hingegangen und auf den Beinen gewesen vom Morgen bis jetzt."<sup>19</sup> ("She said, 'I shall gather blades behind the reapers.'")

The interpretation of the boy's words as an actual citation and a request that Ruth did indeed make is probably based on the addition of the transitive expression of request (אֵלֶּקְטָה נָא, "please let me glean"). One thinking to oneself does not need a transitive expression of request, and this may account for the view that Ruth in fact made such a request. However, this line of reasoning is flawed. In this context, the word נָא should be viewed not as a transitive expression of request but rather in accordance with its alternative meaning, "now."<sup>20</sup> The style of this verse ("said . . . now [נָא]") resembles a common construction that is found in many passages, for example, "And Moses said, 'I will turn aside now (נָא) and see this great sight'" (Exod 3:3); and "And the LORD said: 'Verily, the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great . . . I will go down now (נָא) and see . . .'" (Gen 18:20–21).

This reading leads to the next, more significant step in deciphering this verse. The second assumption made by some scholars is that the boy indeed conveys accurate information about Ruth, but this idea does not emerge from the story's presentation. The boy's words reflect his perspective on Ruth's actions, his perception and thoughts, rather than a complete, accurate description of Ruth and her conduct.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Rudolph, *Das Buch Ruth*, 45. Cf. also Gillis Gerleman, *Ruth: Das Hohelied* (BKAT 18; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 22, 26. Campbell mentions this interpretation (p. 95), but disregards it later in his commentary.

<sup>20</sup> BDB, 609.

<sup>21</sup> Several leading literary scholars have already noted the importance of distinguishing between different frames of reference in general literature. See, e.g., Cleanth Brooks and Robert P. Warren, *Understanding Fiction* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1943); Frank K. Stanzel, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen in Roman* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1955); Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," *PMLA* 70 (1955): 1160–84; Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (trans. Valentina Zavarin and Susan Wittig; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Methuen 1983).

Gérard Genette famously preferred the term "focalization" over "frame of reference," as this term incorporates as well the processes of perceiving the character in terms of memory, feelings, and modes of thought (*Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* [trans. Jane Lewin; Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 1980]). This emphasis is of great importance here in that the supervising boy's words reveal his general feelings toward Ruth (not only what his eyes see).

Several researchers noted the importance of this point in the analysis of biblical narrative; see, e.g., Mieke Bal, *Narratologie: Essais sur la signification narrative dans quatre romans modernes* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), 107–26; Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 43–82; Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 129–52; David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 112–19; Frank Polak, *Biblical Narrative:*



This point is critical for resolving the difficulty we mentioned earlier, how Ruth dared to ask for such an extraordinary privilege. The answer is, quite simply, that Ruth never did ask for such a privilege; this is merely the perspective of the supervising boy and the manner in which he sought to characterize Ruth!<sup>22</sup>

This interpretation emerges naturally from the similarities between Ruth’s comments to Naomi and the description of the supervising boy. The narrator encourages this comparison by using similar expressions in the two contexts:

Ruth–Naomi (2:2)	Supervisor–Boaz (2:7)
And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi:	And she said:
Please let me go to the field	Please let me
And glean Among the ears of grain	Glean and gather Among the sheaves
After one in whose sight I may find favor	After the reapers

There are three important differences between Ruth’s words to Naomi and Ruth’s words as reported from the perspective of the supervising boy:

1. Ruth uses only the verb “to glean,” which connotes a delicate and precise gathering. The narrator likewise uses this verb later in describing her work in the field: ותלקט, “So she gleaned in the field” (2:17). The boy, by contrast, mentions the verb “to glean” and then immediately adds the verb “to gather,” which, unlike the former term, expresses a crude and haphazard gathering. An effective illustration of the contrast between the two verbs can be found in the narrative of Israel’s complaints in the desert regarding the manna and the quail. The narrator describes the gathering of the manna with the verb “to glean”: “Now the manna was like coriander seed. . . . The people went about and ‘gathered’ (ולקטו) it” (Num 11:7–8). By contrast, the narrator describes the haphazard collection of quail with the verb “to gather”: “And the people rose up all that day and all the night and all the next

*Aspects of Art and Design* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1994), 324–30; Gary Yamasaki, “Point of View in a Gospel Story: What Difference Does It Make?” *JBL* 125 (2006): 89–105. Berlin, too, mentions this important point with respect to the supervising boy’s words, but she believes that his words should be regarded as reliable information: “Ruth’s words are quoted within the speech of the foreman. Yet this is the first we hear of this encounter; the scene in which Ruth actually spoke to the foreman is not included in the narrative” (*Poetics and Interpretation*, 96).

<sup>22</sup> In truth, this reading is valid even for those who claim that the boy records an actual request by Ruth, because according to this reading Ruth’s request is reported by the boy, so the reader first encounters Ruth’s words as the boy chooses to phrase them.

day and gathered (וַיִּסְפּוּ) the quails: he that gathered least gathered (אָסַף) ten heaps" (Num 11:32).<sup>23</sup>

2. This difference relates integrally to a more basic difference: according to what Ruth says, her plan is to glean among "the stalks of grain," while the boy describes her as coming to gather among "the sheaves."

3. Another slight difference is that Ruth tells Naomi she is going to glean "after one in whose sight I may find favor." It stands to reason that she refers to the field's owner, who can give her as much as he sees fit. The supervisor boy, however, changed (unknowingly, of course) the meaning to "after the reapers." As a result, the broader meaning of the term "after" in Ruth's words becomes, in the boy's words to Boaz, a much narrower reference, a technical description of the place where the grain is gathered. This, in turn, alludes to yet another difference, with regard to the question of who is the master in the field. Ruth, in speaking to Naomi, makes reference to the owner of the field, whereas the boy replaces his master with himself.

All these differences result from the supervisor's frame of reference and invite the reader to enter the boy's mind, as his words, particularly in light of the minor changes he introduces in Ruth's words to Naomi, reveal his feelings toward Ruth.<sup>24</sup>

The conventional approach among the scholars perceives the boy as a positive character in the story, one on whom Ruth has made a good impression. Indeed, this boy has received many compliments. Yair Zakovitch, for example, wrote the following regarding the boy's words:

It is the Moabite damsel who returned with Naomi out of the country of Moab. . . . The boy, too, shares the perspective on Ruth's coming to Beit Lehem as a return, and his words therefore express sympathy for Ruth. Ruth's Moabite origins are mentioned twice in the scriptures, a fact that serves to glorify the impression of her clinging to her mother-in-law. Moreover, the boy's refraining from saying that Ruth is Naomi's daughter-in-law clarifies that it was not a familial-judicial commitment that had motivated Ruth to act as she did, but rather her spirit, the spirit of grace.<sup>25</sup>

Hubbard similarly writes:

One must not miss, however, the narrator's design in this surprisingly lengthy report. The mention of Ruth's return with Naomi (v. 6) was meant to link the woman before him with what Boaz has heard about her. Further, Ruth was to emerge as an admirable character—indeed, a model of true devotion.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Modern translations do not draw this distinction and uniformly translate both verbs as "gathered."

<sup>24</sup> Recall that Boaz had only asked him for the girl's identity; all other details included in the boy's answer are his voluntary addition (cf. Bush, *Ruth*, 128).

<sup>25</sup> Zakovitch, *Ruth*, 71.

<sup>26</sup> Hubbard, *Book of Ruth*, 152. Roth-Rotem wrote similarly, "He [the supervising boy]

I believe that, contrary to these comments, the narrator depicts the boy as having reservations regarding Ruth and her conduct in the field. Such a reading has been suggested by Moshe Garsiel:

According to our evaluation, the supervisor intended to condemn her, and these are the signs that attest to it: he does not say her name, and does not mention her familial affinity with Naomi, for him she is simply a "Moabite damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." The anonymity, while emphasizing the foreign origin, reflects contempt.<sup>27</sup>

It is possible that the boy is impressed by her diligence, yet this diligence only adds to the boy's uneasiness with the Moabite girl, as I will soon clarify.

The various differences between the boy's description and Ruth's words are all related to the supervising boy's feeling that Ruth gathered grain excessively. He seems to insinuate to his master, the field's owner, that this girl is not like the other gatherers, and that she must be carefully watched because she gathers too much grain. This is suggested by the shift from the verb "glean" to the verb "gather," as well as by the change in reference to the place of gathering. One cannot collect too much grain when gathering among the stalks, whereas among the sheaves the gatherer can take whole sheaves or at least parts of sheaves, which consist of many stalks of grain. As mentioned earlier, this was not the customary practice in the fields of Beit Lehem. The expressions of kindness in Ruth's words ("After one in whose sight I may find favor"), which the boy omits in his report to Boaz, emphasize that, from the supervising boy's perspective, what the girl saw before her was only the reapers and the grain, and no act of grace was involved at all.<sup>28</sup>

---

reveals also his positive evaluation of Ruth and his elation over her personality" ("Minor Characters," 79). He detects in the supervising boy's words "covert criticism regarding Boaz's behavior towards Naomi and Ruth in Bet Lehem" (p. 80). In my view, the text makes no indication of such criticism, and, as will soon become clear, the covert criticism in the boy's words is directed at Ruth and not at his master.

<sup>27</sup> Moshe Garsiel, "The Literary Structure, Plot Development and Narrator's Intentions in the Scroll of Ruth" (in Hebrew), *Hagut Ba-Mikra* 3 (1979): 71. Cf. Avi Hurvitz, who writes that the supervising boy "speaks in an apologetic and confused manner because he is not sure whether the 'boss' will approve of the fact that the overseer has given Ruth his permission to stay . . . inside the house reserved specifically for Boaz's workers" ("Ruth 2:7—A Midrashic gloss?" ZAW 95 [1983]: 122–23).

<sup>28</sup> This difference assumes particular significance in light of the secondary meaning of Ruth's words to Naomi, as the narrator uses her words about "the one in whose sight she may find favor" and turns it into a central motif in the chapter (Campbell, *Ruth*, 96). Thus, the boy, who omits this expression from Ruth's remarks, does not conform to the general trend of creating closeness between Boaz and Ruth, serving instead as someone who separates them. See also Sasson (*Ruth*, 42–43), who claims that the expression "to find favor" is always mentioned in a context in which the beneficent is already known, and he thus concludes that here, too, Ruth is thinking about Boaz (who is mentioned in v. 1) when using the expression. Hubbard (*Book of Ruth*, 138 n. 13),

Further support for this reading may be drawn from the name the boy uses in identifying Ruth to Boaz: "Moabite damsel"! Zakovitch takes note of this unflattering reference and writes, "The text presents Ruth at the lowest point of the social ladder. From here on, she can only rise."<sup>29</sup> I agree that Ruth is presented as one at the "lowest point of the social ladder," but, *pace* Zakovitch, I think it is not the "text" that presents her in such a manner but the supervising boy. The boy identifies her with this degrading description in order to cause his master to dissociate himself from Ruth. The designation of Ruth as a "Moabite" receives emphasis in the boy's words through the double repetition of her origin ("Moabite damsel . . . country of Moab").<sup>30</sup>

In light of this, it is likely that the boy's subsequent remarks similarly express his reservations toward Ruth: "So she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, save that she tarried a little in the house" (2:7). This is a most difficult verse, which has received various interpretations.<sup>31</sup> The most common reading interprets this clause as a description of Ruth's unique diligence, emphasizing that she worked almost a complete day without stopping.<sup>32</sup> But in light of the boy's insinuations, as discussed, one must wonder whether the boy compliments Ruth for her diligence or perhaps warns his master, the field's owner, of this woman, who has been gathering grain for an entire day on his account.

By paying close attention to the changing frames of reference in the narrative, we can explain the difficult verse that has been discussed (7). The difficulty concerning Ruth's request to gather among the sheaves is easily resolved, for, as mentioned, this request is expressed only from the supervising boy's perspective, and not by Ruth herself.

With this approach, one can trace the literary role served by the boy in the narrative. Like the other minor characters, the boy is to illuminate the character of

---

however, disagrees and claims, correctly, that since it is the narrator who mentions Boaz in v. 1, not Ruth or Naomi, it is difficult to assume that Boaz is present in the consciousness of these two characters during their discussion. The reader, however, can sense the narrator's allusions through the combination of these two clauses (v. 1 and v. 2).

<sup>29</sup> Zakovitch, *Ruth*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Hubbard, *Book of Ruth*, 137.

<sup>31</sup> "The last words of v. 7 are the most obscure in the entire book" (Hubbard, *Book of Ruth*, 150). D. R. G. Beattie claims that this part of the verse is a "midrashic gloss" ("A Midrashic Gloss in Ruth 2,7," *ZAW* 89 [1977]: 122–24). Hurvitz, however, rejects this and claims that in these words the boy is presented as confused and apologetic ("Ruth 2:7," 122–23). For more on this issue, see D. R. G. Beattie, "Ruth 2,7 and Midrash," *ZAW* 99 (1987): 422–23; Michael Carasik, "Ruth 2,7: Why the Overseer Was Embarrassed," *ZAW* 107 (1995): 493–94.

<sup>32</sup> "This is commonly interpreted as, 'she came and stood on her feet and gathered stalks of grain from early morning till now, and only a short while ago did she stop and go sit in the house (= a booth that serves as a place of rest and shelter for the reapers).' According to this interpretation, the boy emphasizes to Boaz Ruth's diligence" (Yair Zakovitch, *The Scrolls* [in Hebrew; Olam Ha-Tanakh; Tel Aviv: Davidzon-Ati, 1994], 88).

the protagonist.<sup>33</sup> Boaz, who speaks kindly to Ruth (“my daughter”), is portrayed as a uniquely kind character, particularly against the background of the boy’s reservations regarding this Moabite girl. Yet, unlike other minor characters in the story (Orpah in ch. 1 and the redeemer in ch. 4), the supervising boy advances the plot and influences Boaz’s behavior. Several scholars have suggested that the chapter is built on a “reversed,” or “chiastic,” structure, but they disagree about how the chapter should be divided and its precise structure. I will present the two central opinions on the issue, and then offer a third option.<sup>34</sup>

A. Boyd Luter and Richard O. Rigsby suggest that the chapter is built on a chiastic structure with four components in each half:<sup>35</sup>

- A SECTION 1: Introducing Boaz, the channel of grace; the situation needing grace; and the action: chancing into Boaz’s field setting up opportunity for grace.
- B SECTION 2: Gracious, kind greeting by Boaz.
- C SECTION 3: Ruth identified by head worker and her extraordinary request for grace.
- D SECTION 4: Boaz begins to grant favor; Ruth’s question.
- D’ SECTION 5: Boaz’s answer; Ruth requesting continued favor.
- C’ SECTION 6: Boaz’s extraordinary invitation and Ruth’s protection from the other workers.
- B’ SECTION 7: Ruth, recipient of Boaz’s generosity.
- A’ SECTION 8: Recounting to Naomi her “luck” in Boaz’s field.

Another suggestion is mentioned by Bush, dividing the chapter into two halves, each consisting of two sections linked by a chiastic relationship:<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> I do not intend here to conclude definitively that the boy should be perceived as a “minor character” rather than “background” or “extra” in the plot (a common role in biblical narrative; see Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 23). However, since this boy advances the plot—as I will soon demonstrate—it is possible to consider him an actual minor character. As for the role of the minor character in biblical narrative, see Uriel Simon’s important study “Minor Characters in Biblical Narrative” (in Hebrew), *The Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1979): 31–36; Polack, *Biblical Narrative*, 255–61. Regarding minor characters in Ruth, see, e.g., Zakovitch, *Ruth*, 7–8.

<sup>34</sup> For an additional approach (also claiming a chiastic structure), see Yehuda T. Radday and John W. Welch, “The Structure of Ruth” (in Hebrew), *Beit Mikra* 24, no. 2 (1979): 184–85; Yehuda T. Radday, “Chiasmus in Hebrew Biblical Narrative,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (ed. John W. Welch; Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 72–73.

<sup>35</sup> A. Boyd Luter and Richard O. Rigsby, “The Chiastic Structure of Ruth,” *BBR* 3 (1995): 49–58. They emphasize that the unit clearly begins with 2:1 as evidenced by the syntax of the sentence. This is already mentioned by Hubbard, *Book of Ruth*, 132.

<sup>36</sup> Bush, *Ruth*, 110.

*Narrative Introduction (v. 4a)*

- A Conversation between Boaz and his workers about Ruth and her gleaning (vv. 4–7).
- B Conversation between Boaz and Ruth: he grants her exceptional privileges and explains why (vv. 9–13).
- B' Actions involving Boaz and Ruth: He grants her exceptional privileges at the noon meal (v. 14).
- A' Conversation between Boaz and his workers about Ruth and her gleaning (vv. 15–16).

*Narrative Conclusion (v. 17a)*

In my opinion, the inner structure of the chapter is indeed a reversed structure, but it should be arranged differently. Each half consists of seven components, and the structure is not chiasmic, but rather concentric, meaning that both halves revolve around the central axis of this scene:

- [A 1:22 Background and setting: "So Naomi returned . . . and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest."]
- B 2:1 Presenting Boaz as a relative: "and his name was Boaz."
- C 2:2 Ruth and Naomi at home: "Let me now go to the field."
- D 2:3 Ruth's arrival at the field and the gleaning of the grain: "And she went, and came and gleaned in the field."
- E 2:4–7 Boaz and the reapers: "gather after the reapers among the sheaves."
- F 2:8–9 Boaz's words to Ruth: "when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."<sup>37</sup>
- G 2:10 Ruth's words to Boaz: "Why have I found favor in thy sight?"
- H 2:11–12 Boaz's words about Ruth's grace toward Naomi and the reward she deserves from God.
- G' 2:13 Ruth's words to Boaz: "Let me find favor in thy sight."
- F' 2:14 Boaz's words to Ruth: "Come hither, and eat of the bread."
- E' 2:15–16 Boaz and the reapers: "Let her glean even among the sheaves."

<sup>37</sup> For an arrangement of Boaz's comments into a small chiasmic structure, see Linafelt, *Ruth*,

- D' 2:17 Ruth continues to glean the grain: "So she gleaned in the field until evening."  
 C' 2:18 Ruth's return to Naomi's home: "and went into the city."  
 B' 2:19–22 Naomi reveals to Ruth that Boaz is a relative: "The man's name with whom I wrought today is Boaz."  
 A' 2:23 Conclusion and setting: "unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and she dwelt with her mother-in-law."

The frame of the chapter, as Campbell has already noted, is the dialogue between Ruth and Naomi at their home. Ruth leaves Naomi and returns to her at the end of the scene.<sup>38</sup> An interesting wordplay is implied within this frame (A, B, C–A', B', C').<sup>39</sup> At the beginning the text has, "So Naomi returned (וַתָּשָׁב)," and at the end it says, "She dwelt (וַתֵּשָׁב) with her mother-in-law." This wordplay is part of a wider wordplay between these verbs, which encompasses the complete story, as Robert Alter has already noted.<sup>40</sup> In the present context, the association between these two verbs lowers the reader's expectations. The reader innocently assumes that after Ruth "returns" with Naomi and meets Boaz in the field, she will be granted the privilege to "dwell" with him; but, at least for now, she continues to "dwell" with her mother-in-law.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, however, the reader's expectations begin to build. In ch. 1, the reader meets Ruth, who "clings" to her mother-in-law (1:14); now, at the end of ch. 2, Ruth clings to Boaz's girls (2:23). It is as if the narrator seeks to suggest to the reader that Ruth is indeed drawing nearer to the one who will redeem her, the one to whom she will cling for the rest of her life.

Campbell also notes the link between v. 1 and v. 19, both of which mention Boaz's name and the fact that he belongs to Elimelech's family.<sup>42</sup> It is the reader who first receives this information, which Ruth learns only later. As mentioned above, these links constitute only the frame of an elaborate concentric structure. The cen-

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, *Ruth*, 109.

<sup>39</sup> I do not necessarily disagree with those who claim that the unit begins with 2:1. However, the end of the previous scene serves as background for the present scene and must, therefore, be taken into account in the context of the structure of the unit.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 58–60. This phenomenon, of a literary structure that places words with similar sounds but different meanings parallel to one another, is widespread both in prophetic literature (Jonathan Grossman, "'Structural Ambiguity' in Ezekiel 33–38" [in Hebrew], *Beit Mikra* 49 [2004]: 194–224) and in biblical narrative (idem, "Ambiguity in the Biblical Narrative and Its Contribution to the Literary Formation" [Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, 2006], 112–23).

<sup>41</sup> Garsiel demonstrates how every scene in the book of Ruth is built in this manner. During the scene, readers assume that the tangle of the plot is going to be unraveled, but at the end of the scene they are disappointed to find a new complication. See Garsiel, "Literary Structure," 66–83.

<sup>42</sup> Campbell, *Ruth*, 109.



tral axis of the structure features Boaz's words to Ruth, in which he mentions Ruth's unique kindness toward her mother-in-law (a central motif of the plot),<sup>43</sup> and God, as the one who will reward Ruth for her kindness.

This structure is itself worthy of an independent discussion; for the present, I would like to address only the association between v. 7 and v. 15. As mentioned, a number of scholars note that, since it is only in v. 15 that Boaz allows Ruth to glean among the sheaves, "it is incongruous to have Ruth request and receive permission to glean among the sheaves here [in v. 7]."<sup>44</sup>

I have already pointed out that indeed Ruth never asked for such permission and that v. 7 presents only the boy's perception of Ruth. Verse 15, however, has also been misunderstood. Hubbard is correct in noting that in this verse Boaz speaks not to Ruth but to his workers: "Boaz commanded his young men, saying, 'Let her glean even among the sheaves.'"<sup>45</sup>

According to the concentric structure of this unit, this dialogue between Boaz and his workers (element E') corresponds to the previous dialogue between Boaz and the supervising boy (element E). Thus, the literary design of Boaz's grace reaches its peak: Ruth indeed gleans "among the stalks of grain"—as she had told Naomi in the beginning and as the narrator describes her actions. Boaz, however, expands the boundaries of her gleaning to a place that is usually not meant for

<sup>43</sup> Boaz's remarks contain two allusions to the book of Genesis, which also contribute to the unique beauty of his words. First, the reader is reminded of Abraham, who also left his parents and country to go to an unknown land ("Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house unto the land that I will show thee [Gen 12:1]). In this comparison, Ruth's character is illuminated against the background of the father of the Israelite nation, which adds to the positive assessment of her conduct. Moreover, Abraham left his homeland because of a divine command, while Ruth relocates voluntarily, motivated by human grace (Phyllis Trible, "A Human Comedy," in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], 166–99). Second, Boaz's words remind the reader of the second story of creation: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Gen 2:24). When reading Boaz's words, the reader finds a passage parallel to the first clause ("leave his father and his mother") and wonders whether there will be a passage parallel to the second clause ("and shall cleave unto his wife"). As mentioned, the scene concludes with this verb ("cleave"), which is then transferred to "Boaz's girls," rather than to Boaz himself. Many writers have noted these associations. Yefet Ben Eli interpreted Boaz's comments to mean, "You came to a foreign country, to the place of religious principles, as did Abraham our father, who left his ancestors and relatives for the love of religion" (cited in Zakovitch, *Ruth*, 76). Garsiel viewed the comparison to the creation story as a means of glorifying Ruth's character: in the story of creation, a man leaves his father and mother in order to cling to his wife, while Ruth clung to her husband's mother after his death, when no hope could be seen in the future ("Literary Structure," 69).

<sup>44</sup> Campbell, *Ruth*, 94.

<sup>45</sup> Hubbard, *Book of Ruth*, 176. The narrator emphasizes this by first describing Ruth's actions ("And when she was risen up to glean") and then immediately thereafter presenting the introduction to Boaz's command ("Boaz commanded his young men, saying . . ."). The reader expects to hear Boaz's words to Ruth, but Boaz instead directs his words to his workers, not to Ruth.

gleaning (“among the sheaves”), and he does so, as the structure of the scene reveals, in reaction to the supervisor boy’s remarks.

In other words, the boy thought that with slight exaggeration he could persuade his master to impose restrictions on the Moabite girl who had recently arrived and begun descending on the field. Boaz, however, not only chooses not to impose restrictions but uses the boy’s words to expand his kind gestures to Ruth further. It is not coincidental that Boaz adds, “Let her glean even among the sheaves, and put her not to shame . . . and rebuke her not” (2:15–16). Evidently, Boaz is well aware of the atmosphere surrounding the boy and his workers.<sup>46</sup>

In summary, the key to resolving the difficulty in interpreting Ruth 2:7 lies in the changing frames of reference in the chapter. This verse reflects the perspective of the supervising boy, who has reservations regarding Ruth and her behavior in the field. The narrator presents the boy as a minor figure whose role is to illuminate the character of Boaz. Indeed, the structure of the chapter presents the boy’s reservations opposite Boaz’s abundant kindness toward Ruth, allowing her to glean even among the sheaves and instructing his workers not to prevent her from doing so.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the concern for Ruth’s safety in the field (in terms of the relation between Boaz’s words in v. 9 and Naomi’s words to Ruth in v. 22), see David Shepherd, “Violence in the Fields? Translating, Reading, and Revising in Ruth 2,” *CBQ* 63 (2001): 444–61.

## The Responsibilities and Rewards of Joshua the High Priest according to Zechariah 3:7

MICHAEL SEGAL

msegal@pluto.mscc.huji.ac.il

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem 91905, Israel

---

The vision and oracle in Zechariah 3, in which the high priest Joshua is both tried and exonerated in a divine tribunal, have often been introduced as evidence for the development of the institution and conception of the high priesthood in the restoration period. Following God's positive verdict regarding Joshua, and the exchange of his soiled clothes for priestly garments, the angel of the Lord admonishes Joshua to follow a series of commands, with a reward promised for his compliance (Zech 3:7). According to various scholars, this charge to Joshua outlines an expanded role for the high priesthood, transferring tasks previously assigned to the prophet or the king to the realm of the priest,<sup>1</sup> or roles previously assigned to a class of priests to the high priest alone.<sup>2</sup> For these interpreters, this "innovative" oracle serves as evidence of the special status of the priesthood in the early Second Temple period.

Furthermore, the accepted interpretation of the reward promised to Joshua at the end of v. 7, given for his compliance with the conditions delineated in the begin-

I would like to thank Prof. Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, Mr. Noam Mizrahi, Dr. Matthew Morgenstern, Dr. Baruch Schwartz, and Prof. Benjamin Sommer, as well as the anonymous editorial reviewers of *JBL*, for their insightful comments on various versions of this essay. An earlier edition of this paper was delivered at the SBL International Meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 2006.

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Wilhelm Rudolph, *Haggai, Sacharja 1–8, Sacharja 9–14, Maleachi* (KAT 13/4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1976), 97; Rex Mason, "The Prophets of the Restoration," in *Israel's Prophetic Tradition: Essays in Honor of Peter R. Ackroyd* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 137–54, at 147; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25B; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 195, 197.

<sup>2</sup> David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 205–6.

ning of the verse, involves human, and specifically priestly, access to the heavenly realm. Other examples of human beings observing divine scenes in biblical literature, for example, 2 Kgs 22:19–22, Isaiah 6, and Jer 23:18, describe one-time events in which prophets, not priests, witness the Lord in the divine context. Zechariah 3:1–5 itself records Joshua's presence at a divine tribunal, but it too appears to be a one-time event, in which Joshua functions as a passive participant. The conditional promise of v. 7 is generally understood as providing regular access for the priest to the divine realm. This passage is thus supposed to offer an important precursor to the notion of priestly ascent to heaven, a common motif in both Jewish and Christian works in antiquity.<sup>3</sup>

I would like to suggest, however, that a careful analysis of Zech 3:7, which outlines the responsibilities given to Joshua and the resulting rewards for their fulfillment, reveals a different meaning for this passage, one that undermines the assumptions both of an expanded role for the priesthood in this period and of the precedent of regular priestly access to the divine council. In particular, a number of linguistic and syntactical difficulties in this verse have yet to receive adequate treatment. Verse 7 (MT) reads as follows:

כה אמר ה' צבאות :

(1) אם בדרכי תלך (2) ואם את משמרתִי תשמר

(3) וגם אתה תִּדְּרֹן את ביתִי (4) וגם תשמר את חצרי

← ונתתי לך מַהֲלָכִים בֵּיתָה עֹמְדִים האלה

This verse is generally translated as follows:<sup>4</sup>

Thus says the Lord of Hosts

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) If you walk in my paths                       | (2) and if you keep my charge             |
| (3) and (if) you <i>judge/administer</i> my house | (4) and (if) you look after my courtyards |

→ then I will give you *access* among *those standing here*.

<sup>3</sup> For the theme of priestly ascent in both Jewish and Christian sources from the Hellenistic period and onward, see Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascents to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Yehezkel Kaufmann interprets the promise in Zech 3:7 to mean that Joshua will be “on the level of an angel of the Lord” (*Tölēdōt ha’Emūnā ha’Yisrē’ēlīt* [8 vols.; Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik/Dvir, 1960], 8:245–46). In n. 38, he compares the role of Joshua the high priest in Zech 3:7 to that of Levi in *T. Levi* 2:6–10 (Kaufmann lists it as ch. 1, but must have intended the following one), in which Levi ascends to heaven in a dream and is promised to minister before the Lord; 5:2, in which he sees the Lord sitting upon his throne and is promised the priesthood; and *Jub.* 30:18; 31:14, according to which Levi and his priestly descendants will serve before the Lord as do the “angels of presence.”

<sup>4</sup> The modern translations of this verse vary from one another (primarily regarding the division of the verse into its protasis and apodosis, but also regarding the meaning of certain words in the verse), and thus it is difficult to present a single translation that reflects the scholarly consensus. Although I present this as a “commonly accepted” translation, since I have attempted to

This verse consists of the Lord's conditional promise to the high priest Joshua: if he fulfills (either the two or) the four conditions listed in the protasis, then he will be rewarded with the promise detailed in the apodosis.<sup>5</sup> (As will become clear from the interpretation of this verse to be suggested here, I understand it as four stipulations.) Each of the conditions relates to the role of the priest and the proper fulfillment of his obligations.

## I. THE PROTASIS

The first two conditions are general obligations that relate to the observance of the Lord's commandments:

1. הלך בדרכי תלך, "If you walk in my paths." The use of the verbal stem הלך with the object "דרך of YHWH" to describe metaphorically obeying (or disobeying) the Lord is common in biblical literature, in particular in the Deuteronomic and Deuteronomistic writings (Deut 5:30; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16;

---

combine a number of interpretive options, the final result is not identical to any of the existing editions.

<sup>5</sup> The syntactical status of stichs 3–4 has been debated. The use of the particle וְגַם to open each of those clauses seemingly connects them to the first two conditions, as part of the protasis; see, e.g., the LXX (with the addition of ἐάν before the fourth stich, as in the first two); the Masoretic cantillation marks (which place the *ʿetnah* on the final word of the fourth stich); Ibn Ezra; Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel* (7 vols.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908–14), 5:338; Hinckley G. Mitchell, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai and Zechariah* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 154; Lars G. Rignell, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja: Eine exegetische Studie* (Lund: Gleerup, 1950), 119–20; Benjamin Uffenheimer, *The Visions of Zechariah: From Prophecy to Apocalyptic* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Israel Society for Biblical Research/Kiryat Sepher, 1961), 101–2; Wim A. M. Beuken, *Haggai-Sacharja 1–8: Studien zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der frühnachexilischen Prophetie* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1967), 291–93; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 206–7; Mordekhai Zer-Kavod, *Zechariah in Minor Prophets*, vol. 2 (in Hebrew; Daat Mikra; Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1990), 12; Wolter H. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period* (JSOTSup 304; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 68–70. In addition, the use of different verbal forms in the first four clauses, in contrast to the fifth, seemingly supports the division of this conditional sentence: *yiqtol* in the protasis and *wəqātal* in the apodosis (as suggested to me by Noam Mizrahi).

In contrast, some interpreters have suggested that conditions 3 and 4 are actually part of the apodosis, and thus part of God's promise to Joshua; see, e.g., Rashi; KJV; NAB; RSV; NRSV; NJPS; Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), 186–87; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 178, 194; James C. VanderKam, "Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3," *CBQ* 53 (1991): 553–70 at 558–59 (although he allows for both possibilities); Robert Hanhart, *Sacharja* (BKAT 14/7.3; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1992), 167, 172–73.

The interpretation of stich 3 that will be suggested below also supports the claim that it represents one of the responsibilities of the high priest, not one of his benefits.

Josh 22:5; Judg 2:22; 1 Kgs 2:3; 3:14; 8:58; 11:33, 38; 2 Kgs 21:21–22; Jer 7:23; cf. also Hos 14:10; Ps 81:14).<sup>6</sup>

2. ואם את משמרתִי תשמר, “and if you keep my charge.” Similarly, throughout biblical literature, the verb שמר with its cognate accusative in reference to the Lord denotes general observance of the commandments (Gen 26:5; Lev 8:35; 18:30; 22:9; Num 9:19, 23; 18:7; Deut 11:1; Josh 22:3 [משמרת מצות ה’]; 1 Kgs 2:3; Mal 3:14 et al.). The expression שמר משמרת alone refers to the performance of guard duty (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:5–7 and throughout Priestly literature).<sup>7</sup>

Following these two general obligations, the verse turns to a more specific topic or topics, focusing on the temple:

3. וגם אתה תדין את ביתי. Translated according to the common meaning of the verb דין (“judge”), this clause reads “And [if] you also *judge* my house.” The noun בית is explicitly designated as the direct object of the verb by the use of the marker את. Most interpreters associate this charge with the juridical function of the priests described in Deut 17:8–13 and in Ezek 44:24, which was performed specifically at the temple.<sup>8</sup> However, as has already been noted by a number of scholars, the object of the verb דין elsewhere in the Bible is always either the person or people being judged, or a cognate accusative, “to judge a judgment.”<sup>9</sup> If the temple is indeed the direct object of the verb דין, then Zech 3:7 presents a syntactical anomaly. A number of solutions have been suggested to solve this difficulty:

<sup>6</sup> See Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 333–34.

<sup>7</sup> See Jacob Milgrom, *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, vol. 1, *The Encroacher and the Levite, The Term ‘Aboda* (University of California Publications: Near Eastern Studies 14; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 8–12, esp. nn. 40, 41, for a discussion of the distinction between the two phrases in Priestly literature.

<sup>8</sup> R. Joseph Kara (ad loc.) cites Deut 21:5 as a proof text for their judicial capacity, but that passage refers to their performance of these duties outside the temple.

<sup>9</sup> With person(s): Gen 15:14; 30:6; 49:16; Deut 32:36; Isa 3:13; Pss 7:9; 9:9; 50:4; 54:3; 72:2; 96:10; 110:6 (בגוים); 135:14; Job 36:31; Prov 31:9; with cognate accusative: Jer 5:28; 21:12 (משפט as obj.); 22:16; 30:13. In Qoh 6:10 the verb is used with the preposition עם (marking the object) with the meaning “dispute, quarrel.”

1 Samuel 2:10 appears to be an exception to this rule: “The Lord will judge the ends of the earth (אפסי ארץ),” an object that does not conform to the syntactical principle described above. The term אפסי ארץ represents a geographical entity (Ps 72:8; Jer 16:19). However, in 1 Sam 2:10, the object, understood by all scholars as “the ends of the earth,” should probably be interpreted as a merismus, as the people contained between these “ends,” a meaning confirmed by numerous verses in which אפסי ארץ is used in place of or parallel to the nations of the earth: e.g., Deut 33:17; Isa 45:22; 52:10; Pss 2:8; 22:28; 67:8; 98:2–3; cf. Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy = [Devarim]: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 329, 409 n. 124. One can thus conclude that in 1 Sam 2:10 the expression functions syntactically in accordance with this metaphorical meaning.

(a) *Reinterpretation of the object*: Some exegetes reinterpret the object so that it conforms to the syntactical structure mentioned above. For example, in order to provide an object other than the temple, *Targum Jonathan* changed “my house” to “those who serve in my temple” (תדין לדמשמשין בבית מקדשי), thus conforming to the general usage of the verb.<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, Lars G. Rignell suggested that “my house” refers to the “house of Israel.”<sup>11</sup> Both suggestions demonstrate sensitivity to the syntax of the sentence, reflecting an attempt to adapt Zech 3:7 to the general usage of the verb. However, in the process of redefining בית as something other than the physical structure of the temple, these interpretations have succeeded in undermining the parallelism between בית and the object חצר in the next hemistich.<sup>12</sup>

(b) *Reinterpretation of the verb*: Another solution that has been suggested is the reinterpretation of the verb דין not as “judge” but with the connotation of “govern, administer.”<sup>13</sup> This meaning is deduced most probably from the context, and specifically from the parallel colon, וגם תשמר את חצרי, “and (if) you look after my court-yards.” But this interpretation, while contextually appropriate, creates an unattested meaning for the verb דין, without any evidence for such a root in any other Semitic language.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The Targum translates חצרי as עזרתי (“my courtyard”), without the addition of human agents, demonstrating an awareness of the syntactical problem in question in the parallel stich. The Targum uses a similar phrase to describe the priests who serve in the temple in Zech 7:3; Ezek 44:11; 45:4; cf. also Joel 1:9 (in that verse the Targum adds the temple); Mal 3:10 (as an expansionistic translation of the Hebrew בביתי).

<sup>11</sup> Rignell, *Die Nachtgesichte*, 120; also Zer-Kavod, *Zechariah*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Christian Jeremias adduces two additional arguments against this suggested interpretation of ביתי (*Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja* [FRLANT 117; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], 214–15). First, in Zechariah, the term בית alone never refers to the people of Israel (1:16; 4:9; 5:4, 11; 6:10; 7:3; 8:9). In order to express this national notion, the expression employed is either “house of Israel” or “house of Judah” (8:13, 15, 19). Second, the context of the passage is the commissioning of Joshua as high priest in the temple.

<sup>13</sup> Rose adopts this approach and quotes a long list of scholars who suggested it prior to him (*Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 72–73 and n. 85). See also BDB, s.v. דין (vb.), p. 192 (meaning 5); and DCH 2:434, s.v. דין, I §3; both record Zech 3:7 as the only evidence for this sense. Various verses have been adduced as evidence for the notion of דין as protection or deliverance, including Gen 49:16; Deut 32:36; Ps 54:3, but that is a meaning different from “govern.” In any event, those three verses all take the people or a person as an object and thus do not assist in solving the syntactical problem here.

Rashi (ad loc.) attempts to preserve both meanings, while solving the syntactical problem: תשפוט ותהיה פקיד על בית מקדשי, “you will judge and be the administrator over my temple”; similarly, Jeremias includes both in his suggested translation: “wenn du meines Hauses Rechte wahrnimmst” (*Die Nachtgesichte*, 215).

<sup>14</sup> Rose suggests a semantic development of the verb דין similar to that of שפט, from the meaning of “judge” to “govern, rule” (*Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 93). This possibility should be modified by the observation that the verb שפט has both meanings in classical Biblical Hebrew, and it

(c) *Interpretation of verb and object according to their regular sense despite the syntactical anomaly*: A third possibility offered by scholars is to assume that the verb and object retain their common literal meanings and to view this case as an exception to this syntactical rule. Note, for example, David Petersen's methodological comment: "Rather than worry at the outset about the best way to juxtapose 'judge' and 'my house,' it is perhaps preferable to raise the issue of what is at stake in this activity."<sup>15</sup> Some translations reflect this by the addition of a preposition such as "in my house" (though without the suggestion of a Hebrew variant such as בְּבֵיתִי). But it is exactly this juxtaposition that is worrying, for a rendering of the verse that ignores the syntactical relationship between its components is hardly convincing.

In light of these interpretive difficulties, I would like to propose a new interpretation of the clause וְגַם אֶתָּה תְּדִין אֶת בֵּיתִי, offering a new meaning for the Hebrew verb דִּין, based on the Akkadian verb *dunnunu* (D form of *danānu*), "to strengthen, to increase, to reinforce."<sup>16</sup> This common Akkadian verb is used specifically to describe the reinforcing of buildings, as well as various structural elements found in buildings (such as walls). The following examples from Akkadian texts of different genres demonstrate the usage of this verb:<sup>17</sup>

*šumma itinum ana awilim bītam īpušma šipiršu la udaninma bīt īpušu imqutma* . . . , "If a builder constructs a house for a man but does not make his work sound (reinforce), and the house that he constructs collapses . . ." (Code of Hammurabi [CH] 229)<sup>18</sup>

*aššum bīt īpušu la udanninuma imqutu*, "because he did not make sound (reinforce) the house which he constructed and it collapsed" (CH 232)

*itinum šū ina kasap ramanišu igāram šuʾati udannan*, "that builder shall reinforce that wall at his own expense" (CH 233)

is therefore not apt to speak of a development. Against his suggestion, however, Rose himself notes that there are no other attested examples with this meaning for the verb דִּין.

<sup>15</sup> Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah* 1–8, 205.

<sup>16</sup> CAD, D, 84b. A similar suggestion has been proposed by some scholars for the word יָדִין in the difficult phrase לֹא יָדִין רוּחִי in Gen 6:3, leading to the translation, "my spirit will not be strong"; see Karl Völlers, "Zur Erklärung des יָדִין Gen 6:3," ZA 14 (1889): 349–56; Ronald Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4," JBL 106 (1987): 13–26, at 15, esp. n. 10.

<sup>17</sup> The following examples were selected from CAD, D (3), 84b–85a, s.v. *danānu* §2(b)1'. For further instances of this expression, note the additional examples listed there, as well as in CAD A (1/II), 350b, s.v. *asurrū* §1(a)–(b), with reference to the strengthening of the foundation structure of a wall.

<sup>18</sup> Text and translation are taken from Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (SBLWAW 6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 125. See also CH 53, 68+b.



*šumma igārum iqāmma bābtum ana bēl igāri ušēdīma igāršu la ú<dan>ninma igārum imqutma*, “If a wall is buckling and the ward authorities so notify the owner of the wall, but he does not reinforce his wall and the wall collapses” (Laws of Ešnunna 58)<sup>19</sup>

These laws from different collections describe what was apparently a common problem in the ancient world, the poor quality of construction that resulted in the collapse of various structures. The expression employed in each of these instances is constructed from the verb *dunnunu* + the structure being reinforced. An identical expression is found in the following inscription (Kudur-Mabuk Inscription 2, lines 26–28):<sup>20</sup>

*ša bīt agurrim šuʾati inūma iltabbiru la udannanušu*, “who, when this baked brick house has become old, does not strengthen it . . .”

In this early-second-millennium B.C.E. cone inscription, Kudur-Mabuk, ruler of Larsa, describes how he built a baked brick house in order to protect a stele. In lines 24–51, Kudur-Mabuk invokes a curse from Nergal and Šamaš against those who do not reinforce the house when it becomes old or falls into disrepair.

In the following inscription, the verb is used in the context of the rebuilding of a destroyed temple (Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus I, 46–II, 13):<sup>21</sup>

For rebuilding the Ehulhul, the temple of Šin, my lord . . . I mustered my numerous troops . . . (and) in a propitious month, on an auspicious day . . . on the foundation deposit of Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, who had found the foundation deposit of Shalmaneser, the son of Assurbanipal, I cleared its foundations and laid its brickwork. I mixed its mortar with beer, wine, oil and honey and anointed its excavation ramps with it. More than the kings my fathers (had done), I **strengthened its building** and perfected its work (*eli ša šarrāni abbēa epšetišu udanninma unakkilu šipiršu*). That temple from its foundations to its parapet I built anew and completed its work. Beams of lofty cedar trees, a product of Lebanon, I set above it. Doors of cedar wood, whose scent is pleasing, I affixed at its gates. With gold and silver (glaze) I coated its walls and made it shine like the sun . . .

This monumental inscription commemorates the rebuilding of three different temples by Nabonidus, the final king of Babylon (556–539 B.C.E.). This first section of the inscription describes the rebuilding of the temple Ehulhul, destroyed previ-

<sup>19</sup> Roth, *Law Collections*, 68.

<sup>20</sup> For the transcription and translation of this inscription, see Douglas R. Frayne, *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)* (RIME 4; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990), 267–68.

<sup>21</sup> The translation is according to Paul-Alain Beaulieu, “The Sippar Cylinder of Nabonidus (2.123A),” in COS 2:310–13. The highlighted line is found in col. 2, lines 7–8. The Akkadian text is quoted from Stephen Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), 220–23.

ously by the Medes. This final source is significant for the interpretation of Zechariah 3 both chronologically and contextually. The expression “strengthened its building” appears in the context of rebuilding a destroyed temple, similar to the situation in which Zechariah prophesied. This passage demonstrates that it might have a broader meaning than just general upkeep and can possibly refer to the physical improvement of a devastated structure. However, since it is only one of a number of expressions employed in that passage to describe the rebuilding process, it is preferable to limit its meaning to the physical repair of the edifice.

In each of these examples, the strengthening refers to the physical maintenance of a structure, whether it be a temple, a house, or a wall. The variety of contexts in which the expression *dunnunu* + physical structure appears attests to its common usage in Mesopotamian literature. In light of this Akkadian collocation, I suggest that the same idiom is found in Zech 3:7, תַּדִּין אֶת בֵּיתִי, and should therefore be translated as “strengthen/reinforce my house.” This responsibility for the physical management of the temple in this stich parallels the fourth, and final, clause describing the priestly duties demanded of Joshua, “and (if) you look after my courtyards.”<sup>22</sup> Both demand the same obligation of the high priest, the responsibility to maintain the temple and its precincts.

According to the interpretation suggested here, the phrase תַּדִּין אֶת הַבַּיִת in Zech 3:7, “reinforce, strengthen” the house, can be equated with the more prevalent biblical expression לְחַזֵּק אֶת הַבַּיִת, which also refers to the priestly obligation to maintain the temple (2 Kgs 12:15; 22:6; 1 Chr 26:27; 2 Chr 24:5, 12; 29:3; 34:8, 10). Interestingly, both in 2 Kings and in Ezekiel, the earlier idiom used for temple maintenance is לְחַזֵּק אֶת בֵּדֶק הַבַּיִת (2 Kgs 12:6, 7, 8, 9, 13; 22:5; cf. also Ezek 27:9, 27). A cognate Akkadian expression, *batqam šabātu*, parallels this longer formulation.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> BDB, s.v. שָׁמַר I, p. 1036, §1a (“keep, have charge of”), presents a list of examples, some of which fall within this sense: Gen 2:15 (in reference to the Garden of Eden); 30:31 (flock of sheep; cf. 1 Sam 17:20); Exod 22:6, 9 (property).

<sup>23</sup> For examples of this Akkadian expression, see CAD 2:167–68; 16:25–26. The relationship between the Akkadian and Hebrew (or Aramaic) expressions has been discussed by various scholars; see CAD 2:168; Jonas Greenfield, “Lexicographical Notes I,” *HUCA* 29 (1958): 203–28, at 221 n. 24; Baruch Levine, “Comments on Some Technical Terms of the Biblical Cult” (in Hebrew), *Leš* 30 (1965): 3–11, at 10–11; Stephen A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic* (AS 19; Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 41–42; Victor Hurowitz, “Another Fiscal Practice in the Ancient Near East: 2 Kings 12:5–17 and a Letter to Esarhaddon (LAS 277),” *JNES* 45 (1986): 284–89; idem, “The Jehoash Inscription under a Magnifying Glass” (in Hebrew), *Beit Mikra* 49 (2003): 89–102, at 95–96; Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11; New York: Doubleday, 1988), 137. Hurowitz notes that the Akkadian expression can be translated as “seize, grasp the fissure,” and thus it is closest to the form of the Hebrew expression found in Ezek 27:9, 27, in which the verb חִזַּק is in the *hiphil* conjugation, which also carries the meaning of “seize, grasp” (“Jehoash Inscription”). Thus, according to Hurowitz, the meaning of the Hebrew expression in which the verb

The use of this expression has disappeared completely from Chronicles, both from passages parallel to 2 Kings and from the non-synoptic sections. Most scholars assume that this is merely a shortened form of the fuller expression לחזק את בִּדְק הַבַּיִת, an explanation supported by the omission of the word בִּדְק from the phrase in 2 Kgs 12:15; 22:6. However, the complete omission of בִּדְק from the phrase חזק את הַבַּיִת in Chronicles suggests an alternative explanation: perhaps the expression in Chronicles reflects a later Hebrew expression based on the Akkadian *bitam dunnunu*, a linguistically plausible cognate for the Hebrew, evidenced by the almost direct correspondence (תִּדִּין/*dunnunu*)<sup>24</sup> in Zech 3:7, and preserved frequently using the more common *piel* form of the Hebrew verb חזק. If so, one cognate expression has been exchanged for another.<sup>25</sup>

The emphasis on the duty of the high priest to maintain the physical structure of the temple is a direct continuation of the role of the priests in the First Temple. 2 Kings 12:5–17 describes how the king, Joash, instructed the priests to use the donations made to the temple in order to maintain and repair its physical structure. Later in his reign, the priests neglected their responsibilities (v. 7)<sup>26</sup> and did not use the funds for their (newly) designated purpose. After being confronted by Joash for disregarding their duties, the priests agreed to relinquish both the collection of donations and the responsibility for maintaining the physical structure of the temple (vv. 8–9). Instead, Jehoiada the priest created a special box in which funds were collected to pay contractors for the necessary repairs (vv. 10–17). The high priest (לְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל) and a representative of the king (סֹפֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ) were responsible for the

---

appears in the *piel*, as it does in most instances, should not be understood as the strengthening of a fissure but rather as the fastening together of its parts.

<sup>24</sup> Geminate verbs are at times conjugated in Biblical Hebrew as II-*yod* forms; see the examples adduced by Gotthelf Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, II Teil, *Verbum* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1929) 140, §27q (M. Morgenstern provided me with this reference). Alternatively, they more often follow the pattern of II-*waw* (Bergsträsser, 140, §27q). The presence of the II-*yod* form תִּדִּין could then be explained as the result of the more common II-*yod* replacing the rare II-*waw*, found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible only in Gen 6:3 (as suggested to me by Noam Mizrahi). For the mixing of II-*yod* and II-*waw* verbs on a linguistic level, see Bergsträsser, 152–53, §28t; Zé'ev Ben-Hayyim, *A Grammar of Samaritan Hebrew* (rev. English ed.; Jerusalem: Magnes; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 147–48, §2.6.2. It is also possible that the replacement of the rare form with the more common one occurred on a textual level; on the text-critical phenomenon of *waw/yod* interchange, see Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (2nd rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress; Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001), 246–47.

<sup>25</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:10 (לְחַזְקוֹת וּלְבִדּוֹק הַבַּיִת) parallel to 2 Kgs 22:5: (לְחַזְקוֹת בִּדְק הַבַּיִת), in which the denominative verb בִּדְק (the only instance in Biblical Hebrew) has replaced the substantive בִּדְק, suggests that the earlier phrase was no longer in use in Late Biblical Hebrew.

<sup>26</sup> In the parallel version of the story in 2 Chronicles 24, the priests are not given the charge to maintain the temple, but rather to collect money for the project (v. 5), a task that they, and the Levites, are in no hurry to perform. See the discussion of Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary* (OTL; London: SCM, 1993), 841–43.

administration of these funds (v. 11). The same joint arrangement, whereby the priests collected the money, which was then disbursed by the high priest and the *sōpēr* to the various workers, is repeated immediately prior to the description of the discovery of the book of the Torah in the time of Josiah (cf. 2 Kgs 22:3–7).<sup>27</sup> This joint control of the temple maintenance, as described by 2 Kings 12, was not the original model of responsibility for this project, but rather a necessary step to ensure the well-being of the building in light of the priests' indifferent attitude to their duty. In this light, the expectation of Joshua to "strengthen/repair my house" in the oracle in Zechariah 3 should not be taken as an innovation of the role of the priesthood in the Restoration period. Rather, it is an attempt to reestablish the temple service along the lines of the original, First Temple model.<sup>28</sup> In contrast to the interpretations of other scholars, this charge to Joshua does not refer to an expanded role for the priestly class in the Second Temple period. The choice of Joshua as the high priest is in itself an attempt to establish the Second Temple based on the institutions of the First, as Joshua was the son of Jehozadak (Hag 1:1, 12, 14; 2:2, 4; Zech 6:11), son of Seraiah, the final high priest of the First Temple period (1 Chr 5:40–41; 2 Kgs 25:18–21||Jer 52:24–27).<sup>29</sup>

## II. PARALLELISM IN VERSE 7 AND THE MEANING OF העמדים

The use of parallelism in v. 7 has been noted above. The pair of parallel bicola found in the protasis of God's statement to Joshua can be identified both through formal signifiers and through their synonymous content:

<u>אִם בְּדַרְכֵי תֵלֶךְ</u>	a	1
<u>וְאִם אֶת מִשְׁמַרְתִּי תִשְׁמֹר</u>	b	
<u>וְגַם אֶתֶּה תְּדִין אֶת בֵּיתִי</u>	a	2
<u>וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת חֲצָרִי</u>	b	

<sup>27</sup> The description in 2 Kgs 22:3–7 is based directly on 2 Kgs 12:5–17 and functions as a literary stratagem to explain why Josiah's scribe, Shaphan, encountered Hilkiah, the high priest, in the temple and there received the book of the Torah from him (in contrast to Cogan and Tadmor [*II Kings*, 293], who posit that the purpose of this passage is to highlight Josiah's piety, "for it was a primary duty of ancient Near Eastern monarchs to care for and maintain the temples of the gods").

<sup>28</sup> The priestly responsibility for temple maintenance differs from the task of rebuilding assigned to the Davidide Zerubbabel in two oracles (Zech 4:6b–10a [using the verb יָסַד]; 6:12–13 [using the verb בָּנָה twice]). The same division of labor, according to which the royal figure is responsible for temple building, also reflects the First Temple model.

<sup>29</sup> The notion that Zechariah 3 reflects a continuation of the preexilic position of the priesthood corresponds to the general conclusions of Mark J. Boda ("Oil, Crowns and Thrones: Prophet, Priest and King in Zechariah 1:7–6:15," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 3, 10 [2001], section 2; online, [http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article\\_22.pdf](http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/JHS/Articles/article_22.pdf)), although he bases his discussion on very different arguments (some of which are at odds with this study).

On the formal level, the first stich contains bicola that open with the conditional **אם**, while the second employs the word **וגם** for similar purposes. Regarding the content of each of the stichs, the responsibilities assigned to the priest in the parallel cola closely resemble one another. The first two describe the priestly responsibilities in general terms, while the second stipulates the more specific task of the physical maintenance of the temple. In each of these descriptions, the text employs synonymous terms found in parallel elsewhere in the Bible. In the first stich, the verb **הלך** appears in parallel to **שמר**, a pair found together in numerous passages, most often in the context of covenants.<sup>30</sup> The parallelism in the second line is expressed both in the repetition of the word **וגם** and in the objects of the verbs: **בית** and **חצר**. The two substantives function as a word pair in Hebrew, Ugaritic, and Phoenician, and appear frequently in the Bible in parallel (e.g., Pss 65:5; 84:11; 92:14; 100:4; 135:2), both referring to the temple compound.<sup>31</sup> The parallelism in 2a–b supports the interpretation offered above, namely, that the parallel cola refer to the priestly responsibility for the maintenance of the structure of the temple (2a) and its precincts (2b).

Further analysis of the charge to Joshua reveals an additional parallelism present in the final three clauses of the verse, transcending the division between the protasis and the apodosis, a structure which suggests an alternate vocalization for one of the key words in the passage:

- (i) וגם אתה תדין את ביתי
- (ii) וגם תשמר את חצרי
- (iii) ונתתי לך מהלכים ביה, עמדים האלה

According to the Masoretic vocalization (and the underlying vocalization assumed by all interpreters, from ancient to modern), the final clause in the verse (here labeled [iii]), containing the apodosis of the conditional sentence, mentions **הַעֲמָדִים הָאֵלֶּה**, “these who are standing,” presumably a reference to the divine court

<sup>30</sup> Leviticus 18:4; 26:3; Deut 8:6; 13:5; 30:16; Josh 22:5; Judg 2:22; 1 Kgs 2:3–4; 3:14; 6:12; 8:25, 58, 61; 9:6; 11:10, 38; 2 Kgs 10:31; 17:19; 23:3; Ezek 11:20; 18:9; 20:18–19, 21; 36:27; 37:24; Ps 78:10; Prov 6:16; 2 Chr 6:16; 34:31. Among these sources, the following use the phrase **הלך + בדרך**: Deut 8:6; 30:16; Josh 22:5; Judg 2:22; 1 Kgs 2:3; 3:14; 8:58; 11:38. The combination **שמר + דרך** (1 Kgs 2:4; 8:25; 2 Chr 6:16) in parallel to **הלך**, points to the interchangeability of the two verbs, **שמר** and **הלך**, in these contexts.

<sup>31</sup> See Umberto Cassuto, “Biblical and Canaanite Literature,” in *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (trans. Israel Abrahams; 2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975) 53 (trans. of *Tarbiz* 13 [1942]: 197–212; 14 [1943]: 1–10); Stanley Gevirtz, “The Ugaritic Parallel to Jeremiah 8:23,” *JNES* 20 (1961): 41–46, at 45; Menahem Haran, “The Symbolic Significance of the Complex of Ritual Acts Performed inside the Israelite Shrine” (in Hebrew), in *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume* (ed. M. Haran; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960), 34\* n. 19; Yitzhak Avishur, *The Construct State of Synonyms in Biblical Rhetoric* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1977), 17.

described in vv. 1–5: “the accuser standing (עֹמֵד) at his right to accuse him” (v. 1); “and he spoke up and said to those who stood before him (הַעֹמְדִים לְפָנָיו)” (v. 4); “and the angel of the Lord stood (עֹמֵד)” (v. 5). Indeed, the verb עֹמֵד, “to stand,” functions as a *Leitwort* in the vision of the divine council of vv. 1–5 and, at first sight, continues to do so in v. 7. Setting aside for the moment the meaning of the difficult word מַהֲלָכִים in this sentence, according to the vocalization of הַעֹמְדִים, the primary, if not the only, approach suggested by interpreters for understanding Joshua’s reward for his fulfillment of the conditions set forth in the first part of the verse involves some kind of relationship with the celestial beings described in the scene in vv. 1–5, whether it refers to access for Joshua or for those related to him, into the divine retinue. However, an examination of these three clauses in parallel leads to an alternative vocalization for the word הַעֹמְדִים in the final one:

וְגַם אַתָּה תִּדְּרִין אֶת בֵּיתִי (i)

וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת חֲצָרִי (ii)

וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ מַהֲלָכִים בֵּין הָעֲמֻדִים הָאֵלֶּה (iii)

I suggest that when these clauses are examined together, with the terms in the first two clauses describing the physical structure of the temple, the most appropriate vocalization for the final noun in the apodosis is not הַעֹמְדִים, as in the MT, but עֲמֻדִים, the “pillars, columns,” continuing the architectural language present in the protasis.<sup>32</sup> The term עֲמֻד is common in descriptions of the temple (and the tabernacle),<sup>33</sup> described in Zech 3:7 and elsewhere as a בֵּית. The nouns בֵּית and עֲמֻדִים appear in synonymous parallelism in Prov 9:1: חֲכָמוֹת בָּנְתָה בֵּיתָה חֲצָבָה עֲמֻדָּה, “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars.” The collocation עֲמֻדֵי הַחֲצֵר, specifically in the context of the tabernacle or temple, presents a combination of the elements in construct form.

If the correct reading is עֲמֻדִים “the pillars,” and not הַעֹמְדִים, “the ones standing,” that is, not the heavenly beings present at the divine council in vv. 1–5, then the Lord’s promise to Joshua is unrelated to this divine realm and thus does not constitute a major innovation.<sup>34</sup> In contrast to previous interpretations, the vocal-

<sup>32</sup> It seems that the noun was read incorrectly owing to the influence of the use of עֹמֵד in vv. 1–5 with reference to the heavenly court. The defective orthography of the word הַעֹמְדִים easily allows both for this misreading and for the revocalization proposed here.

<sup>33</sup> The term appears frequently in Exodus 27; 38; 1 Kings 7; Jeremiah 52; and elsewhere.

<sup>34</sup> Among the many interpreters who understand the promise to Joshua to relate to the heavenly realm, some have noted that the expected result may not relate directly to Joshua himself but rather, “he will be given individuals who have direct access to the divine presence” (VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 560). VanderKam suggests that if this indirect, heavenly access is intended, then “the promise may refer to the ongoing presence of people such as Zechariah,”

ization proposed here connects this promise to the earthly domain, locating the reward of Joshua's actions in strengthening the temple within the pillars of that same structure.<sup>35</sup>

### III. מְהַלְכִים

One last interpretive issue remains in order to clarify the content of the Lord's promise to Joshua in v. 7, the word מְהַלְכִים in the final clause. Many modern lexica and editions, following Gesenius-Buhl,<sup>36</sup> assume that this word needs to be revocalized as מְהַלְכִים, a plural form of the noun מְהַלֵךְ, which itself occurs only four times in the Hebrew Bible (Ezek 42:4; Jonah 3:3, 4; Neh 2:6). In each of those instances, the word refers either to a journey, including the distance of the journey (Jonah 3:3, 4; Neh 2:6), or to a passage for walking in Ezekiel's temple (Ezek 42:4). In contrast to the four other instances, Zech 3:7 represents the only case in which this noun (if revocalized thus) appears in the plural. These interpreters suggest that this word should be translated as "goings." Since Joshua (or those close to him) will journey among the divine beings (according to the vocalization of the end of the verse as הַעֲמִידִים), then these "goings" are further interpreted as "free access" to the divine realm.<sup>37</sup>

---

that is, prophets who commune with God (ibid.). Similarly, Boda suggests that this is a reference to prophets, and even that this promise predicts "that God will restore temple prophecy" ("Oil, Crowns and Thrones," §2.3.1.4). Heinz-Günther Schöttler posited that these promised intermediaries to the heavenly court are in fact angelic beings (*Gott inmitten seines Volkes: Die Neuordnung des Gottesvolkes nach Sacharja 1–6* [TThSt 43; Trier: Paulinus, 1987], 339–40). If, as suggested above, the promise to Joshua does not include a reference to the divine retinue, then the need to identify possible intermediaries is obviated.

<sup>35</sup> Gary A. Rendsburg also suggested that the promise to Joshua was located in the earthly realm, not in heaven, but offered a different solution ("Hebrew Philological Notes [III]," *HS* 43 [2002]: 21–30). He preserved the Masoretic vocalization, but suggested understanding "those standing" as a reference to the priests who accompany Joshua, mentioned in v. 8 (p. 25). However, those priests are referred to there specifically as those *sitting* before Joshua (וְרַעֲיָד הַיֹּשְׁבִים לִפְנֵי), not *standing*.

<sup>36</sup> Frants Buhl, *Wilhelm Gesenius' hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (12th ed.; Leipzig: F. C. W. Vogel, 1895), 402, s.v. מְהַלֵךְ; see also GKC §53o, where it is first suggested that the word is a *hiphil* participle of the verb הָלַךְ in which the *hireq* has been reduced to a *šewa*, but then the revocalization suggested above is accepted; Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1927) §70h' (in §55g'), they suggest that it is a form of the *hiphil* participle; cf. GKC §53o; Bergsträsser, *Hebräische Grammatik*, 104, §19h; BDB, 237, s.v. מְהַלֵךְ; *DCH* 5:164; *BHK*; *BHS*; and in numerous commentaries and studies.

<sup>37</sup> For an extensive discussion of the weaknesses of this approach, see Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel*, 73–76.

In contrast to most modern exegetes,<sup>38</sup> all of the ancient translations interpret this form as a participle from the root הלך, with the meaning “(people) who walk.”<sup>39</sup> While some scholars have suggested that this reflects the *hiphil* form of the participle with intransitive meaning,<sup>40</sup> Raphael Kutscher<sup>41</sup> has demonstrated that the vocalized form in the MT is actually a variant *piel* form, similar in meaning to the regular *piel* form מְהַלְכִים (as in Qoh 4:15), and identical in vocalization to the Aramaic מְהַלְכִין (Dan 3:25; 4:34).<sup>42</sup> Similar Hebrew forms are found in rabbinic literature, and in particular in ms Kaufman of the Mishnah.<sup>43</sup> Kutscher provided a description of the development of this vocalization for the *piel* forms of I-guttural verbs in general, and for this verb in particular: מְהַלְכִים > מְהַלְכִים\* > מְהַלְכִים. According to Kutscher, in these verbs, the second radical of the verbal root lost its doubling, leading to the transfer of the vowel under the guttural radical to the pre-

<sup>38</sup> Rendsburg suggested, based on the Phoenician noun מלך, attested frequently in Punic inscriptions, that מְהַלְכִים carries the meaning “sacrifices” (“Philological Notes [III],” 19–25). My analysis, and specifically the revocalization of מְהַלְכִים with reference to the temple itself, certainly allows for his intriguing suggestion—Joshua will be rewarded with sacrifices in the temple if he is to care for it properly.

<sup>39</sup> LXX: ἀναστρεφόμενους; Vulgate: *ambulantes*; Peshitta: דמהלכין; Targum: מהלכין מהלכין; for a discussion of the versions, see Hanhart, *Sacharja*, 173.

<sup>40</sup> GKC §530; Bauer and Leander, *Historische Grammatik*, §55g'; Beuken, *Haggai-Sacharja* 1–8, 293–96; VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 560.

<sup>41</sup> Raphael Kutscher, “מְהַלְכִים ואחיותיה” (in Hebrew), *Leš* 26 (1962): 93–96; see the further examples adduced by Edward Y. Kutscher, “Marginalia to the Biblical Lexicon (I)” (in Hebrew), *Leš* 27–28 (1964): 188; idem, “Marginalia to the Biblical Lexicon (II)” (in Hebrew), *Leš* 30 (1965): 23–24; Mordekhai Ben-Asher, “Additional Note to מְהַלְכִים” (in Hebrew), *Leš* 31 (1967): 160. This vocalization for *piel* I-guttural verbs was noted briefly by Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Mikrâ ki-Psheschutô* (3 vols.; 1901; repr., Library of Biblical Studies; New York: Ktav, 1969), 3:471, who adduced Deut 26:12 and Neh 10:39 as additional examples of this phenomenon; and also by Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21–37: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 22A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 480, regarding Ezek 23:21 and Lev 26:43 (my thanks to Baruch Schwartz for the final reference).

<sup>42</sup> BHK, BHS Daniel (ed. W. Baumgartner) suggest correcting both of these instances to מְהַלְכִין, to conform to a preconceived notion of the form of the *paal* participle. This correction was proposed already by Hans Bauer and Pontus Leander, *Grammatik des biblisch-Aramäischen* (Halle/Saale: Max Niemeyer, 1927), 274, §76n; Franz Rosenthal, *A Grammar of Biblical Aramaic* (6<sup>th</sup> rev. ed.; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995), 58, §169; HALOT, 1860, s.v. הלך.

R. Kutscher argued that the Aramaic forms in Dan 3:25; 4:34 similarly reflect variant *paal* forms, and not *haphel* (“מְהַלְכִים” 95). As he correctly noted, Dan 4:26 provides undisputed evidence for the identical use of this verb in the *paal* conjugation (לָךְ) and therefore obviates the need to create an unattested meaning in the *haphel*. Elisha Qimron (*Biblical Aramaic* [in Hebrew; Biblical Encyclopedia Library 10; 2nd rev. exp. ed.; Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik and Ben Gurion University, 2003], 132) accepts Kutscher's analysis.

<sup>43</sup> E. Y. Kutscher, “Marginalia” (parts I and II).



fix, leaving the guttural without a vowel. Thus, one can understand this word as “those who walk (about),” without having to emend the vocalization in the Hebrew text.

#### IV. THE PROMISE IN ZECHARIAH 3:7

In light of the reinterpretation of the three elements posited in this study, I propose the following translation of Zech 3:7:

Thus says the Lord of Hosts: If you will walk in my ways and if you keep my requirements, and if you *reinforce* my house and look after my courtyards, then I will grant you (*people*) *who walk* among these *pillars*.

This conditional promise to Joshua stipulates that if he sees to the physical repair and upkeep of the temple, then God will give him people who will walk around within that same structure. Who are these promised people who are the reward for Joshua's actions? In the context of a personal promise to Joshua (“and I will grant to you”),<sup>44</sup> this pledge perhaps refers to the high priest's descendants. If Joshua ensures that the temple remains in good condition, then God in turn commits to passing along his position to his progeny. This option was suggested by the medieval Jewish commentator Rashi: *ולפי פשוטו מבשרו על בניו שיזכו לעתיד*, “and according to the *peshat* [or: contextual meaning], he informed him about his children who will benefit in the future” (although his general interpretation of the nature of the promise differs fundamentally from my own, owing to the Masoretic vocalization of the word *(העמדים)*). If Joshua follows God's command by properly maintaining the temple, then the future status of his children therein is guaranteed.

The promise of familial continuity within the priesthood or the monarchy is found elsewhere in the Bible. Numbers 25 describes the reward granted to Phinehas for his courageous response to the Israelites' sexual improprieties with Moabite women and their cultic sins involving the worship of Baal-peor:<sup>45</sup>

(11) Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites. . . . (12) Therefore say, “I hereby grant him (*נתן לו*) my covenant of peace. (13) And it shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of eternal priesthood. . . .

The reward of priesthood is not limited to Phinehas himself, but rather is granted to his progeny as well. In a negative context, the anonymous “man of God” in 1 Sam

<sup>44</sup> The personal aspect of the conditional promise is perhaps strengthened by the addition of the pronoun *אֲנִי* in the third clause of the protasis, in concert with the apodosis *וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ* (as suggested to me by Baruch Schwartz).

<sup>45</sup> I would like to thank Baruch Schwartz for drawing my attention to the relevance of this passage for my argument.

2:27–36 chastises Eli, the priest in Shiloh, explaining to him that his family will no longer preside over the temple service:

(30) Assuredly—declares the Lord, the God of Israel—I intended for you and your father's house to remain in my service (יִתְהַלְכוּ) forever. But now—declares the Lord—far be it from me; for I honor those who honor me, but those who spurn me shall be dishonored. . . . (35) And I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will act in accordance with my wishes and my purposes. I will build for him an enduring [or: faithful] house, and he shall walk (וְהִתְהַלֵּךְ) before my anointed evermore.

The prophet refers to the Elide line, which was originally supposed to function eternally as priests. As a result of the sinful cultic practices (v. 29) of Eli's sons, Hofni and Phinehas, the prophet informs Eli that his family will not continue the priestly line, and that instead a new house of priests will inherit this eternal role. The original promise of priesthood to Eli's ancestors in Egypt can thus be understood in retrospect as a conditional pledge, similar to the one received by Joshua, stipulating that if the priests of that family continue properly to observe their priestly obligations, then their progeny will continue to oversee the temple service. The verbal root used in 1 Sam 2:30, 35 to describe the priestly service is הִלָּךְ, the same verb that occurs in the participle מְהַלְכִים in Zech 3:7.

Another prophecy related to offspring and the temple is found in Isa 56:3b–5, in which the prophet offers consolation to eunuchs, who although they cannot produce offspring, are promised a reward “better” than children if they observe God's commandments:

And let not the eunuch say, “I am a withered tree.” For thus said the Lord: “As for the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who have chosen what I desire, and hold fast to my covenant—I will give them in my house and within my walls (וְנִתְּנוּ לִי) (לֵהֶם בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחוֹמֹתַי), a monument and a name better than sons or daughters. I will give them (אֶתֵּן לָו) an everlasting name which shall not perish.”

This passage stipulates the conditions for the eunuch to be accepted and memorialized within the temple—the fulfillment of the laws and the covenant with God. They too, like Joshua, receive a reward within the temple, God's house, one that comes in place of the children that they cannot have. Although the nature of this “monument and name” is not completely clear,<sup>46</sup> they function in this prophecy as a substitute for offspring. Proper observance of the laws in each of these examples leads to a personal reward for the righteous individual, either progeny or their proxy, both specifically within the temple context.

Observance of the commandments is also a guarantee of the continuity of the

<sup>46</sup> For a survey and analysis of a number of possible interpretations, see Dwight W. van Winkle, “The Meaning of *yād wāšēm* in Isaiah LVI 5,” *VT* 47 (1997): 378–85.

royal family, as stated explicitly in Ahijah the Shilonite's prophecy to Jeroboam, in which the latter was informed that he would assume the role of king of Israel:

And you shall be king over Israel. If you heed all that I command you, and walk in my ways (והלכת בדרכי), and do what is right in my sight, keeping my laws and commandments as my servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David, and I shall give Israel to you (ונתתי לך). (1 Kgs 11:37b–38)

This verse uses the same style and formulation of conditional promise that are found in the promise to Joshua, based on the proper observance of God's commandments, guaranteeing the monarchical status of Jeroboam's offspring if he behaves properly. The function of this passage from 1 Kings is clear: it is related to Jeroboam when he was identified by the prophet as the future king of Israel. It thus should be taken as part of the process of Jeroboam's initiation for that role.

In light of these parallels and, most important, Jeroboam's initiation into a new leadership role, it seems likely that Zech 3:7 is also a conditional promise given to Joshua at the beginning of his term as high priest. If he properly fulfills his priestly obligations, then his dynasty will be guaranteed. This promise is especially appropriate following the heavenly scene depicted in 3:1–5, which describes the removal of Joshua's soiled garments and their replacement by the pure priestly garment, the צניף. Many scholars have already posited that this scene describes Joshua's investiture as high priest, which involved a symbolic, heavenly purification ceremony.<sup>47</sup> This initiation ceremony is the most appropriate time for the charge to Joshua and parallels the timing of the pledge to Jeroboam.

## V. CONCLUSION

The responsibilities and rewards offered to Joshua in Zech 3:7 have often been quoted as evidence for major religious and social developments in the status of the priesthood in the Second Temple period. While the upheaval that resulted from the destruction of the First Temple, the exile, the return to the land of Israel, and

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., Beuken, *Haggai-Sacharja* 1–8, 284; Klaus Seybold, *Bilder zum Tempelbau: Die Visionen des Propheten Sacharja* (SBS 70; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1974), 96; Jeremias, *Die Nachtgesichte*, 205, 209; Hanhart, *Sacharja*, 176–77, 191–92. Meyers and Meyers refer to vv. 1–7 as a unit entitled “Heavenly Court and Investiture” (*Haggai, Zechariah* 1–8, 178).

The subsequent section, vv. 8–10, constitutes a separate unit, as can be seen both by the use of שמע־נא, a “call to attention” formula, at the beginning of v. 8, and by the expanded group addressed in these verses, including those “sitting before” Joshua. The literary relationship between vv. 8–10 and the rest of the chapter has been debated extensively by scholars, and lies beyond the scope of this analysis.

the end of Israelite monarchic rule undoubtedly influenced the position of the priest in Second Temple Judaism, it is my suggestion that Zech 3:7 itself cannot be adduced as evidence for any such development. On the contrary, the author of this verse intended to describe Joshua's responsibilities by fashioning them using the First Temple model of the priestly responsibility for the maintenance of the temple. By casting Joshua along the lines of his priestly forebears, this author intended to grant legitimacy to the reinitiation of the temple service following the return to the land. Furthermore, the pledge to Joshua should not be taken as the priestly adoption of the First Temple role of the prophet who ascends to heaven, nor as a precursor of Jewish and Christian descriptions of priestly heavenly ascent, but rather as a personal promise to Joshua, ensuring the future of his dynasty in the temple.

## Shepherds, Sticks, and Social Destabilization: A Fresh Look at Zechariah 11:4–17

ROBERT L. FOSTER

rlfoster@smu.edu

Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX

---

11:4 This is what YHWH my God said, “Shepherd the flock set aside for slaughter. 5 Those who are buying them are killing them and do not feel guilty. Those who are selling them are saying, ‘Blessed be YHWH’ and ‘I am rich.’ And those who are shepherding them do not have compassion on them. 6 For I will not have compassion upon those dwelling in the land,” declares YHWH. “And behold, I will be delivering each person into the hand of their shepherd and into the hand of their king. And they will utterly desolate the land but I will not deliver [the people] from their hands.”

7 So I shepherded the flock set aside for slaughter on behalf of the merchants of the flock. And I took for myself two staves. The one I named “Favor” and the other “Ties.” So I shepherded the flock. 8 And I got rid of three shepherds in one month. But my spirit grew impatient with them and their spirits lost patience with me. 9 So I said, “I will not shepherd you. Let those who are to die, die. Let those who are to be destroyed, be destroyed. And let those who remain eat the flesh of their neighbor.” 10 And I took my staff “Favor” and I broke it to break the covenant made with the peoples. 11 And it was broken in that day. And the merchants of the flock, who watched over them, knew that it was the word of YHWH. 12 And I said to them, “If it seems right in your eyes, pay me my wages. If not, let them be nothing.” So they measured out my wages, 30 silver pieces.

13 Then YHWH said to me, “Throw unto the molder there the princely sum with which you were paid.” So I took the 30 silver pieces and threw them into the house of YHWH unto the molder. 14 And I broke my second staff, “Ties,” to break the family bond between Judah and Israel.

15 Then YHWH said to me, “Once again take the instruments of a worthless shepherd. 16 For, behold, I am placing a shepherd in the land: those being

---

\* This article represents a revision and expansion of the major argument of my master’s thesis written under John T. Willis (“An Exegesis of the Sign-Act Narrative of Zechariah 11:4–17 and Its Theological and Pastoral Implications” [M.A. thesis; Abilene Christian University, 2000]).

destroyed he will not care for; the young he will not seek; the ones being broken he will not heal; those being set apart he will not feed; and the fatty flesh he will eat and their hooves rip off.

17 Woe to the worthless shepherd forsaking the flock!

A sword upon his arm and upon his right eye.

May his arm be completely withered and his right eye completely dimmed."

At the turn of the twentieth century, no less a scholar than S. R. Driver described Zech 11:4–17 as, "the most enigmatic [prophecy] in the Old Testament."<sup>1</sup> As the twentieth century drew to a close, Edgar Conrad echoed the sentiments of Driver in his own comments on this passage, "The grim development of events suggests a peculiar logic now impenetrable."<sup>2</sup> Despite developments during the twentieth century in critical theory used to investigate the biblical text, Conrad found himself in a position similar to Driver, a position with which undoubtedly many readers would concur.

While acknowledging that numerous difficulties attend the interpretation of Zech 11:4–17, I propose to discuss several key issues in order to gain a better understanding of the purpose of this prophetic narrative, both historically and in the book of Zechariah. First, I propose to uncover the identity of the shepherds condemned in this text, a proposal that differs from many of the various approaches in recent scholarship. I think that this identification of the shepherds in the social context of Yehud in the Persian period proves paramount to the second phase of my discussion: uncovering the social situation within Yehud that precipitated the prophetic drama recorded in Zech 11:4–17. Third, understanding the underlying social conflict provides a vista from which to observe the carefully crafted words of this narrative, which are used to convey the condemnation of the social ills envisioned here. As we observe the narrative's portrayal of words and actions, we discover that at key junctures the text is in dialogue with the prophetic message, especially of Isaiah 40–55, undermining any false sense of security that the readers might have based on the various restoration promises in the earlier prophetic tradition. Finally, as the message of Zech 11:4–17 becomes clear, we will in turn discuss the function of this narrative in Zechariah 9–14 and the way it reinforces the overall message of the book of Zechariah.

## I. SHADOWY SHEPHERDS

Perhaps the element that holds the greatest potential for unlocking the historical circumstances that gave rise to the narrative of Zech 11:4–17 involves an

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Driver, *The Minor Prophets* (2 vols.; New York: Henry Frowde, 1904, 1906), 2:253.

<sup>2</sup> Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah* (Readings; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 172.

accurate identification of the “shepherds” condemned in the narrative.<sup>3</sup> Still, even as there appears a growing consensus that this prophecy emerged in the context of Persian-period Yehud,<sup>4</sup> there remain numerous opinions regarding the role of the shepherds envisioned here.<sup>5</sup>

Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers identify the shepherds with false prophets because of the instruction to the prophet in 11:5 to take the instruments of a worthless shepherd.<sup>6</sup> Though the Meyerses theorize that the text reflects the period of devastation prior to the exile, they understand the impetus for Zech 11:4–17 as stemming from the prophet’s present conflict with false prophets.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the “three shepherds” driven away in 11:8 are all false prophets in previous times who contended with true prophets.<sup>8</sup>

The major difficulty with this theory is that, though in the Hebrew Bible “shepherd” refers to a variety of figures, including God (Ps 29:1), Joshua (Num 27:17), judges (2 Sam 7:7), kings (2 Kgs 22:17), and perhaps the king and his officials (Jer 23:1),<sup>9</sup> “shepherd” never refers to prophets. Furthermore, in other ancient

<sup>3</sup> David L. Petersen eschews identifying the “shepherds” as contrary to the nature of the text. He writes that to do so “absolutizes what is obviously highly picturesque discourse, constrained by the form of the symbolic action” (*Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995], 100–101). Petersen’s position seems to assume that the intention of the picturesque discourse is to allow the reader to identify the shepherds with whoever is perceived to act in a fashion similar to the actions condemned in this passage. However, the picturesque language could instead serve to obscure the specific meaning of this passage to those outside the group that shared the symbolic world imaged in this passage while simultaneously conveying a clear message to insiders. The difficulty with understanding the role of the shepherds in ancient Yehud, then, stems primarily from the fact that modern readers especially do not share this symbolic world.

<sup>4</sup> Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 280–86; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25C; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 15–26; Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, 3–21; Marvin A. Sweeney, *The Twelve Prophets* (2 vols.; Berit Olam; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 2:565–66. Cf. Michael H. Floyd, who dates this text in the Hellenistic period (*Minor Prophets, Part 2* [FOTL 22; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 454–57).

<sup>5</sup> A few continental scholars, notably A. S. van der Woude (“Die Hirtenallegorie von Sacharja XI,” *JNSL* 12 [1984]: 139–49) and Alfons Deissler (*Zwölf Propheten III: Zefanja, Haggai, Sacharja, Maleachi* [NEchtB; Würzburg: Echter, 1988], 301–4), argue that Zech 11:4–17 reflects issues of the Hellenistic period, including the Samaritan–Jewish conflict. I leave their arguments to the side because I agree with those who date the text to the Persian period. I deal with Floyd’s opinion because, though he dates the text in the Hellenistic period, he thinks it deals retrospectively with issues of the Persian period.

<sup>6</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 250.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 249–50.

<sup>8</sup> Meyers and Meyers take “three” as a symbol of completeness, as in Gen 42:18; Exod 19:11, 16; and Josh 3:2 (*Zechariah 9–14*, 265).

<sup>9</sup> I agree with scholars who think that the shepherds condemned in Jer 23:1 are the last several kings of Jerusalem; see, e.g., William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah: A Commentary on the Book of the*

Near Eastern texts, the term “shepherd” refers to kings.<sup>10</sup> Thus, for “shepherd” in Zech 11:4–17 to refer to prophets would constitute a significant departure from its normal usage. Furthermore, if Zech 11:4–17 builds on the tradition found in Jer 23:1–6 and Ezek 34:1–10<sup>11</sup> of condemning shepherds, it seems unlikely that Zech 11:4–17 would refer to prophets, when the tradition uses this metaphor to refer to kings. Finally, the prophet in Zech 11:4–17 condemns the shepherds for their *actions* against the sheep (vv. 5, 16), while condemnation of false prophets often focuses on their false *speech* (e.g., Jer 23:9–40; Ezekiel 13; Mic 3:5–7).

Paul D. Hanson proposed that the term “shepherds” refers to the Zadokite-led hierocracy, which the prophet condemns along the lines of the visionary tradition of Second Isaiah.<sup>12</sup> Hanson and other proponents of the priestly theory offer several arguments to support their thesis. First, the sheep merchants exclaim, “Blessed be YHWH” (v. 5), suggesting that the merchants receive priestly approval in spite of their gross injustices.<sup>13</sup> Second, the prophet names one of his staves “Favor” (v. 7), linking this staff to the temple; in several passages in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Pss 28:5; 31:21; 41:23),<sup>14</sup> “favor” signifies God’s presence in the temple. Third, the prophet casts the wages he earned as a shepherd into the temple (Zech 11:13), indicating that the prophet held the priesthood responsible for the plight of the sheep.<sup>15</sup> Fourth, the physical incapacities described in the woe oracle in v. 17 would render a priest unfit for service in the temple.<sup>16</sup> Finally, if this narrative refers to buying and selling slaves (on this subject, see below), then perhaps this text condemns the priesthood for this sin based on the reference to slaves among the temple personnel in Neh 7:73.<sup>17</sup>

Like the identification of the shepherds with prophets, the theory that “shepherds” refers to priests falters mainly because no other biblical or ancient Near Eastern text makes such an identification, nor does the tradition of Jeremiah 23 and

---

*Prophet Jeremiah*, vol. 1, *Chapters 1–25*; vol. 2, *Chapters 26–52* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986, 1989), 1:613. For the opinion that “shepherds” includes the kings’ officials, see, e.g., John Bright, *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB 21; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965).

<sup>10</sup> James W. Vancil, “Sheep, Shepherd,” *ABD* 5:1188–89.

<sup>11</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 481; Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 337; Ben C. Ollenburger, “The Book of Zechariah,” *NIB* 8:820.

<sup>12</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 345–46. Among his followers are Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi* (WBC 22; Waco: Word Books, 1984), 270–71; Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope: A Commentary on the Books of Haggai and Zechariah* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 135–39. See similarly Rex Mason, *The Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (CBC; London: Cambridge, 1977), 106.

<sup>13</sup> Mason, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 106; Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 137.

<sup>14</sup> Mason, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 106; Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 137–38.

<sup>15</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 347; Mason, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 109.

<sup>16</sup> Mason, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, 110.

<sup>17</sup> Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 137.



Ezekiel 34, on which Zech 11:4–17 builds. Furthermore, though the phrase “Blessed be YHWH” occurs in cultic settings, it appears also in noncultic settings (e.g., Ruth 4:14; 1 Sam 25:32; 1 Kgs 10:9), indicating that the use of this phrase in Zech 11:4–17 could also occur in a noncultic setting.

Additionally, though נַעַם sometimes refers to the “favor” of YHWH in the temple, at other times this term refers to the blessing of land allotment (Ps 16:6)<sup>18</sup> or the grandeur of a nation, such as Egypt (Ezek 32:19).<sup>19</sup> The fact that Zech 11:10 links נַעַם to a covenant with the nations makes it likely that “favor” refers to a geopolitical reality in this instance. Further, the phrase “a sword upon X” normally refers to the defeat of a rebellious nation (e.g., Lev 26:25; Jer 50:35–37), indicating that the weakened shepherd in 11:17 serves a political function that entails some form of military responsibility.

Finally, even if 11:5 refers to buying and selling slaves, the fact that “slaves” appear among the temple personnel listed in Neh 7:73 does not necessarily mean that the priests were involved in oppressive acts. Baruch Levine argues that the נְתִינִים mentioned in Neh 7:73 consisted of members of a guild who maintained their freedom though they devoted themselves to temple service.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the author of Nehemiah portrays the priests positively in ch. 5, when Nehemiah calls on them to witness the oath pledged by the nobles and officials to quit selling slaves (Neh 5:12), making it unlikely that the נְתִינִים belong in the same class of individuals that Nehemiah tried to liberate only two chapters earlier in the narrative.

Interestingly, Hanson does not maintain that Zech 11:4–17 addresses priests throughout but in vv. 15 and 16 turns to condemn the Davidic governor. Hanson argues this based on his thesis that the prophet in 11:4–17 responds to the visions of Ezekiel 34 and 37, and particularly the promise of a new David in 34:23–24 and 37:24.<sup>21</sup> Thus, Hanson (though not necessarily others who hold the priestly theory) thinks that 11:4–17 condemns both cultic and political leadership. Though I do not agree with Hanson with regard to either the priestly theory or the main textual interaction of this passage, I do think this move toward a vision of shepherds as political leadership heads in the right direction.

Marvin Sweeney proposes that “shepherds” in 11:4–17 refers to specific political leadership in the Persian period—the Persian kings who exercised authority over Yehud. He bases his theory on the reference to Cyrus as “shepherd” in Isa

<sup>18</sup> J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “The Book of Psalms,” *NIB* 4:737; cf. Hans-Joachim Kraus, who argues that Psalm 16 reflects the view of a Levitical priest whose portion is YHWH (*Psalms 1–59: A Commentary* [trans. H. C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 238).

<sup>19</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48* (WBC 29; Waco: Word Books, 1990), 137.

<sup>20</sup> Baruch Levine, “The NETINIM,” *JBL* 82 (1963): 207–12; see also C. J. Labuschagne, “נְתִינִים ntn to give,” *TLOT* 2:778.

<sup>21</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 345, 348–51.

44:28.<sup>22</sup> Consequently, Sweeney thinks that the three shepherds driven away in Zech 11:8 are Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius. Furthermore, he suggests that the conflict with kings and neighbors (Zech 11:6) reflects the revolts that occurred early in the reign of Darius.<sup>23</sup> This view commends itself particularly because it identifies “shepherd” with a group clearly indicated in the biblical and extrabiblical materials.

I hold that throughout Zech 11:4–17 “shepherd” refers to the governors of Yehud in the Persian period. I differ significantly with Sweeney on the translation of רעהו in v. 6. The following argument thus serves both as a refutation of Sweeney’s thesis and as part of my larger argument in support of the theory that “shepherds” refers to the governors of Yehud.

Sweeney and others translate רעהו as “his neighbor” based on the textual evidence of the MT, the LXX, and the Targums.<sup>24</sup> Yet the unpointed Hebrew text allows for the translation of either “his neighbor” or “his shepherd.” Furthermore, support for the translation “his neighbor” derives from the apparent parallel in v. 9, where the prophet leaves the remaining sheep to “eat the flesh of her neighbor.” Thus, “to eat the flesh of her neighbor” (v. 9) would parallel YHWH’s placing every person “in the hand of his neighbor” (v. 6). However, this parallelism breaks down when one considers that “they will utterly devastate the land” (v. 6)—“they” apparently referring to the רעה and מלך mentioned in v. 6.

It seems highly unlikely that the neighbors in the land of Yehud would have sufficient strength to participate in the utter devastation of the land. One of the major semantic domains of כתת (“to devastate utterly”) involves the defeat of one army by another, as when the Canaanites defeated the Israelites coming out of Egypt (Num 14:45; Deut 1:44) and Nebuchadnezzar defeated Pharaoh Neco and his army (Jer 46:5). Thus, כתת may refer to the military defeat of a weaker foe by a stronger one.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the “neighbors” in v. 9, apparently the people of the land of Yehud, seem unlikely to have sufficient strength to defeat others in battle; more likely they would be victims of such utter devastation.

Furthermore, in conjunction with כתת, the prophet reports that YHWH does not intend to deliver (נצל) the land “from their hand” (v. 6). “To deliver” often refers to YHWH’s rescuing the people of Israel from their enemies—the people from the land of Egypt (Exod 3:8; 6:6; 18:4, 8, 9), Jerusalem from the Assyrian army (2 Kgs 18:29, 30; 20:6), or Judah from Babylon (Mic 4:10). So, in Zech 11:6, the promise that YHWH will not deliver the people from “their hand” likely refers to the military enemies of the land of Yehud. The combination of כתת, נצל, and ארץ (the land of Yehud) in Zech 11:6, all referring to the (in)activity of YHWH, points to the military

<sup>22</sup> Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 2:677.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 678, 679.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 679; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 268.

<sup>25</sup> See Sara Japhet, who writes that כתת in 2 Chr 15:6 refers to “infraternal strife” (*I & II Chronicles* [OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993], 721).

exploits of a strong foe in the land of Yehud, which YHWH will not prevent. Thus, it seems best to translate רעהו as “his shepherd,” a political figure of some authority who may inflict such utter devastation in the land that the people will desire YHWH to deliver them.

If one accepts the translation of רעהו as “his shepherd,” the next question we must address involves whether to take רעהו as synonymously parallel with מלכו.<sup>26</sup> That these words are not synonymous is suggested by their use in the phrase ביד רעהו וביד מלכו. In examples of the phrase Y וביד X in the Hebrew Bible, X and Y are normally two different peoples, countries, or entities (e.g., Judg 10:7; 1 Sam 12:9; 2 Kgs 13:3).<sup>27</sup> As a result, one should take מלך and רעה in Zech 11:6 as two different persons, the king and his representative shepherd.

Even if one translates רעהו as “his shepherd” and distinguishes between shepherd and king in v. 6, this does not necessarily mean that one should conclude that the shepherds condemned in Zech 11:4–17 are the governors of Yehud. The term “shepherd,” excluding references to YHWH, refers to chief political figures both in the decentralized political period (Joshua, the judges) and the centralized period (the kings), however.<sup>28</sup> I believe one can reasonably assume that the use of the term “shepherd” in the colonial period (under Babylonian and Persian rule) would carry connotations of political authority, so that “shepherd” refers to the chief political figure also in Yehud—in this case the governors of Yehud.

Knowledge of Persian-period satraps and the witness of biblical texts such as Zechariah 1–8 and Nehemiah indicate that Yehud structured itself in a diarchy (the governor and high priest), not a theocracy.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, there is a growing consensus that a continuous line of governors existed in Yehud from the time of Zerubbabel to Nehemiah, meaning that the Samaritan governors did not directly oversee the region in the years between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah.<sup>30</sup> Alongside this evi-

<sup>26</sup> So Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, 93.

<sup>27</sup> However, cf. Jer 21:7; 22:25; 32:28; and 34:20. In these texts X and Y (and sometimes Y1 and Z) are apparently the same, but the LXX of these passages differs significantly from the MT. Holladay proposes that Y and Y1 and Z in the MT are expansions, and he eliminates them (*Jeremiah*, 1:568, 604; 2:205, 238).

<sup>28</sup> I employ here Norman Gottwald’s terminology; see *The Politics of Ancient Israel* [Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001], 15–16.

<sup>29</sup> Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia’s Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 63–65; Gottwald, *Politics in Ancient Israel*, 104; Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol. 1, *The Persian and Greek Periods* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 74–75; David L. Petersen, “The Temple in the Persian Prophetic Texts,” in *Second Temple Studies*, vol. 1, *The Persian Period* (ed. Philip R. Davies; JSOTSup 117; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 136.

<sup>30</sup> Charles E. Carter, *The Emergence of Yehud in the Persian Period: A Social and Demographic Study* (JSOTSup 294; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 301; Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 1:79–83; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai; Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25B; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 9–16; H. G. M. Williamson, “The Governors under the Persians,” *TynBul* 39 (1988): 59–82. Cf. Ephraim

dence one observes that in the book of Nehemiah the governor appears to act with authority over the priesthood when necessary (Neh 5:12; 7:1–5; 13:4–14).<sup>31</sup> Other texts that address this period indicate that the temple and priesthood fell into neglect (e.g., Ezra 9–10; Nehemiah 10; 13; Hag 1:2–6; Mal 2:10–16; Isaiah 65; 66:17);<sup>32</sup> it appears, therefore, that in the diarchy the governor exercised the highest level of authority in the community.<sup>33</sup>

Michael Floyd argues that “shepherd” in Zech 11:4–17 refers to a lower official with responsibility to the king (noting the pairing of king and shepherd in v. 6), though he does not identify the specific position. Floyd’s identification of the shepherd as a lower official stems from his view of several texts that seem to apply the term “shepherd” to an entire class of persons who govern (i.e., Isa 63:11; Mic 5:4[5]; Nah 3:18).<sup>34</sup> The disputable nature of Isa 63:11 renders this text questionable for use in this particular discussion. Mic 5:4[5] and Nah 3:18 seem particularly relevant to our discussion, especially if, as I argue, these texts actually refer to governors.

It is significant that in neither Mic 5:4[5] nor Nah 3:18 does “shepherd” necessarily refer to an entire class of ruling officials. Thus, Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman write that “to raise up” in Mic 5:4 echoes the language of God raising up charismatic deliverers in the days of the judges.<sup>35</sup> They take the parallel term to shepherd, נָסִיךְ, to refer to chieftains of a federation of tribes (so Josh 13:21; Ezek 32:30; Ps 83:12).<sup>36</sup> Delbert Hillers also maintains that this term refers to chieftains, though he emends the text to read “eight Aramaean chiefs” rather than “eight chiefs of men.”<sup>37</sup> The point pertinent to the current discussion is that “shepherd” in Mic 5:4 apparently refers to a territorial ruler rather than, more generally, to a whole class of ruling officials.

---

Stern, who thinks that the governors named on seal impressions, who are taken by others as Judean governors between Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, actually postdate Nehemiah (*Archaeology of the Land of the Bible*, vol. 2, *The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods, 732–332 BCE* [ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001], 356–57, 545–51).

<sup>31</sup> Duly noting David J. A. Clines’s caution concerning the use of the Nehemiah memoirs for historical evidence (“The Nehemiah Memoir: The Perils of Autobiography,” in *What Does Eve Do to Help?* [JSOTSup 94; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994], 124–64).

<sup>32</sup> Using the list developed by Peter R. Bedford, “On Models and Texts: A Response to Blenkinsopp and Petersen,” in *Second Temple Studies*, vol. 1, ed. Davies, 158, 162.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Temple and Society in Achaemenid Judah,” in *Second Temple Studies*, vol. 1, ed. Davies, 23; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 247–48. Berquist calls the governor “the highest Persian authority, while recognizing the significant cultural influence of the high priest (*Judaism in Persia’s Shadow*, 155).

<sup>34</sup> Floyd, *Minor Prophets* 2, 487.

<sup>35</sup> Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Micah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24E; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 473, 474, 477, 478.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 479. Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner offer “leader, chief of a tribe” as a definition of נָסִיךְ (*HALOT* 2:703).

<sup>37</sup> Delbert R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 68.

Similarly, with regard to Nah 3:18, Richard Coggins proposes that “shepherds” signifies the vice-regents appointed by the Assyrian king.<sup>38</sup> One also notes that the UBS translation handbook for Nahum suggests translating the term “shepherd” as “governor.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, it appears that at least two of the passages Floyd uses to support his thesis that the shepherds in Zech 11:4–17 are a whole class of governing officials may in fact refer more strictly to governors.

In sum, several items exterior and interior to the text of Zechariah point to the validity of the thesis that the shepherds condemned in this passage are governors of Yehud during the Persian period. Exterior witnesses include that fact that “shepherd” in the Hebrew Bible, especially the tradition of Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34, and in the ancient Near East refers to the leading political figure, whether the king or, as in early Israel, Moses or the judges. Furthermore, we know that in the Persian-period satrapy the governor held the greatest authority, a picture supported by biblical texts such as Nehemiah. Interior to the text, I argue that one should translate רעהו in v. 6 as “his shepherd” and not “his friend”; that נעם (11:10) sometimes refers to the blessing or favor of land, not simply to a priestly blessing; and that the phrase “a sword upon his arm and upon his right eye” should be understood in terms of a political leader with military responsibilities, consonant with the use of the phrase “a sword upon X” elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

## II. SOCIAL SITUATION OF ZECHARIAH 11:4–17

Clarifying the specific social position of the shepherds addressed in this narrative puts us far down the road toward understanding the import of this passage. However, several other points need clarification, not least of which is understanding the particular deeds denounced in this narrative. What did the shepherds do that generated such a strong reaction?

A full discussion of the genre of this text would unduly lengthen this article, but I argue that this passage presents a narrative report of a sign-act or prophetic drama.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the narrative reports multiple sign-acts, much like the series in Jer 13:1–11 (linen belt), Hos 1:2–11 (Hosea’s marriage to Gomer and the subsequent naming of children), and Ezek 4:1–5:12 (a series of actions signifying the fall of Jerusalem). Georg Fohrer enumerates three basic elements of the sign-act narrative: (1) YHWH commands an action to be performed, (2) the text relates the per-

<sup>38</sup> Richard J. Coggins and S. Paul Re’emi, *Nahum, Obadiah, Esther* (ITC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 58.

<sup>39</sup> David J. Clark and Howard A. Hatton, *A Translator’s Guide on the Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Helps for Translators; New York: United Bible Society, 1989), 69.

<sup>40</sup> David Stacey offers the phrase “prophetic drama” for the type of actions like that reported in the narrative of Zech 11:4–17 (*Prophetic Drama in the Old Testament* [London: Epworth, 1990]).

formance of the action, and (3) the text interprets the action.<sup>41</sup> In Zech 11:4–17 YHWH gives three separate commands for the prophet to obey (11:4b, 13b, 15b), though the narrative relates only two reports of the prophet's obedience (11:7–12, 13c–14). Several words of interpretation appear throughout the text (11:6, 10, 14, 16). As with other texts with multiple sign-acts, each sign-act commission in Zech 11:4–17 begins with *כה אמר יהוה* (11:4, 13, 15).

In Zech 11:4–17 YHWH commissions the prophet to adopt the role of shepherd—which might suggest to the naïve reader that the prophet actually gained employment as a shepherd in Yehud—to signify the unjust actions of the governors of Judah. The question remains, Why use this particular cultural reality to dramatize the negative role of the governors and YHWH's response? One of the striking features of the narrative involves the prevalence of commercial terminology. Verse 5 refers to “buyers” (*קניהן*) and “sellers” (*מכריהן*) of the sheep. Those who sell the sheep and profit from it bless YHWH saying, “I am rich” (*אעשר* [v. 5]). The prophet shepherds the flock on behalf of merchants (*כנעניי* [vv. 7–11]).<sup>42</sup> The merchants pay the prophet his wages (*שכרי* [v. 12]), thirty pieces of silver (*שלשים כסף*), which YHWH sarcastically calls “a lordly sum” (*אדר היקר* [v. 13]). It is this commercial vocabulary that seems to hold the key to the issue at hand in Zech 11:4–17.

This mercantile language also functions in contexts that address the buying and selling of slaves. For example, the root *קנה* occurs primarily in contexts that discuss slave trade (e.g., Exod 21:2; Lev 25:44, 45, 50; Deut 28:68; Neh 5:8; Amos 8:6). Exodus 21:2 and Lev 25:44 specifically introduce manumission laws regarding constraints on enslaving fellow Israelites. Amos 8:6 condemns those who wait for the end of the Sabbath so that they can “buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals.” Andersen and Freedman argue that Amos 8:6 addresses the ruling class.<sup>43</sup> In an ironic twist, in Neh 5:8, which discusses the Persian period, Nehemiah condemns the elite of Israel for selling their fellow Israelites into slavery after Nehemiah and those of a similar disposition “bought back” fellow Israelites previously sold into slavery among the nations.

Similarly, in texts dealing with selling fellow Israelites as slaves, the root *מכר* serves as the key word for selling (e.g., Exod 21:7, 8; Lev 25:39, 47, 48). Various prophets condemn selling people, especially the needy, into slavery, including again Amos, who chastises those selling the innocent for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals (2:6). Joel 3:3–8 pronounces judgment upon Tyre and Sidon for selling

<sup>41</sup> Georg Fohrer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (trans. David E. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 1968), 356.

<sup>42</sup> This requires a slight emendation of the MT, based on the LXX *χατανῆτιν*; see HALOT 2:486.

<sup>43</sup> Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 802.

Judeans into slavery to the Greeks. One also notes that Nehemiah's confrontation with those selling Israelites back into slavery (5:8) uses the word מכר three times.

Finally, one of the ironies apparent in Zechariah 11 concerns the prophet's wages of thirty pieces of silver (v. 13). In Exod 21:32, the law mandates that an owner whose slave is gored by someone else's ox may expect to receive thirty pieces of silver as compensation. Thus, the "lordly sum" the merchants paid to the prophet just happens to be the same amount one would pay to compensate someone for the loss of a slave.

This combination of words indicates that the situation that the prophet dramatizes concerns the buying and selling of fellow Israelites into slavery.<sup>44</sup> As noted above, two of these key terms, קנה and מכר, occur in the passage in Neh 5:1–13, which purports to describe a situation of injustice in the Persian period, in which the elite were selling needy fellow Israelites into slavery. The sense that a travesty occurs in Neh 5:1–13 increases when one considers that Nehemiah and those with him bought back as many fellow Israelites from slavery among the nations as they were able (5:8). At the end of this narrative, Nehemiah reflects on his practice of not accepting the food allowance from the king while he served as governor over Yehud (5:14–19). The governors before him in Yehud had accepted the food allowance, which they took from the people in the land, laying upon the people a heavy burden (5:15, 18). Even the servants of the governors oppressed the people (5:15).

Here perhaps is the kind of situation condemned in the prophet's dramatic action narrated in Zech 11:4–17. The prophet symbolizes the worthless shepherds (11:15),<sup>45</sup> who do not care for those being destroyed or seek the young or heal the broken or feed those sheep specially set apart (11:16). The shepherds, all of the ones prior to the time of Zech 11:4–17,<sup>46</sup> proved worthless, not caring for those in need. The governors managed to care for themselves but failed to intervene on

<sup>44</sup> Petersen writes: "Since this text is not an allegory, it is inappropriate to presume that the act of selling (v. 5) involves slave trade" (*Zechariah 9–14*, 92 n. 115). Yet the combination of terms associated with buying and selling slaves seems to argue against this opinion. Petersen views this text as a report of a series of symbolic actions, and in this light it seems difficult to maintain that the selling referred to in the text cannot stand for something else, as one would expect with symbolism.

<sup>45</sup> In 11:15 YHWH commands the prophet to *again* take the implements of a worthless shepherd, indicating that his first actions also represent the actions of a worthless shepherd (11:4). Cf. Mark J. Boda, who thinks that עֹד modifies the introductory statement, "Thus said YHWH my God," rather than the verb "to take"/קח ("Reading Between the Lines: Zechariah 11:4–16 in Its Literary Contexts," in *Bringing Out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9–14* [ed. Mark J. Boda and Michael H. Floyd; JSOTSup 370; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003], 83).

<sup>46</sup> The interpretation of the text as a condemnation of all the previous governors of Judah relies on understanding "three" as representing wholeness or totality, so that the "three shepherds" disposed of in one month means all previous shepherds (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 265). Bruce C. Birch affirms that in the ancient Near East the number three "seems to have been regarded as symbolic of a complete and ordered whole" ("Number," *ISBE* 3:558).



behalf of the poor in the land, who were being bought and sold into slavery by the elite. It is this type of activity that led the prophet to dramatic action that portrayed the judgment of YHWH against such practices and against the inaction of the governors in the face of such oppression.

### III. STAVES, GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY, AND SOCIAL DESTABILIZATION

Up to this point, I have argued that the shepherds condemned in Zech 11:4-17 are the governors of the land of Yehud in the Persian period and that the main issue that gave impetus to the narration involved the governors' toleration or even promotion of the selling of fellow Israelites into slavery by the elite in Yehud because the system aggrandized their own position. This leaves at least one other major interpretive issue in this passage: how to understand the text's interpretation of the prophetic action, especially the breaking of the two staves "Favor" and "Ties" (vv. 7, 10, 14).

Walter Brueggemann offers an enlightening comment on the social function of the prophets by highlighting that they often serve as counterforces of stabilization in their social system.<sup>47</sup> The daily presence of the powerless and disenfranchised provides the impetus for the prophet's destabilizing speech and action. Thus, the prophet's role involves exposing the lie of the existing social situation.<sup>48</sup>

The structure of this passage revolves around the commands of YHWH issued in vv. 4, 13, and 15, each introduced by a variation of the original narrative statement, "Thus said YHWH my God" (v. 4). This original phrase, with the rare use of the possessive "my" with the divine name<sup>49</sup> places the prophet unequivocally on the side of YHWH in contrast to the addressees in this text, especially the leadership confronted in the use of the shepherd terminology. Yet the interpretive comments on the breaking of the staves demonstrate the effect of the sins of the governors on the whole existence of the people of Yehud.

At the climax of the first prophetic drama the prophet breaks his staff, "'Favor' . . . to break my covenant which I made with all the peoples." This interpretive comment demonstrates the close tie between the prophet and YHWH, already estab-

<sup>47</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "The Prophet as a Destabilizing Force," in idem, *A Social Reading of the Old Testament: Prophetic Approaches to Israel's Communal Life* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 223. That the prophets *often* serve as counterforces to stabilization implies that at other times they serve to stabilize the social system. This latter portrayal of the prophet as a stabilizing force is the primary vision of the text in Zechariah 1-8.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 224, 229.

<sup>49</sup> Rex L. Mason, "The Use of Earlier Biblical Material in Zechariah IX-XIV" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1973), 139; Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 249; Henning Graf Reventlow, *Die Propheten Haggai, Sacharja, und Maleachi* (ATD 25/2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 109.



lished in v. 4, as the prophet's actions and words become "an event of God."<sup>50</sup> The breaking of the staff represents the breaking of God's covenant with all the peoples—though which covenant the prophet/YHWH means remains obscure.

Hanson and others argue that the covenant in view is the covenant of peace of Ezek 34:25 and 37:26.<sup>51</sup> This proposal relies on the larger theory that Zech 11:4–17 purposefully reverses the promises in these two chapters of Ezekiel. The major argument against this theory is the fact that the covenant terminology that supposedly links the passages in Ezekiel and Zechariah is too general; there is a more precise link between Zechariah and the prophecies in Isaiah 40–55, to which we will turn momentarily. However, two further points are noteworthy here. First, while Zech 11:4–17 builds on the tradition of condemning political leaders through the use of the metaphor of the shepherd, this use of tradition (1) extends to an earlier text in Jer 23:1–6 and (2) does not establish an intertextual link between Ezekiel 34 and 37 and Zechariah 11.<sup>52</sup> Second, though Ezekiel 37 discusses two "sticks,"<sup>53</sup> neither "stick" refers to a covenant with the people, as in Zechariah 11.

Another theory asserts that the "covenant with the peoples" refers to God's covenant with the people of Israel, based on the use of the plural עַמִּים to designate one's own people in other biblical texts (Gen 49:10; 1 Kgs 22:28; Joel 2:6).<sup>54</sup> BHS seems to support the idea that the covenant is one YHWH made with Israel, as it emends the text to the singular עַם. Still, those who hold this theory admit that the use of the plural עַמִּים to refer to a singular people is rare.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, given that Zech 11:4–17 indicates the presence of other nations in the reference to the king (v. 6) and the language of exile (v. 9), it seems likely that "peoples" refers to other nations as well.

David Petersen argues that the covenant with the peoples refers to the covenant with Noah recorded in Genesis 9 because (1) the Noachian covenant involved all the peoples and (2) the destruction of the peoples in Zechariah 11 reverses the promise to protect the peoples from destruction.<sup>56</sup> This Noachian the-

<sup>50</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (OBT; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 154.

<sup>51</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 344–45; Mason, "Use of Earlier Biblical Material," 152; Ollenburger, "Book of Zechariah," 821; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 270–71; Stuhlmüller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 138–39.

<sup>52</sup> For an excellent discussion of the difference between inner-biblical allusion, inner-biblical exegesis, intertextuality, tradition history, and "literature in the second degree," see David L. Petersen, "Zechariah 9–14: Methodological Reflections," in *Bringing Out the Treasure*, ed. Boda and Floyd, 210–24.

<sup>53</sup> Notice again an uncertain lexical link owing to the use of two different words.

<sup>54</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*; 270–71; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972), 184; Paul L. Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 126.

<sup>55</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*; 271; Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 184.

<sup>56</sup> Petersen, *Zechariah 9–14 and Malachi*, 95.

ory falters because the devastation of the land in Zechariah 11 refers strictly to the people in the land of Yehud, not all peoples, and the covenant never again to destroy the earth is a covenant with all creatures (Gen 9:10, 12, 15), which is not a concern in Zechariah 11.

At this point it may be helpful to introduce Risto Nurmela's discussion of inner-biblical allusion and his criteria for establishing the degree of certainty of whether one has located an instance of inner-biblical allusion.<sup>57</sup> According to Nurmela, an allusion is not a quotation, but there must be some identifiable verbal, synonymic, or thematic similarities, and these must seem intentional. The allusion may "*confirm the fulfillment of a message of judgment, proclaim the fulfillment of an oracle of salvation, or reverse a message of judgment.*"<sup>58</sup> Nurmela proposes the following criteria for establishing whether an allusion is sure, probable, or possible:

1. A *sure* allusion requires three instances of exclusive similarity, verbal, thematic, or synonymic similarity, or reversing a message of judgment.
2. A *probable* allusion displays two such similarities or reversals.
3. A *possible* allusion displays only one such similarity or reversal.<sup>59</sup>

The strength of Nurmela's proposal is that he brings rigor and clarity to the discussion of inner-biblical allusion, though it seems nearly impossible to state categorically that any perceived allusion is sure. A reasonable addition to Nurmela's indicators of an allusion is that the allusion may *reverse a message of salvation/hope*. This is a natural extension of his categories, which include the proclamation of a confirmation of an oracle of judgment or salvation, and is consonant with texts such as Jer 18:1–12, which states that YHWH may reverse either a promised judgment or a hope.

Given these criteria, it seems that we find a *sure* allusion to texts in Isaiah 40–55 in breaking the staff "Favor" . . . to break the covenant made with the peoples." One of the difficulties in previous studies is the inability to find a parallel to the "covenant with the peoples." Yet Isa 42:6 and 49:8 are two prophecies that describe the Servant as a "covenant to the people," a combination of terms uniquely connecting these passages in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>60</sup> Though the interpretation of the Servant Songs involves many difficulties beyond the scope of this article, these texts deserve further discussion to highlight the way Zech 11:10 alludes to these two Servant passages.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> For the full discussion, see Risto Nurmela, "The Method Applied in This Study," ch.3 in *Prophets in Dialogue: Inner-Biblical Allusions in Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1996), 23–37.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 25 (emphasis original).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>60</sup> At least in 42:6 עַם obviously refers to more than one people, as it parallels גוֹיִם. It is not as obvious that 49:8 refers to multiple nations, though the overall context includes several references to the nations, including the Servant as a light to the nations (see also 49:1, 7, 12, 22–23, 26).

<sup>61</sup> For a classic discussion of the issues involved, see H. H. Rowley, "The Servant of the Lord

In Isaiah 42, the Servant's role as a covenant to the people/light to the nations results in the release of prisoners from the dungeon, of those in prison from darkness (v. 7), a likely reference to the liberation of Jews from their exilic captivity.<sup>62</sup> The larger context confirms this idea of release as a return from exile: in 42:16 the image is of God bringing people down a road out of darkness into light, and ch. 43 promises that God has redeemed his people and will bring them from east and west, north and south, from the ends of the earth (vv. 5–6). Isaiah 49 also apparently envisages the Servant as a covenant with the people in terms of a return from exile (v. 8): the Servant restores the tribes of Israel (v. 66) and brings prisoners out of darkness, from far away, from north and west, even from Syrene (vv. 9–11).<sup>63</sup> Thus, the vision of the Servant as a covenant to the nations means that the Servant facilitates the return of the exiles among the nations to the land of Israel.

The breaking of the staff "Favor" to break the covenant with the peoples, then, means that YHWH reverses the promise to [continue to] bring the Jews back to their homeland from north, south, east, and west, from the ends of the earth. Here, too, is a thematic parallel in the leadership role on behalf of the people, though again a reversal. In Isaiah 42 and 49 the Servant is appointed as a leader who brings benefit to the people so that they may return from exile. In Zechariah 11 YHWH distances himself from the leaders of the people of Yehud, which will lead to devastation of the land rather than a return of exiles. Zechariah 11:4–17 develops the tradition of poor shepherds that is found in Jer 23:1–6 and Ezekiel 34, but the interpretive comment on the staff "Favor" actually alludes to passages from Isaiah 40–55, in my estimation a sure allusion.<sup>64</sup>

At the end of the second prophetic drama, when the prophet throws his wages to the potter in the temple, he breaks his staff "Ties" to "break the family bond between Israel and Judah" (Zech 11:14). Here the interpretive statement seems clear, but the text to which it alludes is not as readily identifiable as in 11:10. Scholars seem agreed that the identity of the "potter" (my translation "molder") in the temple is a key to the meaning of this symbolic action and its interpretive statement, though difficulties obtain here as well.

Part of the difficulty in identifying the potter has to do with the variations in the textual witnesses: the MT contains the word יוצר ("potter"), while the Targum

---

in Light of Three Decades of Criticism," in idem, *The Servant of the Lord and Other Essays on the Old Testament* (London: Lutterworth, 1952), 3–57.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 433; Harry M. Orlinsky, "The So-Called 'Servant of the Lord' and 'Suffering Servant' in Second Isaiah," in Harry M. Orlinsky and N. H. Snaith, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah* (VTSup 17; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 44, 90, 100, 103; R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66* (NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 75.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 191; Whybray, *Isaiah 40–66*, 138.

<sup>64</sup> This is counter to Nurmela's thesis that Zechariah 9–14 contains no allusions to Second Isaiah (*Prophets in Dialogue*, 168).

and Syriac read *אוצר* ("treasury"). Consequently, several scholars argue for emending the text to follow the Targum and Syriac, especially since temples often served as treasuries in the ancient Near East,<sup>65</sup> priests served as administrators of the temple treasury,<sup>66</sup> and Neh 10:39 combines the terms *אוצר* and *בית* to refer to the temple treasury.<sup>67</sup> Those who emend the text and so understand that the prophet throws his wages into the treasury in the temple nevertheless offer various theories as to the meaning of the act. Ben Ollenburger links the thirty shekels to Leviticus 27, a passage that lists various sums equivalent to "life worth" that people could donate to the temple to free themselves from a vow to service in the temple.<sup>68</sup> Hanson argues that throwing the money into the temple treasury "unmistakably shows that the prophet identifies the temple and its leadership as the ultimate source of corruption in Yehud."<sup>69</sup> Douglas Jones writes that putting the money in the temple shows that the prophet performed God's work and that Zion stood at the center of the flock of YHWH.<sup>70</sup> Carol Meyers and Eric Meyers simply think that the prophet took the wages he earned and donated them to the temple and that this action carried no negative connotation.<sup>71</sup>

My preference is to locate a meaning that allows us to retain the wording of the MT and that remains consonant with the general thrust of this text, which I think emerges in the inner-biblical allusion to which I will turn momentarily. The previous theories, each in its own way, seem to falter even if one were to accept the emendation of the text. Both Ollenburger and Hanson develop their arguments based on the idea that Zech 11:4–17 censures the temple and its personnel, which I have argued is not the concern of this text. Jones's thesis seems possible but apparently does not acknowledge the interpretive comment in 11:14. Finally, it seems difficult to accept the Meyerses' thesis that no negative connotation obtains in 11:13, given the negative consequences—the breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel in 11:14.

Others follow C. C. Torrey and retain *יוצר*, maintaining that this refers to a metalworker in the temple who melted down metals donated to the temple, rather than to a "potter" per se.<sup>72</sup> 2 Kings 12:11 and 22:9 seem to support this theory, as

<sup>65</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 340; Douglas R. Jones, "A Fresh Interpretation of Zechariah IX–XI," VT 12 (1962): 241–59; Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 277; Ollenburger, "Book of Zechariah," 822.

<sup>66</sup> E.g., 2 Chr 29:6–9; Neh 7:69–70 = Ezra 2:68–69; Mal 3:8; so Ollenburger, who considers the shepherds in Zech 11:4–17 as priests ("Book of Zechariah," 822).

<sup>67</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 278.

<sup>68</sup> Ollenburger, "Book of Zechariah," 822.

<sup>69</sup> Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 347.

<sup>70</sup> Jones, "Fresh Interpretation," 254.

<sup>71</sup> Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 276, 278.

<sup>72</sup> C. C. Torrey, "The Foundry of the Second Temple at Jerusalem," JBL 55 (1936): 247–60;

they indicate that the first temple had a metalworker.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, יצר sometimes refers to shaping or forming, for example, of weapons (Isa 54:17) or idols (Isa 44:9, 10, 12).<sup>74</sup> Herodotus refers to metalworkers storing metal in pottery during the days of Darius Hystaspis.<sup>75</sup> Finally, temples required the service of such metalworkers because they often served as storehouses in the ancient Near East.<sup>76</sup> Those who think that יוצר refers to a metalworker in the temple think that casting the money to the metalworker symbolizes some form of low esteem, whether the low esteem held for the condemned leadership<sup>77</sup> or the people's little esteem for the prophet as a good shepherd.<sup>78</sup>

It seems reasonable to retain יוצר and to understand it as a reference to a metalworker in the temple, but as symbolic of something else. I reject the thesis, however, that this refers to the people's little esteem for the prophet as a good shepherd, since I argue that the prophet actually symbolizes ineffective shepherds/governors. Rather, as Marvin Sweeney notes, the verb יצר in several instances refers to YHWH as "creator," the one who formed Israel and Judah, so that the prophet casts his wages to YHWH in the temple.<sup>79</sup> I would simply emend this to say that the prophet literally cast his wages to the metalworker in the temple, though this symbolizes casting the wages to YHWH. This symbolism I think directs us toward locating the inner-biblical allusion on which 11:13–14 builds.

The image of YHWH as the one who formed Israel and Judah in the womb emerges especially in Isaiah 40–55 (43:1, 7, 21; 44:21, 24; 45:11), though the only passage with references to both Israel and Judah is 44:21–28. Here we find several verbal, synonymic, and thematic parallels to Zech 11:13–14. As already noted, Isa 44:21–28 twice introduces YHWH as the one who formed his people, once in reference to Israel (44:21) and once in reference to Judah (44:24; see 44:26). Furthermore, the passage contains a reference to the temple, synonymous with the reference to the *בית יהוה* in Zech 11:13, which YHWH promises that Cyrus will build

---

see also Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1987), 157; B. Otzen, "יצר yāsar," *TDOT* 6:259; Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, 271; Stuhlmüller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 140.

<sup>73</sup> Otzen, "יצר yāsar," 259. Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor think that the emendation of 12:11 to read יצר makes good sense, though they think this may refer to "emptying out," as in Chronicles, owing to the fact that 2 Kings 12 concerns the initial stages of a collection. They translate 22:9 as "Your servants have melted down the silver" (*II Kings: A New Translation* [AB 11; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988], 135, 277, 282).

<sup>74</sup> Stuhlmüller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 140.

<sup>75</sup> Torrey, "Foundry of the Second Temple," 255.

<sup>76</sup> Stuhlmüller, *Rebuilding with Hope*, 140.

<sup>77</sup> Reventlow, *Die Propheten*, 111.

<sup>78</sup> Achtemeier goes so far as to propose that the people's reaction to the good shepherd indicates how they would react to the Messiah (*Nahum–Malachi*, 157).

<sup>79</sup> Sweeney, *Twelve Prophets*, 2:681.

(44:28). The theme of the brotherhood of Israel and Judah seems implied by the fact that YHWH formed both of them, with an explicit reference to forming “in the womb” in 44:24. Thus, these parallels in combination support the idea that Zech 11:13–14 contains an inner-biblical allusion to Isa 44:21–28—in Nurmela’s terms, a *sure* allusion.

This thesis that Zech 11:13–14 is a *sure* allusion to Isa 44:21–28 gains further strength from the fact that Zech 11:13–14 apparently reverses the promise of salvation/hope found in Isa 44:21–28. In the Isaian passage, the prophet celebrates the redemption of Israel (44:22–23), the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah (44:26), and the rebuilding of the temple in the days of Cyrus (44:28). Yet the tenor of Zech 11:4–17 indicates the destruction of the land and its people rather than the hope of rebuilding. The failure of leadership in Yehud leads to the overturning of the promise to make the land a place for the brothers Israel and Judah to inhabit, with a new temple in which to worship YHWH. Thus, the verbal, synonymic, and thematic parallels, with the reversal of the promise of salvation in Isa 44:21–28, and the fact that both of the prophet’s dramatic actions in Zechariah that contain an interpretation refer to passages in Isaiah 40–55 (Zech 11:10, 13–14) indicate that the whole narrative envisions the reversal of important promises made in Isaiah 40–55. YHWH receives the thirty silver pieces, the price of enslavement, perhaps symbolizing the fact that YHWH knows the evil done in Yehud and that, as the one who formed Israel and Judah, in his sovereignty, he has the authority to reverse his earlier promises.

#### IV. ZECHARIAH 11:4–17 AS A DESTABILIZING TEXT IN THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

One cannot avoid the destructive tone of Zech 11:4–17, which is apparent in the abundance of terms for ruin found in the narrative. The litany of virulent words unfolds throughout the extended drama of this text: “slaughter,” הרג (v. 4), “kill,” מכר (v. 5), “utterly devastate,” כתה (v. 6), “destroy,” כחד (vv. 8, 9, 16), “die,” מות (vv. 8, 9), “eat the flesh of her neighbor,” תאכלנה אשה את־בשר רעותה (v. 9), “break,” הפר (vv. 10, 11, 14), “break,” גדע (vv. 10, 14), “throw,” שלך (v. 13),<sup>80</sup> “wound,” שבר (v. 16), “a sword upon,” חרב על (v. 17), “wither,” בוש (v. 17), and “dim,” כחה (v. 17). The destructive actions of the governors lead to the destructive actions of the prophet, which symbolize the forthcoming destructive actions of YHWH.

It is not surprising that this passage plays a destructive role within the overall structure of the book, which up to 11:4–17 conveyed a generally hopeful message. Zechariah 11:4–17 builds on the tradition of passages that condemn poor leader-

<sup>80</sup> Taking “to throw” here as negative; see Reventlow, *Die Propheten*, 111; cf. Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 276.

ship by means of the metaphor of the shepherd and reverses the hopeful promises of Isaiah 40–55. But, as Ollenburger points out, the more immediate role of the passage is to counter directly pronouncements of a better future recorded in Zechariah 9–10.<sup>81</sup> In 9:10 YHWH promised to overturn war in Ephraim and Jerusalem, and in 10:10 to return exiles in such great numbers that the land could not hold them all. Zechariah 11:6 destroys this hope by promising that the king and shepherd will crush the land. Likewise, chs. 9 and 10 prophesy peace and a return of prisoners on account of the blood of God's covenant, a return in great numbers (9:10–12; 10:8–10), a promise apparently overturned by the breaking of the staff "Favor." In addition, breaking the staff "Ties"—and so breaking the brotherhood of Israel and Judah—not only contradicts the promise to end war in Ephraim and Jerusalem but reverses the image of YHWH using Ephraim as his bow and Judah as his arrow (9:13) as well as YHWH's promise to strengthen Judah and save Joseph, bringing them both back to the land (10:6).<sup>82</sup> The destructive nature of 11:4–17 thrusts the hopes of chs. 9 and 10—as well as those in chs. 1–8—into an eschatological "that day" (12:3, 4, 5; 13:1, 2), when YHWH achieves the purposes for his people, seemingly in spite of his people.

The seeds for such a reversal of hopeful promises and their delay to an unknown future day are actually found in chs. 1–8. In the opening section of Zechariah, the prophet makes it clear that the renewal envisioned in the following prophecies arises from the repentance of the people in light of their remembrance that the preexilic generations refused to listen to the message of the earlier prophets, which led to the exile (Zech 1:1–6). What message did the people fail to obey in that earlier generation, a message that the prophet claims remains pertinent to the present generation (7:8–14)?

Administer justice reliably  
show faithfulness and compassion toward one another  
and do not oppress the widow, orphan, the alien, the poor,  
and do not plan evil in your hearts against one another. (7:9–10)

It is this same message that now overtakes the people envisioned in Zech 11:4–17, with an apparent failure on the part of the shepherds to administer justice or to have compassion on those most in need in the land, so that the people will devour one another. The rhetorical effect of 11:4–17 on the reader of the book of Zechariah is to mark an important disjuncture in the book, reminding the reader that hope now lies in the future, in an ill-defined "that day." The alert reader is not totally surprised, however, in view of the history recalled by the prophet in the first major section of the book.

<sup>81</sup> Ollenburger does not elaborate on this comment, however ("Book of Zechariah," 820).

<sup>82</sup> Floyd also notes that 11:12–14 reverses the "north-south fraternal co-existence" promised in 10:6–12 (*Minor Prophets* 2, 444).



SMYTH & HELWYS BIBLE COMMENTARY SERIES

# Job

by Samuel E. Balentine

Retail Price: \$65.00  
ISBN: 1-57312-067-7



Balentine rises to the challenge of the book of Job in this rich exegetical and theological probing of its mysteries. This treatment of Job stands out because of its marvelous collection of literary and artistic representations of the book and the themes with which it deals. The Book of Job must have been created for this kind of commentary—or vice versa!

—Patrick D. Miller  
Princeton Theological Seminary

# Mark

by R. Alan Culpepper

Retail Price: \$65.00  
ISBN: 1-57312-067-7



Alan Culpepper's commentary on Mark is creative, innovative, and user-friendly. In short, it is outstanding. It belongs in the library of every pastor, student, and scholar. I recommend it highly.

—Craig A. Evans  
Payzant Distinguished  
Professor of New  
Testament at Acadia  
Divinity College

SMYTH & HELWYS

Learn more at [www.helwys.com/commentary](http://www.helwys.com/commentary)

Looking for Bible studies on Mark and Job? Request free samples!

Call 1-800-747-3016 or visit [www.helwys.com/samples](http://www.helwys.com/samples)

## Ephrem the Syrian Select Poems

Vocalized Syriac text with  
English translation, introduction, and notes by  
Sebastian P. Brock & George A. Kiraz



## Ephrem the Syrian

### Select Poems

Edited and with an Introduction  
and notes by Sebastian P. Brock  
and George A. Kiraz

Ephrem the Syrian is the most important poet and theologian of the Syriac Christian tradition. His numerous hymns, homilies, and commentaries were highly influential for later generations, and his poetry continues to be broadly used in the liturgies of Syrian Christian churches. This new translation of twenty poems, the only edition of Ephrem that features a text in vocalized serto script with a facing translation, offers a broad and varied introduction to Ephrem's work.

Brigham Young University - Eastern Christian Texts  
Cloth \$39.95

Distributed by the University of Chicago Press  
[www.press.uchicago.edu](http://www.press.uchicago.edu)



## Biblicized Narrative: On Tobit and Genesis 22

TZVI NOVICK

michael.novick@yale.edu  
Yale University, New Haven, CT 06511

---

The book of Tobit is dense with biblical allusions, particularly to the books of Genesis and Job (the latter, according to a Jewish tradition to which the pattern of allusion in the book of Tobit may itself attest, is also set in the patriarchal period).<sup>1</sup> While readers have long taken note of many of these allusions, an important one appears to have gone unnoticed. I argue here that Tobit 6, which describes Tobiah's journey from Nineveh to Ecbatana in the company of his kinsman Azariah (in fact the angel Raphael), is patterned after Isaac's journey, in the company of his father Abraham, to the land of Moriah in Genesis 22. After arguing for this allusion in the first part of this essay, I turn in the second part to a discussion of its function in the book. I suggest that this and the other biblical allusions in Tobit should be understood not (or not only) as literary allusions of the sort that we find in literature of all periods but as manifestations of a particular sort of "canon consciousness" originating in the Second Temple period.

### I. TOBIT 6 AND GENESIS 22

Tobiah's expedition to Ecbatana in Tobit 6 shares certain basic plot elements with Isaac's journey in Genesis 22. In both cases, an only son is led by a kinsman

I thank Professors John Collins, Steven Fraade, and Christine Hayes for their insightful responses to an earlier version of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> For a survey of the book's intertexts, see George W. E. Nickelsburg, "The Search for Tobit's Mixed Ancestry: A Historical and Hermeneutical Odyssey," *RevQ* 17 (1996): 339–49. A discussion of allusions to Genesis in particular may be found in Irene Nowell, "The Book of Tobit: An Ancestral Story," in *Intertextual Studies in Ben Sira and Tobit: Essays in Honor of Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M.* (ed. Jeremy Corley and Vincent Skemp; CBQMS 38; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2005), 3–13. On Job as a story from the patriarchal period, see Devorah Dimant, "Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Mikra:*

into a life-threatening situation. The fact that Genesis 24, which describes the search by Abraham's servant for a wife for Isaac, serves as a (if not the) fundamental inter-text for Tobiah's marriage to Sarah, bolsters the identification of Tobiah with Isaac.<sup>2</sup> More pertinent to the argument for allusion than these general similarities are the striking parallels in the staging of Isaac's and Tobiah's respective journeys. In the Genesis narrative, after Abraham "sees the place from afar" (22:4), he orders the servants to remain with the ass and continues forward with Isaac and the sacrificial necessities (22:5–6). In the next scene, we overhear a conversation between Abraham and Isaac: Isaac wonders about the absence of a lamb to accompany the fire and wood, and Abraham assures him that God will provide it (22:7–8). In the first stop during Tobiah's journey, Raphael instructs him to collect the gall, heart, and liver of the fish that they have encountered, because they are medicinal (6:2–6a).<sup>3</sup> Then, as they "approach Media" (6:6b), Tobiah asks Raphael what medicinal properties inhere in the fish organs. Raphael explains that the smoke of the heart and liver expels demons from possessed persons and the gall cures blindness (6:7–9). This conversation should naturally happen immediately after Raphael asks Tobiah to retrieve the organs, or immediately after Tobiah obeys. Indeed, we might expect Raphael to detail the medicinal properties of the fish in the context of his initial request, without any prompting from Tobiah. The latter sequence of events is in fact attested in medieval versions of the book.<sup>4</sup> The reason for having Tobiah

---

*Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. Martin Jan Mulder and Harry Sysling; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988), 417 n. 167.

<sup>2</sup> On the use of Genesis 24 in Tobit, see, e.g., Paul Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit: Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie* (OBO 43; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 292–303; Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2000), 129–31; Sabine M. L. van den Eynde, "One and One Journey Makes Three: The Impact of the Reader's Knowledge in the Book of Tobit," *ZAW* 117 (2005): 277–79.

<sup>3</sup> The explanatory clause occurs only in the longer, more original Greek recension (GII), not in the shorter revision (GI). On the relationship between the two Greek recensions, see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2003), 5–6, and the literature cited therein. The text of GII is confirmed by the Aramaic version discovered at Qumran, which, according to Fitzmyer's reconstruction ("Tobit," in *Qumran Cave 4: XI, Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* [ed. Magen Broshi et al.; DJD 19; Oxford: Clarendon, 1995], 44), reads: *וּכְבֹּדָהּ [סם הוא מררתה ולבב] (4Q197 4 I, 9).*

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew version copied by Theodor Gaster (Codex Or. Gaster 28) reads thus at 6:5: *אמ' לו רפאל בצע אותו באמצע וקח לבו והוא טוב להקטיר ממנו לפני כל איש שיש בו רוח שדים שיברחו ממנו וקח המרה והיא טובה למשוך ממנה העינים שיש בהם עורון וירפאו* "Raphael said to him: split it in the middle and take its heart, which is good for burning before a person possessed by demons, so that they may flee from him, and take the gall bladder, which is good for rubbing on blind eyes, so that they may be healed." The conversation between Tobiah and Raphael in 6:7–9 is omitted. The same changes are attested in the Aramaic version published by Adolf Neubauer (Bodleian Hebrew Ms. 2339). For the text of and background information on these manuscripts,

initiate a new conversation in a separate scene, as the two interlocutors near their destination, is evidently better to mirror the sequence of events in Genesis 22. There, as here, the young man, after proceeding some distance with his kinsman, wonders about the function of the objects that they took up in the previous stage of the journey, and in both cases the response carries an implicit threat of danger to the young man.<sup>5</sup>

This structural similarity is enhanced by key linguistic parallels between the two chapters. The most important concerns the phrase “and the two of them went along together.” The Hebrew equivalent, *וילכו שניהם יחדו*, occurs twice in Genesis 22, just before and just after the conversation between Abraham and Isaac (22:6; 22:8). The phrase is not a common one in the Hebrew Bible; outside Genesis 22, the only verse in which all three components occur together is Amos 3:3 (*הילכו שנים יחדו*). Even this verse, however, is an inexact parallel. For what is striking about the phrase *וילכו שניהם יחדו* in Genesis 22 is that, since the reader already knows that two figures are on a journey together, the verb *וילכו* suffices to indicate that they moved forward; the words *שניהם* and *יחדו* are, from an informational perspective, redundant.<sup>6</sup> In Amos 3:3, the corresponding words (or at least the word *שנים*) are not redundant, as Amos uses to them to introduce an altogether new situation.

The phrase of Genesis 22 is echoed in an Aramaic fragment of Tob 6:6 from Qumran (4Q197 4 I, 11): *וואזלין תריה[ו]ן [ב]חדא*.<sup>7</sup> The Greek version (GII) of Tob 6:6 precisely matches the Aramaic: *ἀλλ' ἐπερσεύθησας ἀμφότεροι αὐτοῖν*, “and

---

see Stuart Weeks et al., eds., *The Book of Tobit: Texts from the Principal Ancient and Medieval Traditions, with Synopsis, Concordances, and Annotated Texts in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Syriac* (Fontes et subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes 3; Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 39–41, 44–46, 181.

<sup>5</sup> Tobit's question in 6:7 may (as with Isaac) itself imply a certain disquietude in connection with the objects being carried. In any case, Raphael's response must surely worry the boy, for not only the reader (who has heard about Asmodeus in ch. 3) but also, as we discover later (6:14–15), Tobiah himself knows at this point that his kinswoman Sarah is possessed by a demon lover who has killed her previous husbands. Tobiah must suspect that Raphael means to marry him to Sarah, and that it is the demon Asmodeus for whom Raphael intends the fish organs. This suspicion is confirmed in their last conversation on the journey to Ecbatana (6:11–13).

<sup>6</sup> No doubt these words implicitly convey something other than the fact that Abraham and Isaac walked on together, perhaps that Isaac freely and with full awareness resolved to go through with the task, or that he continued to feel affection for his father. On the first possibility, see James L. Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), 176–77; and Rashi ad loc. My point is that this information reaches the reader indirectly, via the assumption that the author would recognize and avoid patent redundancies, and thus that interpretation is called for.

<sup>7</sup> The same rendering occurs in the Targumim (*Onq.* and *Neof.*) to Gen 22:6 and 22:8. According to Fitzmyer (*Qumran Cave 4: XI*, 18), 4Q196 13, 1 reads at 6:6: *א[ו]ל[ו] תריה[ו]ן*. But after the *א* there is a long gap to the end of the line that continues at the beginning of the next line, so that it seems difficult to rule out the possibility of a following *בחדא*.

the two of them went along together.”<sup>8</sup> The phrase probably recurs in Tob 6:2. GII has here καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ἀμφοτέρω, “and the two of them went along.”<sup>9</sup> The Aramaic (4Q197 4 I, 5) preserves the word כחדא, with a large gap preceding. Since ἀμφοτέρω in the Septuagint consistently renders Hebrew שנים, it seems reasonable to fill out the Aramaic as, again ואזלין תריהון כחדא. GII would, on this reconstruction, have passed in silence over the “redundant” כחדא.<sup>10</sup> The phrase occurs a third time in GII at 11:4 (neither the Aramaic nor the Hebrew of which has survived), during Tobiah’s return to Nineveh: as the two travel together (καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ἀμφοτέρω κοινῶς), Raphael instructs Tobiah to apply the fish gall to his father’s blind eyes. If I am correct that the phrase is supposed to recall Genesis 22, then its occurrence toward the end of the story, after Tobiah’s deliverance from Asmodeus, may correspond to the report in Gen 22:19 of Abraham’s return to Beersheba after sacrificing the ram (וילכו יחדו).<sup>11</sup>

Evidence that the author of Tobit could expect his readers to associate the motif of “two going together” with Genesis 22 may be derived from the treatment of ch. 22 in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a pseudepigraphical work likely composed in the late first or early second century C.E. Chapters 9–12 of the *Apocalypse* make obvious allusion to Genesis 22, although here it is Abraham who occupies the Isaac role, as he is led by an angel toward Horeb for the purpose of offering a sacrifice. The clearest allusion to Genesis 22 comes in 12:4 (“And I said to the angel, ‘... [B]ehold, I have no sacrifice with me, ... so how shall I make the sacrifice?’), but the Genesis narrative also clearly underlies 12:1: “And we went, the two of us alone together.”<sup>12</sup> The fact that an author of the first or second century C.E. deemed

<sup>8</sup> GI: καὶ ὥδευσον ἀμφοτέρω. The LXX of Genesis 22 differs from GII: “together” is rendered not with κοινῶς but with ἅμα, both in 22:6 (καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν οἱ δύο ἅμα) and 22:8 (πορεύθεντες δὲ ἀμφοτέρω ἅμα).

<sup>9</sup> GI: οἱ δὲ πορευόμενοι τῇ ὁδόν, “they journeyed along the way.”

<sup>10</sup> According to the Hatch-Redpath concordance, in every one of the more than seventy-five instances of ἀμφοτέρω for which a Hebrew *Vorlage* can be identified, the latter constitutes a form of שנים, save in two cases, Prov 22:2 (כל) and 1 Kgs 17:10 (יחד). Fitzmyer, in his DJD edition, has כחדא [ואזלין]. He thus appears to believe that ἀμφοτέρω in GII corresponds to כחדא. He offers no explanation for his reconstruction. There seems clearly to be enough room in the line for ואזלין תריהון.

<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, the occurrence of the phrase in Tob 11:4 may reinforce the notion that the “ordeal” is not yet passed. Sarah has been freed of her demon and successfully married off to Tobiah, but the second motivating problem (see 3:16–17), Tobit’s blindness, remains unresolved.

<sup>12</sup> Translations of the *Apocalypse* are from Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Text-critical Studies 3; Leiden: Brill Academic, 2005). For echoes of Genesis 22 in the *Apocalypse*, see Christopher Begg, “Rereadings of the ‘Animal Rite’ of Genesis 15 in Early Jewish Narrative,” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 44–45. Begg, in fact overlooks the allusion in 12:1, but Ryszard Rubinkiewicz spots it (*L’Apocalypse d’Abraham en vieux slave* [Lublin: Société des Lettres et des Sciences de l’Université Catholique de Lublin, 1987], 137). The words “alone together” look like a doublet translation of Hebrew יחדו or of the Aramaic equivalent.

the motif of “two going together” to be a sufficiently prominent feature of the Genesis 22 story that he could employ it in attempting to evoke that story is evidence that the author of Tobit may have done the same.<sup>13</sup>

Further linguistic evidence for an allusion to Genesis 22 comes from the concentration of the term “lad” (Greek παιδίον/παιδάριον; Aramaic עולימא) in the travel narrative of Tobit 6. In the Greek (GII) of ch. 6, the narrator refers to Tobiah consistently as a παιδίον (6:2, 3) or, more often, as a παιδάριον (6:3, 4, 6, 7, 11). Only twice, at the end of the chapter, does the narrator refer to Tobiah by name (6:14, 18). Outside ch. 6, the distribution is strikingly different: the narrator refers to Tobiah as παιδίον only once (7:10) and never as παιδάριον. Instead, he refers to him regularly (over twenty times) by name (and once, in 8:1, as νεανίσκος). The pattern in the Greek is confirmed by the extant Aramaic fragments, in which the word עולימא (always with reference to Tobiah) occurs five times in the narrator’s voice, in all cases in ch. 6 (6:3 [twice], 4, 7, 11).<sup>14</sup> By suppressing Tobiah’s proper

<sup>13</sup> A broader consideration of the above evidentiary strategy may prove useful, as the strategy is seldom employed. Most of the criteria employed (explicitly or implicitly) in the identification of allusions inhere in the “micro” level, that is, in the specific verses or group of verses (here Genesis 22 and Tobit 6) being compared. Micro criteria include similarities in language and in plot. “Macro” criteria take into account the broader context, either of the alluding text or of the intertext. Thus, one might attempt to identify a “pattern” of allusion that governs the book of Tobit as a whole and into which the alleged allusion would sensibly fit. See Steven Weitzman, “Allusion, Artifice, and Exile in the Hymn of Tobit,” *JBL* 115 (1996): 49–61; and for other works, see David Lambert, “Last Testaments in the Book of Jubilees,” *DSD* 11 (2004): 82–107; Bruce N. Fisk, “Offering Isaac Again and Again: Pseudo-Philo’s Use of the Aqedah as Intertext,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 481–507; Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 71–72. For example, the fact that the book makes constant use of the patriarchal narratives lends (limited) support to the claim that it alludes to Genesis 22. My use of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* exemplifies a different macro criterion. In general terms, the use of this criterion involves the following steps. Instances in which other ancient interpreters have made explicit use of the alleged intertext, or in which we may confidently determine that the intertext has been used allusively, should be assembled. From these instances, a profile of the intertext should emerge that highlights the features of the intertext that stood out for ancient interpreters. This might be called a “summary profile,” for it would answer (with due caution, given the paucity of our sources and the different aims of the various interpreters) the question: How would an ancient reader summarize the given intertext? Insofar as an alleged allusion involves a feature that belongs to such a summary, the argument for the allusion becomes more plausible.

<sup>14</sup> The noun occurs a sixth time, in 7:2, in the mouth of Raguel. All occurrences are preserved in 4Q197, save that of 6:7, which is preserved in 4Q196. In compiling the above data I have made use of the concordance to the Greek in Weeks et al., *Book of Tobit*, and the concordance to the Aramaic and Hebrew fragments in C. J. Wagner, *Polyglotte Tobit-Synopse: Griechisch-Lateinisch-Syrisch-Hebräisch-Aramäisch mit einem Index zu den Tobit-Fragmente vom Toten Meer* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004). The narrator’s failure to describe Tobias as a “lad” outside ch. 6 may be attributed, in part, to the

name and describing him as a lad, the narrator in Tobit 6 allows him to evoke Isaac, who is likewise described in Gen 22:5 as a נער, "lad."<sup>15</sup>

One factor that may have encouraged the patterning of Tobiah's journey after Isaac's is the popular embellishment of the Genesis 22 story, attested as early as the book of *Jubilees*, according to which God ordered the sacrifice of Isaac at the instigation of a hostile angel or angels. In *Jub.* 17:15–16, the angelic prince Mastema suggests that God test Abraham's faithfulness by demanding his son.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, according to 4Q225 2 I, 13, God's command is traced to the שר המ[ש]טמה, who "accused (antagonized) Abraham concerning Isaac" (וישטים את אברהם בישחק). The elliptical nature of the description of Mastema's involvement in the Genesis 22 narrative suggests that the tradition was by this time (4Q225 was probably copied at the end of the first century B.C.E.), in any case, well known.<sup>17</sup> Thus, for the author of Tobit, the threat to Isaac may well have come, as in the case of Tobiah, from a demonic figure.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it may not be irrelevant that the name of Tobiah's demon, Asmodeus, is almost an anagram of the name Mastema. It should also be observed, in this connection, that the chief intertext in the first part of Tobit is the book of Job.<sup>19</sup> In the passage from *Jubilees* noted above, Mastema's role in Genesis 22 clearly derives from that of Satan in Job 1.<sup>20</sup> If this association of Genesis 22 and Job, which

---

fact that Tobias marries in 7:13. But at many points before 7:13, both before and after ch. 6, Tobias is referred to by name where he might have been called a "lad."

<sup>15</sup> Another reference to Genesis 22 may come in the exchange between Raphael and Tobit in 6:11. Here, as in Gen 22:7, one party initiates conversation with a familial title (אבי, "my father," and ὁδελφε, "O brother") and the other responds with הנני (הנא אנה) in 4Q197 4 I, 16).

<sup>16</sup> See George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Tobit, Genesis, and the *Odyssey*: A Complex Web of Intertextuality," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (ed. Dennis R. MacDonald; SAC; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 48–50, for striking instances in which Tobit assumes embellishments of the Genesis narrative that are attested in *Jubilees*.

<sup>17</sup> For the dating of 4Q225 and for a discussion of its interpretation of the Aqedah story, see Florentino García Martínez, "The Sacrifice of Isaac in 4Q225," in *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations* (ed. Ed Noort and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar; Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 4; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 44–57; and see now the reconstruction of 4Q225 proposed by James L. Kugel, "Exegetical Notes on 4Q225 'Pseudo-Jubilees,'" *DSD* 13 (2006): 73–98. For another relatively early attestation of the tradition of angelic involvement see *L.A.B.* 32:1–4, where God tests Abraham in order to prove his faithfulness to the angels, who are envious of him.

<sup>18</sup> It is notable that 4Q225 2 I, 13 speaks (probably) of the binding of Mastema, as Asmodeus here is bound by Raphael (Tob 8:3).

<sup>19</sup> On the use of Job as intertext, see Dimant, "Use and Interpretation," 417–19; Anthea Portier-Young, "Eyes to the Blind: A Dialogue Between Tobit and Job," in *Intertextual Studies*, ed. Corley and Skemp, 14–27.

<sup>20</sup> See the sources cited in Jacques van Ruiten, "Abraham, Job and the Book of *Jubilees*: The Intertextual Relationship of Genesis 22:1–19, Job 1:1–2:13 and *Jubilees* 17:15–18:19," in *Sacrifice of Isaac*, ed. Noort and Tigchelaar, 62 nn. 18–20. Van Ruiten himself contends (pp. 83–85), mistakenly in my view, that Job did not influence the *Jubilees* passage.

is widely attested in later periods, was known to the author of Tobit, it could have inspired him, after having invoked Job in the earlier chapters of his work, to take up Genesis 22 as an intertext in Tobit 6.

## II. ALLUSION, ECHO, AND BIBLICIZED NARRATIVE

What is the significance of the allusion to Genesis 22? This is a question that literary theory encourages us to ask. According to the widely cited analysis by Ziva Ben-Porat, to make a literary allusion is, properly, not simply to evoke another text but to use that text to guide the reader toward a “fuller interpretation” of the alluding text.<sup>21</sup> Implicit references that do not enrich the alluding text in this privileged way are merely “borrowings” or, to use Benjamin Sommer’s term, “echoes.”<sup>22</sup> Though it may be difficult to decide whether a given intertextual reference is a literary allusion or an echo, the categorical difference is clear. The echo may trade on the reputation of or pay homage to a highly regarded predecessor, may display erudition, or may have some other peripheral effect, but it leaves the referring text basically unchanged. The echo is playful, not serious; it is always a “mere” echo.<sup>23</sup>

But many intertextual references in Tobit, and also in other Second Temple works, seem to constitute neither literary allusions nor echoes. Consider, for example, the initial exchange between Edna and her two visitors, Tobiah and Azariah (7:3–5). For the length of three verses, the script mimics verbatim Jacob’s conversation with the shepherds of Haran (Gen 29:4–6) and diverges only when the different circumstances of the two narratives so demand (e.g., in the substitution of Tobit for Laban).<sup>24</sup> Why such protracted imitation of so insignificant an incident? The reference is not easily understood as a literary allusion, not only because the evocation of Jacob’s flight seems to do little, if anything, to enrich our interpretation of Tobiah’s experience, but also because the link to Jacob could have been, and indeed elsewhere in the book is, established in a much more “allusive”

<sup>21</sup> Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” *PTL: A Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature* 1 (1976): 110–11.

<sup>22</sup> The first term is Lowrie Nelson’s, cited by Ben-Porat (“Literary Allusion,” 106 n. 3). On “echoes,” see Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 15–17. Sommer (p. 16) provides an example from an essay by Yair Zakovitch. Expressing the notion that, in a text with multiple compositional layers, the final form must have conceptual priority, Zakovitch writes, *סוף מעשה המרכבה במחשבה, תחילה*. The sentence punningly synthesizes (in a way that performs the very compositional complexity of which Zakovitch speaks) a liturgical line about the Sabbath, *סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה*, “what was last in deed was first in intent,” and the rabbinic term for Ezekiel’s chariot vision, *מעשה המרכבה* (in Zakovitch’s usage, associated with *hiphil* רכב, “to combine different strands”).

<sup>23</sup> Sommer, *Prophet Reads Scripture*, 30.

<sup>24</sup> The parallel has been observed by many. See, e.g., Nowell, “Book of Tobit,” 9–10.

manner. The extent and earnest faithfulness of the parallels also make this intertextual reference look different from the typical echo.

The author of Tobit here seems rather to be slavishly *copying* his biblical predecessor. Like the echo, the copy stops short of enriching the referring text. But in the case of the echo, the absence of enrichment is not itself meaningful. It is merely an absence; it does not signify. In the case of the copy, by contrast, this absence is communicative: the copy aims at nothing more than reduplication of the original. By any of the aesthetic standards that define the allusion and the echo, the copy is a failure. But the copy is not a failed allusion or echo; its aesthetic failure is the measure of its success. When a text alludes or echoes, its agency is not compromised: it is making *use* of the intertext. But the copying text seems to become passive. It is, so to speak, parasitized by its predecessor. Good allusions and echoes trade, like jokes and witticisms, on some incongruity between the referring text and the intertext, but the copying text attempts to suppress all incongruity. Incongruity does inevitably arise, but in the same way, and with the same tinge of failure, as when an exceedingly literal translation ends up sounding wooden.<sup>25</sup>

Why would an author of the Second Temple period venture slavishly to “translate” a biblical plot? Or rather, since one must hesitate to inquire directly into authorial intent, what is the effect of intertextual reference of this sort?<sup>26</sup> The later work affirms, through repetition, the primacy of the biblical master plot; or, more precisely, it transforms the Bible from a historical narrative *into* a master plot. The plot is abstracted, prized away from its concrete particulars, and made capable of regenerating itself in other contexts. If the canonical status of the Bible manifests itself in a wide variety of postcanonical forms of life (legislation, education, etc.), the copying text gives expression to the Bible’s authority by rendering it an author.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> As the copy willfully shuns the meaningfulness and wit of the allusion and echo, so, perhaps, it welcomes the failure that is endemic to the translation effort, for in its failure, the copy simultaneously abstracts the canonical predecessor and demonstrates that perfect abstraction is impossible. On the use of failure as a critical category, see Walter Benjamin’s observation, in a letter to Gershom Scholem (“Some Reflections on Kafka,” in *Illuminations* [ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn; New York: Schocken Books, 1968], 144–45), that “[t]o do justice to the figure of Kafka in its purity and its peculiar beauty one must never lose sight of one thing: it is the purity and beauty of a failure.” For further discussion of failure in Benjamin, see, e.g., Ewa Płonowska Ziarek, *The Rhetoric of Failure: Deconstruction of Skepticism, Reinvention of Modernism* (SUNY Series, The Margins of Literature; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 123–56.

<sup>26</sup> For reflections on the difference between intentionalist and rhetorical approaches to literary emulation, see Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (ed. and trans. Charles Segal; Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 23–31.

<sup>27</sup> For discussion of the various manifestations of canonical authority, see Moshe Halbertal,



We may call Second Temple narratives or parts thereof composed in this canonical mode *biblicized narrative*. Biblicized narrative constitutes one member of a larger family of referential forms that use the Bible but do not explicitly cite it. Literary allusions and echoes belong to this family, as does rewritten Bible.<sup>28</sup> Biblicized narrative resembles rewritten Bible in that both reproduce details from biblical stories. But biblicized narrative involves, paradigmatically, nonbiblical incidents (typically centered on nonbiblical characters) patterned after biblical incidents, while rewritten Bible, again paradigmatically, involves biblical incidents modified by means of additions that lack biblical precedent.<sup>29</sup> More fundamentally, rewritten Bible preserves the historical particularity of the biblical narrative, while modifying some of its details. Biblicized narrative, by contrast, hews rigidly to the biblical narrative but generalizes it.<sup>30</sup>

I would suggest that the echoes of Genesis 22 in Tobit 6, like many other intertextual references in the book, are best explained as biblicized narrative. The story, at this point, involves a young man traveling, under the guidance of a (purported) kinsman, toward a murderous demon. Noticing the resemblance to Genesis 22, the author crafts his account of Tobiah's journey after the pattern of this biblical precedent by staging a conversation between Tobiah and Raphael that mimics that between Isaac and Abraham, by noting that "the two of them went

---

*People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3–4.

<sup>28</sup> Dimant, in her pioneering attempt at categorizing different uses of the Bible in the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, distinguishes, within implicit uses of the Bible, between rewritten Bible and "free narrative" ("Use and Interpretation," 401). Into the latter category she places Tobit, along with other texts that do not involve "copying" of the biblical narrative in the sense in which I use this term. The category of free narrative is problematic, as it groups together texts on the basis of how they do *not* use the Bible—thus, free narrative is free because it does not borrow main characters or detailed setting from the Bible—and not on the basis of how they *do* use it. Thus, the opposition between rewritten Bible and free narrative should probably not serve as a governing distinction in mapping out uses of the Bible. Nevertheless, Dimant's work in this area is foundational, and I take my discussion here as elaborating on it.

<sup>29</sup> On rewritten Bible see, e.g., Steven D. Fraade, "Rewritten Bible and Rabbinic Midrash as Commentary," in *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash* (ed. Carol Bakhos; JSJSup 106; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 60–61, and the bibliography in the accompanying notes. In comparing rewritten Bible and biblicized narrative, I am assuming that works of the former mode were designed to complement rather than to supplant their canonical forebears. But this characterization is, as Fraade observes, controversial. I am not wedded to this position and cannot examine the issue in this context, but perhaps the very coexistence of rewritten Bible and biblicized narrative constitutes evidence of the complementary intent of the former.

<sup>30</sup> Biblicized narrative might also be contrasted, from a different direction, with the parables to be found throughout homiletical midrash. Like biblicized narrative, these parables pattern after and thus generalize the biblical stories that they explicate. But unlike biblical narrative, such parables are not expressions of a canonical aesthetics, but rather originate in exegesis.

along together,” and by referring to Tobiah not by his name but as “the young man.” Thus, the author detaches the events of Genesis 22 from their concrete historical situation and renders them an authoritative (and authoring) paradigm. I do not mean to deny that there may be something of the conventional literary allusion to or echo of Genesis 22 in Tobit 6, or Genesis 29 in Tob 7:3–5.<sup>31</sup> I suggest, however, that these intertextual references should be appreciated, first and foremost, as expressions of the canonical aims of biblicized narrative; that they should be appreciated, by the aesthetic standards of the allusion or the echo, as conscious failures, even if they also, by the same standard, enjoy partial success.

<sup>31</sup> Weitzman (“Allusion, Artifice”), for example, claims that the major biblical intertexts in Tobit are all set in places outside Israel, and that this fact is to be linked with the book’s preoccupation with exile. By adverting to exilic intertexts throughout, and patterning the ending of the book after Deuteronomic speeches made immediately before the Israelites’ entrance into Israel, the author creates a pattern of allusion that mimics and thus reinforces the surface story’s explicit thematization of exile and of the hope for return. The allusion to Jacob’s conversation with the shepherds in Genesis 29 could then be understood as one instance in this pattern. But Weitzman’s claim is questionable. First, although the events of the Genesis story and Job take place outside Israel, they are not *exilic* stories (as the nation has not yet come into existence), and geographical setting is not (particularly in the case of Job) a thematized feature in them. It is therefore unlikely that the author of Tobit could expect readers to identify an “exile” motif underlying his intertexts. Moreover, some of the intertextual narratives occur in the land. If I am right in identifying an allusion to Genesis 22, the exilic pattern would be broken. Sarah’s difficulties with her handmaid seem to echo the conflict, in Canaan, between the matriarch Sarah and her handmaid (Gen 16:14), on which see Nowell, “Book of Tobit,” 7. Likewise, the Genesis 24 intertext implicitly situates Tobit, who sends Tobiah and Raphael away to Media, in Canaan.

## 3 Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity

NOAH HACHAM  
noahh@mscc.huji.ac.il  
Hebrew University, Jerusalem 91905, Israel

---

This article reconsiders the as-yet-unresolved issue of literary dependence between 3 Maccabees and Esther—both the Hebrew and the Greek versions. An early-twentieth-century treatment appeared in the context of Hugo Willrich's attempt to identify the historical kernel of 3 Maccabees; a century later, this question is still under exploration, for example, in Philip Alexander's article titled "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim."<sup>1</sup> Scholarly opinions range from the contention that 3 Maccabees was written after Greek Esther,<sup>2</sup> to the opposing position

Previous versions of this paper were presented at the Jonas C. Greenfield Scholars' Seminar, the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jerusalem, March 2004; and at the Fourteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, August 2005. I thank the participants on these two occasions for their helpful comments. I thank also Prof. Daniel R. Schwartz and Dr. Michael Segal who read previous versions of this paper, and Ms. Dena Ordan who translated it from Hebrew. The preparation of this paper was supported by a post-doctoral grant of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Unless otherwise indicated, the NJPS was used for citations from MT Esther and the NRSV for Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees.

<sup>1</sup> Hugo Willrich, "Der historische Kern des III Makkabäerbuches," *Hermes* 39 (1904): 244–58; Philip S. Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," in *Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Texts: Essays in Memory of Michael P. Weitzman* (ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert and Gillian Greenberg; JSOTSup 333; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 321–39.

<sup>2</sup> Victor A. Tcherikover, "The Third Book of Maccabees as a Historical Source of Augustus' Time," *ScrHier* 7 (1961): 22 n. 45; André Barucq, *Judith, Esther* (Paris: Cerf, 1959), 84; Michales Z. Kopidakes, *Το Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλός: Αισχυλείες μνημές στο λεκτικό και στη θεματολογία του Γ' Μακκαβαίων* (Herakleion: Bikelaiia bibliotheke, 1987), 22; Fausto Parente, "The Third Book of Maccabees as Ideological Document and Historical Source," *Henoch* 10 (1988): 168–69 and n. 79; Dov Gera, *Judaea and Mediterranean Politics, 219 to 161 B.C.E.* (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies 8; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 15; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000),

that Greek Esther postdates 3 Maccabees.<sup>3</sup> Yet a third viewpoint distinguishes between the Greek translation of the MT and the Greek Additions to Esther, dating 3 Maccabees earlier than the Greek Additions, in whole, or in part.<sup>4</sup> Almost every introduction to 3 Maccabees addresses this question,<sup>5</sup> as do introductions or commentaries to the Greek Additions to Esther.<sup>6</sup>

Taking as its starting point the many thematic-structural parallels noted in the scholarly treatments of this issue, in the first part of the discussion I argue that the comparative methodology identifying parallels between the texts fails to establish direct literary dependence between these two works. In the second part I suggest that the application of philological-linguistic methodology makes a decisive

123 n. 57; Ulrike Mittmann-Richert, *Historische und legendarische Erzählungen* (JSHRZ 6.1.1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2000), 68–69.

<sup>3</sup> Bacchisio Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” in *Saggi di storia e letteratura giudeo-ellenistica* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1924), 272–90 [= *Ricerche sulla letteratura e la storia giudaico-ellenistica* (ed. Fausto Parente; Rome: Centro editoriale internazionale, 1977), 281–309]; Jakob Cohen, *Judaica et Aegyptiaca: De Maccabaeorum libro III Quaestiones historicae* (Groningen: M. de Waal, 1941), 21; George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 175 (but later he voiced reservations; see idem, “The Bible Rewritten and Expanded,” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* [ed. Michael E. Stone; CRINT 2, 2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984], 137); Sara R. Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity: Third Maccabees in Its Cultural Context* (Hellenistic Culture and Society; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 137, 141.

<sup>4</sup> Carey A. Moore, “On the Origins of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” *JBL* 92 (1973): 383–86; idem, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah: The Additions; A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 44; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977), 198–99; André Paul, “Le Troisième livre des Macchabées,” *ANRW* 2.20.1 (1987): 322–23; Alexander, “3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim,” 333–39. From a different perspective, Moses Hadas finds no direct connection between Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees, but assumes that “III Maccabees, like the Septuagint Esther, is a corrective of the Hebrew Esther” (*The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* [Jewish Apocryphal Literature; New York: Harper, 1953], 6–8). Hugh Anderson finds no evidence for a “direct line of connection between the Hebrew Esther and 3 Maccabees” (“3 Maccabees,” *OTP* 2:515 and n. 19). N. Clayton Croy follows Anderson’s view (3 Maccabees [Septuagint Commentary Series; Leiden: Brill, 2006], xvi).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Hadas, *Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 6–8; Anna Passoni Dell’Acqua, “Terzo libro dei Maccabei,” in *Apocrifi dell’Antico Testamento* 4 (ed. Paolo Sacchi; Biblica, Testi e studi 8; Brescia: Paideia, 2000), 595–96.

<sup>6</sup> Moore, “LXX Additions to the Book of Esther”; idem, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 195–99, 237; David J. A. Clines, *The Esther Scroll: The Story of the Story* (JSOTSup 30; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 173; Jon D. Levenson, *Esther: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 75; Sidnie W. Crawford, “The Additions to Esther: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” *NIB* 3:953, 967. Oddly, some studies do not relate to 3 Maccabees; see, e.g., Michael V. Fox, *The Redaction of the Books of Esther: On Reading Composite Texts* (SBLMS 40; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); idem, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

contribution to this question. The unique linguistic, as opposed to the thematic-structural, parallels between the texts allow determination, in my opinion, of direct literary dependence: in this instance, between two units from the Greek Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees.

## I. THEMATIC-STRUCTURAL PARALLELS

The oft-cited correspondences between Esther and 3 Maccabees relate primarily to thematic and structural features. Some of these sweeping parallels—their similar story lines, for example—can even be considered striking: in both works, the king promulgates an edict to destroy the Jews, which is then rescinded; the Jews are saved and a holiday established to commemorate their rescue. Another fundamental aspect shared by these stories of rescue is that they take place in a Diaspora setting.

But scholars identify other, more specific affinities. These include many feasts;<sup>7</sup> a Jew foiling a plot to assassinate the king;<sup>8</sup> a false accusation regarding Jewish lack of loyalty to the state;<sup>9</sup> and ascription of responsibility for the unfortunate episode of persecution of the Jews not to the king himself but to royal officials.<sup>10</sup> A further corresponding detail relates to the identical number of people reportedly killed: in Esther the Jews of Shushan kill three hundred of their enemies on the second day (9:15); in 3 Maccabees the rescued Jews kill three hundred renegades whom they encounter on their way home (7:14–15).<sup>11</sup>

Other parallels have been suggested. Esther distinguishes between Shushan and the other provinces under Ahasuerus's rule (9:15–18), and 3 Maccabees differentiates between the Jews of Alexandria, at first not included in the death edict, and the remaining Jews of Egypt, who were decreed to destruction from the start (4:12–13).<sup>12</sup> Female characters also figure in both: in Esther the royal female char-

<sup>7</sup> Esther 1:3–4, 5–12; 2:18; 3:15; 5:4–8; 6:14–7:8; 8:17; 9:17, 18, 19, 22; 3 Macc 4:1, 16; 5:3, 15–17, 36–39; 6:30–31, 33, 35–36, 40; 7:(15), 18, 19–20.

<sup>8</sup> Motzo notes that, according to some manuscripts of Greek Esther, the name of one of the potential assassins of Ahasuerus is θεοδευτος or θεοδοτος, which apparently reflects the influence of 3 Maccabees' θεόδοτος ("Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 274).

<sup>9</sup> Esther 3:8; 3 Macc 3:2–7, 16–26. This undergoes significant expansion in the Greek Additions to Esther, in Haman's first letter. As we shall see below, there are linguistic parallels between this letter and 3 Maccabees.

<sup>10</sup> Esther 7:6, 8:3–8; 3 Macc 6:24–28; 7:3–7. On the distinction between Esther, in which Haman instigates the plot to persecute the Jews, and 3 Maccabees, in which the king is the instigator, see below.

<sup>11</sup> Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 22; Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 333 n. 16.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 333 n. 16.

acter plays a focal role in the story; it is she who is responsible for saving the Jews. In 3 Maccabees Arsinoë, the king's wife, plays a central role at the battle of Raphia; it is largely due to her intervention that the Ptolemies achieve victory in this battle (1:4–5).<sup>13</sup>

Various studies go on to identify additional parallels between the two works. One concerns the king's sleep. Esther states: "that night, sleep deserted the king" (6:1); in 3 Maccabees God sends Philopator sweet and deep sleep (5:11–12) to ensure that he would miss the hour designated for executing the Jews. Note that the LXX of Esther attributes the king's sleeplessness to divine intervention: "That night the Lord took sleep from the king" (6:1); accordingly, in both works God saves the Jews by manipulating the king's sleep.<sup>14</sup> Another matter mentioned as a thematic parallel between the two works relates to the enemy's "face" in confrontation with the king. In Esther, confronted by the king's allegation of an attempt to ravish the queen in the palace, Haman's face "falls" (7:8). And, in 3 Maccabees, when the king berates the elephant handler Hermon and threatens him with death after one of the failed attempts to kill the Jews, Hermon's "face fell" (5:31–33).<sup>15</sup>

The two works also exhibit structural similarities, in particular, their shaping as stories of reversal. That Esther is structured as a story of dramatic reversal is well known: the Jews who were to be killed are saved; those who sought their death are killed instead. The motif of reversal receives explicit emphasis in the scroll: "the opposite happened, and the Jews got their enemies in their power" (9:1); "the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy" (v. 22). There are also many contrasting parallels between the scroll's beginning and end; for example, the mourning among the Jews when the king's command was issued (4:3) as opposed to the "gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday" (8:17) when it was overturned. Third Maccabees as well is a story of reversal: the Jews slated for death were saved, and the renegade Jews were killed. This reversal is reflected both in the language of the story and in the many contrasting parallels between its beginning and end.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the king commands the Jews to celebrate their rescue in the hippodrome, the very place they were to be executed (3 Macc 6:30–31); in addition, the king's wrath is converted to tears (v. 22). Another inversion inheres in how the enemies of the Jews who rejoiced in their expected death brought ignominy upon themselves (v. 34).

The foregoing discussion has focused primarily on the MT of Esther. Comparison of the Greek translation of Esther, with the Additions, to 3 Maccabees elicits its additional similarities: the prayers and royal letters found in each. Addition C

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>14</sup> Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 281.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; and Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλός*, 21.

<sup>16</sup> On this aspect of 3 Maccabees, see recently J. R. C. Cousland, "Reversal, Recidivism and Reward in 3 Maccabees: Structure and Purpose," *JSJ* 31 (2003): 39–51.

contains two prayers: that of Mordecai and that of Esther. 3 Maccabees also has two prayers: that of the high priest Simon (2:2–20) and that of Eleazar, one of the priests in Egypt (6:2–15). Both stories also incorporate two royal letters: one a royal edict concerning the eradication of the Jews (3 Macc 3:12–29; Esth, Addition B), and the second, a royal decree canceling the first (3 Macc 7:1–9; Esth, Addition E). The above-cited parallels by no means comprise the totality of parallels between Esther and 3 Maccabees, but they are the most prominent and representative.<sup>17</sup>

To return to the question of dependence between Esther and 3 Maccabees posed in the opening: what conclusions can be reached on the basis of the numerous thematic-structural parallels outlined above? Let me preface the discussion by stating that, in my opinion, a responsible answer would be: almost nothing. That is, the above-mentioned parallels assist our understanding of the nature and components of each of these narratives but do not testify to a direct intertextual link—of agreement, rewriting, or polemic—between these two works. Indeed, some of these parallels are far from unique; moreover, marked differences are discernible within the above-cited parallels themselves. For example, what I noted as perhaps the most striking correspondence, their similar story lines—an attempt to eradicate or to harm the Jews, their rescue, and the mandating of a holiday to commemorate this event—is not unique to these two works and appears elsewhere in Second Temple Jewish literature, including 1 and 2 Maccabees.<sup>18</sup> Nor is the appearance of feasts exclusive to the two works in question. As Philip Alexander notes, feasts are a common literary motif;<sup>19</sup> therefore their presence cannot provide a link between Esther and 3 Maccabees. In addition, the distinct difference between Dositheus, the apostate Jew who saves the king (3 Macc 1:2–3), and Mordecai, the Jew who foils the plot of Bigthan and Teresh (Esth 2:21–23), undermines the argument that the two books share the theme of the king's rescue from assassination. Weaker still are the parallels between Esther and Arsinoë: the former is a Jewish queen who delivers her people from their enemies; the latter, a queen who assists her countrymen in battle. With regard to the Jews avenging themselves on their enemies in 3 Maccabees, as opposed to Esther, their foes are not those who wish to kill the Jews. I argue that, notwithstanding the apparent similarities between the books, we must take note of these and other, more fundamental differences.

More differences between the two narratives of destruction and rescue can be cited. Missing from 3 Maccabees are any echoes of Esther's tale of court intrigue involving Mordecai and Haman, or of bringing Vashti before the king. Further, the identity of the person persecuting the Jews—a king or a high official—differs in

<sup>17</sup> On these and other thematic parallels, see Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 274–85.

<sup>18</sup> These themes also appear separately in several other books, such as Judith.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 333–34.

the two stories. Moreover, 3 Maccabees has an entire scene unparalleled in Esther: the attempt to enter the sanctuary.<sup>20</sup>

Even the fact that both stories contain prayers has no bearing on our question. The two prayers in Greek Esther are recited in a single time frame, during the three-day fast, before Esther makes her unbidden approach to Ahasuerus. In 3 Maccabees each prayer is recited on a different occasion, and the first prayer belongs to the attempt to desecrate the temple and not to the one to kill the Jews. Besides, 3 Maccabees (5:7–9, 13, 25, 35) refers to other prayers whose texts are not cited; Esther mentions in addition only the cries of the Israelites in the verse linking the two prayers (Addition C 11). Furthermore, as a pervasive theme in Second Temple and in Hellenistic Jewish literature, prayer cannot be considered a unique motif linking these texts.<sup>21</sup>

The argument specifically citing the wording of the prayers in 3 Maccabees and the prayers of Mordecai and Esther in Greek Esther as proof of mutual dependence is also unfounded. The vocative κύριε κύριε found in the opening of both Mordecai's prayer (Addition C 2)<sup>22</sup> and Simon's prayer (3 Macc 2:2) is not exceptional and makes its appearance in the Greek translations of a number of biblical and apocryphal prayers.<sup>23</sup> Nor is the salutation βασιλεῦ appended to the phrase κύριε κύριε in 3 Maccabees and Esther indicative of either direct dependence or of mutual influence between these prayers. A similar combination appears in the LXX of Deut 9:26; moreover, in each occurrence, this word is followed by a different object under divine dominion. Nor are other claims submitted regarding the affinity between the two prayers convincing.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See also Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 283.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., Dan 9:4–19; the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men; Ezra 9:6–15; Neh 1:5–11; 9:5–37; Judith 9; 16:1–18; Tob 3:2–6, 11–15; 2 Macc 1:24–29; 8:2–4, 14–15.

<sup>22</sup> Some witnesses have θεέ instead of the second occurrence of κύριε. See Robert Hanhart, ed., *Esther* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, VIII/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 162. However, the preferred variant is the above-cited one, also because the doubling of the word is not common.

<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy 3:24; 9:26; Judg 6:22; 16:28; 1 Kgs 8:53; Pss 69 (68):7; 109 (108):21; 140 (139):8; 141 (140):8; 2 Macc 1:24.

<sup>24</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion, see Noah Hacham, "The Third Book of Maccabees: Literature, History and Ideology" (in Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2002), 229 n. 124. Motzo ("Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 278–80) and Nickelsburg (*Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah*, 174) put forth a different argument for the affinity between 3 Maccabees and Esther. They note Esther's remarks in her prayer (C 20) that the Gentiles wish to extinguish the glory of the divine house and its altar (καὶ σβέσαι δόξαν οἴκου σου καὶ θυσιαστήριόν σου). They assume that this verse was influenced by the story of Philopator's attempt to penetrate the temple, and they see it as proof that 3 Maccabees was composed before Greek Esther. Because of the temple's importance as a Jewish symbol, appropriate in the context of proposed harm to the Jews, this hypothesis is unfounded. As Moore notes, works by Diaspora Jews reflect their concern for the temple and the altar (*Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 211).



Another point raised in the attempts to establish a relationship between the texts is Esther's omission from the precedents cited in Eleazar's prayer (3 Macc 6:4–8) for the rescue of the Jewish people or individual Jews. Mentioned there are the exodus; Jerusalem's deliverance from Sennacherib; Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; Daniel; and Jonah. Based on the assumption that 3 Maccabees was familiar with the story of Esther, some scholars perceive its absence as a thundering silence, interpreting it as 3 Maccabees' protest against, or polemic concerning, the Esther story.<sup>25</sup> But this argument is problematic as well. Consideration of the list of examples from Eleazar's prayer shows it to be a microcosm of the story of 3 Maccabees as a whole, from the conflict in Jerusalem to the deliverance of the Jews in Egypt.<sup>26</sup> Its purpose is not to delineate all the past deliverances of the Israelites but rather to build a list that parallels the construction of the narrative. In this case any addition would be detrimental; Esther's absence from this catalogue accordingly makes no contribution to the determination of intertextuality between 3 Maccabees and Esther.

A final point concerns the nature of the holiday established to commemorate the deliverance in 3 Maccabees: "They established . . . a festival, not for drinking and gluttony" (6:36). Some scholars regard this statement as proof that 3 Maccabees was familiar with the Purim celebration and tried to fashion "an ersatz Alexandrian Purim."<sup>27</sup> But Philo's use of similar phrasing with reference to the Passover celebration (*Spec.* 2.148) and Josephus's comparable style (*C. Ap.* 2.195–96) make extrapolation of a reference to Purim from this verse impossible. More likely is that this wording reflects a polemic against the idolatrous feasts of the king mentioned earlier in 3 Maccabees, in the framework of its author's struggle against the Dionysian cult.<sup>28</sup>

In sum, the parallels listed here between these two works enable neither deduction of familiarity between them nor determination of its direction. Furthermore, the inability to establish direct dependence undermines the historical hypotheses constructed on the basis of the thematic-structural parallels between 3 Maccabees and Esther.<sup>29</sup> More pertinently, the reference to Mordecai's day in connection with Nicanor's day in 2 Maccabees (15:36) suggests that the story of

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Alexander, "3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim," 334–35. Others view this as testifying to the lateness of the translation of Esther as compared to 3 Maccabees. See Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 278; Cohen, *Judaica et Aegyptiaca*, 21; see also Hadas, *Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, 8.

<sup>26</sup> See Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua, "Le preghiere del III libro dei Maccabei: genere letterario e tematica," *RivB* 43 (1995): 159–64; Hacham, "Third Book of Maccabees," 124–29.

<sup>27</sup> See Joshua E. Burns, "The Special Purim and the Reception of the Book of Esther in the Hellenistic and Early Roman Eras," *JSJ* 37 (2006): 19–21.

<sup>28</sup> See Noah Hacham, "3 Maccabees: An Anti-Dionysian Polemic," in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christian and Jewish Narrative* (ed. Jo-Ann A. Brant, C. W. Hedrick, and C. Shea; SBLSymS 32; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 167–83, esp. 180 and n. 55.

<sup>29</sup> E.g., by Motzo ("Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc'") and Alexander ("3 Maccabees, Hanukkah and Purim"), among others.

Esther was known in Egypt prior to the arrival of the Greek translation. But this by no means implies knowledge of a Greek version, or that such a version aroused a reaction, or that 3 Maccabees was this response. In addition, we cannot overlook the possibility that, in creating their own holiday of deliverance in 3 Maccabees, the Jews of Egypt utilized the familiar and beloved pattern of the Purim story, irrespective of their acquaintance with a Greek translation of Esther.

## II. INTERTEXTUALITY NONETHELESS

Having demonstrated the inconclusive nature of the thematic-structural parallels discussed above, I now turn to a comparative linguistic methodology. This methodology makes possible a more exact determination of the nature of the relationship between the works in question and discloses noteworthy links between 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther.

Various lists of the linguistic similarities between these two texts have been formulated in the past, and they indeed show close affinities.<sup>30</sup> Yet, to my mind, the discussion requires greater precision. As opposed to previous lists, which do not always distinguish between features shared only by these works and words that appear elsewhere in the LXX and sometimes provide thematic, rather than linguistic, examples, the tables below are restricted to words and phrases in the LXX that are unique to Esther and 3 Maccabees. From a methodological viewpoint, only unique linguistic parallels can definitively establish intertextual affinity and deliberate use of one work by the other. In actuality, Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees share nine words that occur nowhere else in the LXX; of these, seven appear in the royal letters, Additions B and E to the Greek version of Esther. A number of additional phrases exhibit shared language; in all, there are some twenty linguistic correspondences between Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees, again, concentrated mainly in the royal letters.

The most significant parallel between Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees relates to a phrase found in ancient Greek literature only in these two works. Ahasuerus's second letter (E 24) commands that any place failing to fulfill the instructions in the letter be destroyed in wrath by "spear and fire" (δόρατι καὶ πυρὶ). A similar combination, but in reversed order, appears in 3 Macc 5:43, where the king announces in his anger at the Jews that he will level Judah with "fire and spear" (πυρὶ καὶ δόρατι). There are further similarities between these two verses. Both contain the verb καθίστημι accompanied by the temporal expression εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον. In Esther, the king announces that that place will be "hateful . . . for all time"; in 3 Maccabees, the king boasts that he will burn down the sanctuary, mak-

<sup>30</sup> Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Esther' e il 'III Macc,'" 275–78, 280–82; Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 19–22.

ing it inaccessible forever. The two verses share another word: ἄβατος. In Esther, that place will be inaccessible to people; in 3 Maccabees, the temple is described as inaccessible to the king.<sup>31</sup>

Additional examples of words and expressions unique in the LXX further support the assumption of dependence between the two works. The closest correspondences are summarized below.

TABLE 1  
WORDS UNIQUE TO GREEK ESTHER AND 3 MACCABEES IN THE LXX

Word	Esther	3 Maccabees	Notes
παραπέμπω	B 4	1:26	
διηνεκῶς	B 4	3:11, 22; 4:16	
δυσμενής	B 4, 7	3:2, 7, 25	See n. 34
δυσνοέω	B 5	3:24	
ὑπερχαρής	5:9	7:20	
μηχανάομαι	E 3	5:5, 22, 28; 6:22, <sup>32</sup> 24	
κόμπος	E 4	6:5	
ὀλεθρία	E 21	4:2; 5:5	
κώθων	8:17	6:31	

As seen from the table, there are nine words unique to 3 Maccabees and Esther. The first three words all occur in Esth B 4. The verb παραπέμπω appears only twice in the LXX,<sup>33</sup> and the adverb διηνεκῶς, which modifies παραπέμπω in Addition B 4, appears elsewhere in the LXX only in 3 Maccabees, as indicated above.<sup>34</sup> The verb δυσνοέω, which appears in the first royal letter in the Additions

<sup>31</sup> The Alpha Text (AT) also has the combination δόρατι καὶ πυρί and the word ἄβατος, but not the other parallels mentioned.

<sup>32</sup> See the variants in Robert Hanhart, ed., *Maccabaeorum liber III* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum, IX/3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 64.

<sup>33</sup> This verb is not unknown in ancient literature, and in writings close to the LXX it appears in a similar meaning in *Let. Aris.* 258.

<sup>34</sup> These two words appear also in the AT of B 4. In this verse in the Additions to Esther (and B 7 below) the word δυσμενής also appears, found elsewhere in the LXX only in 3 Macc 3:2, 7, 25. However, as its gerund δυσμένεια appears in 2 (and 3) Maccabees, and its adverbial form δυσμενῶς is found in 2 Maccabees, it is difficult to consider this word as one shared solely by 3 Maccabees and Esther.

to Esther and in 3 Maccabees, is considered a neologism in the LXX.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, ὀλεθρία, found in the LXX only in the second royal letter in the Additions to Esther,<sup>36</sup> and twice in 3 Maccabees, is also a neologism.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the verse containing this word in the Additions to Esther contrasts destruction and joy (ἀντ' ὀλεθρίας . . . ἐποίησεν αὐτοῖς εὐφροσύνην), and a similar contrast using almost identical language appears in 3 Macc 6:30 (ἐν ᾧ τόπω . . . ὀλεθρον ἀναλαμβάνειν ἐν τούτῳ ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ πάσῃ σωτήρια ἄγειν). The verb μηχανάομαι appears in this form in the LXX only in 3 Maccabees (five times) and in the second royal letter in Esther (E 3).<sup>38</sup> The words ὑπερχαρής and κώθων<sup>39</sup> appear only twice in the LXX: in 3 Maccabees and in Greek Esther, and the word κόμπος appears only twice in the LXX: in 3 Maccabees and in the Additions to Esther, as indicated above.<sup>40</sup>

Additional linguistic affinities between the texts take the form of phrases or expressions as summarized in the table on the next page.

The use of the verb ἀφανίζω in a temporal expression with μία ἡμέρα, only here in the LXX, is striking, but (owing to the different phrasing)<sup>41</sup> not as impressive as is the unique collocation—in the first royal letter of Esther and twice in 3 Maccabees—of the verb ἐπαίρω with θράσος in the dative.<sup>42</sup> The Ptolemaic

<sup>35</sup> See Johan Lust et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 164; LSJ, s.v. δυσνοέω, p. 459; Robert Helbing, *Die Kasussyntax der Verba bei den Septuaginta: Ein Beitrag zur Hebraismenfrage und zur Syntax der Κοινή* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1928), 213. The word also appears in the AT.

<sup>36</sup> Moore suggests that vv. 21–23 are not original to the letter but rather are a later addition (*Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 237). If that is the case, this word's appearance does not prove a connection between the original version of the letter and 3 Maccabees, but see below.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Walters comments that the usual form of the word is ὀλεθρος or ὀλέθριος. With the appearance of the verbs ὀλεθρεύω and ἐξὀλεθρεύω various nouns were created. In his opinion, the form ὀλεθρία was also influenced by this verb and “it may be sound to bring the noun into closer relation to –εύω by spelling it –εία” (*The Text of the Septuagint: Its Corruptions and Their Emendations* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973], 42). Nonetheless, in all three occurrences of this word in Esther and 3 Maccabees its suffix is identical—–ία—not Walters's suggested emendation. This perhaps indicates the close relationship between the two works. Josephus, *Ant.* 11.282 uses the same word in citing this letter from Esther. This word is missing from the AT.

<sup>38</sup> A slightly different form of the verb, μηχανεύομαι, appears in the LXX of 2 Chr 26:15, and, according to some manuscripts, in 3 Macc 6:22. All the parallels cited for this verse appear in the AT.

<sup>39</sup> Even though the word κώθων appears in the LXX only in 3 Macc 6:31 and Esth 8:17, because the verb κωθωνίζω appears elsewhere in the LXX this parallel carries less weight.

<sup>40</sup> Of the final three words, only ὑπερχαρής does not appear in the AT, which has no translation of this verse.

<sup>41</sup> Esther 3:13: ἀφανίσαι . . . ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ; 3 Macc 4:14: ἀφανίσαι μιᾷς ὑπὸ καιρὸν ἡμέρας (as also in 2 Macc 7:20).

<sup>42</sup> Also found in the AT.

TABLE 2  
PHRASES OR EXPRESSIONS EXCLUSIVE TO GREEK ESTHER AND 3 MACCABEES

<i>Phrase or Expression</i>	<i>Esther</i>	<i>3 Maccabees</i>	<i>Notes</i>
ἀφανίζω + μία ἡμέρα	3:13	4:14	See n. 41
ἐπαίρω + θράσος (dat.)	B 2	2:21; 6:4	
ἀποδείκνυμι + βεβαία πίστις	B 3	5:31	
ὁ τεταγμένος ἐπὶ (τῶν) πραγμάτων	B 6	7:1	
παρέχω + εὐστάθεια (or εὐσταθές) + τὰ πράγματα	B 7	6:28	
εὐστάθεια (or εὐσταθές) + τὰ πράγματα + χρόνος + τελ-	B 7	3:26	See n. 44
ἐπιχειρέω + εὐεργέτης in proximity to the verb μηχανάομαι	E 3	6:24	
καθίστημι + μετόχους (pl.)	E 5	3:21	
+ πιστεύω + πράγματα	E 5	3:21	
+ κακοήθεια	E 6	3:22	
τῆς ἀρχῆς . . . καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος	E 12	6:24	
ἀφανισμός + Ἰουδαῖοι	E 15	5:20, 38	See n. 50
κατευθύνω + μέγιστος θεός (μέγας θεός) + ἡ βασιλεία (τὰ πράγματα)	E 16	7:2	See n. 45
καθάπερ (καθὼς) προαιρούμεθα	E 16	7:2	See n. 46
Contrast of ὀλεθρία or ὀλεθρος to εὐφροσύνη	E 21	6:30	
πυρὶ καὶ δόρατι καθίστημι + εἰς τὸν ἅπαντα χρόνον ἄβατος	E 24	5:43	

honorific ὁ τεταγμένος ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων appears in the LXX only in this Addition and 3 Maccabees.<sup>43</sup> The verb παρέχω followed by the object εὐστάθεια or εὐσταθές with reference to the regime (called τὰ πράγματα) also is found only once in 3 Maccabees and once in the Additions to Esther. Like Esth B 7, 3 Macc 3:26 contains the following words: εὐστάθεια (or εὐσταθές), τὰ πράγματα, χρόνος, and a word with the root τελ- (3 Macc: τελείως; Esth: διὰ τέλους).<sup>44</sup> Where the verb κατευθύνω appears in 3 Maccabees and in Esther Addition E the supreme god is the subject of the sentence (3 Macc: ὁ μέγας θεός; Esth: ὁ μέγιστος θεός) and the object relates to the regime (3 Macc: τὰ πράγματα; Esth: ἡ βασιλεία).<sup>45</sup> According to the version appearing in a recently published papyrus, we must add to the affinity between the verses another similar, and unique, combination: καθάπερ προαιρούμεθα (E 16); καθὼς προαιρούμεθα (3 Macc 7:2).<sup>46</sup> In addition to μηχανάομαι, the verse from Addition E 3 discussed above shares two other words with 3 Macc 6:24: the verb-object combination ἐπιχειρέω and εὐεργέτης, which is unique in the LXX, as well as the thematic parallel of a plan to assassinate the king who has shown benevolence to them. Another expression in the LXX that appears in the same verse (6:24) in 3 Maccabees and in a different verse in the same royal letter is: τῆς ἀρχῆς . . . καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος (Esth E 12).<sup>47</sup> In addition, the positive attitude of the “good guys” to the regime has lin-

<sup>43</sup> In 3 Maccabees without τῶν. On this parallel, see Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 20; Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua, “The Liberation Decree of ‘Addition’ E in Esther LXX: Some Lexical Observations Starting from a New Papyrus [POxy LXVI, 4443]; New Evidence for the ‘Egyptian Flavour’ of this ‘Addition,’” *Adamantius* 10 (2004): 80.

<sup>44</sup> These words occur naturally in the semantic field relating to the kingdom’s stability; accordingly, it is difficult to view them as proof of dependence between the two works. For the occurrence of *some* of these words in the LXX, see 3 Macc 3:26; 7:4; 2 Macc 14:6; Esth B 5. For their occurrence in other sources, see, e.g., *OGIS* 56:19, 669:4. As F.-M. Abel notes, there is great lexical similarity between 2 Macc 14:6 and Esth B 5 (*Les livres des Maccabées* [EBib; Paris: Gabalda, 1949], 459). Nonetheless, these words would be expected in this context, and do not establish literary dependence, as opposed to Daniel R. Schwartz’s opinion (*The Second Book of Maccabees: Introduction, Hebrew Translation, and Commentary* [in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2004], 261). See also Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 275–76; Kopidakes, *To Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 20.

<sup>45</sup> See Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 276. This combination is natural in Hellenistic Jewish literature and does not provide strong evidence of a link between 3 Maccabees and Esther. See, e.g., *Let. Aris.* 216 (but note the variants there).

<sup>46</sup> P.Oxy. 4443 l. 4. This is not absolute proof of dependence between the works because, as Passoni Dell'Acqua shows (“Liberation Decree of ‘Addition’ E in Esther LXX,” 79), this verb is found in correspondence from the Ptolemaic milieu. For similar wording, see *Let. Aris.* 45. Moreover, this version is not documented in other witnesses of Addition E and may be secondary. Nonetheless, the similarity between the verses assists the overall picture of a link and dependence by the royal letters in the Additions to Esther on 3 Maccabees, to be discussed below.

<sup>47</sup> See Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 276. The AT also shares the verb μερίσσειν, but in a different form.

guistic parallels in both texts. The verb ἀποδείκνυμι combined with the direct or indirect object βεβαία πίστις is found in the LXX only in 3 Maccabees and Esther Addition B.<sup>48</sup> Two adjacent verses in each book that deal with loyalty to the regime also exhibit linguistic similarities: the combination of the verb καθίστημι with the plural direct object μετόχους, and the combination of the verb πιστεύω with the word πράγματα appears in each,<sup>49</sup> with the word κακοήθεια in the following verse. The word ἀφρανισμός in relation to Ἰουδαῖοι appears twice in 3 Maccabees and once in Addition E to Esther.<sup>50</sup> The king's philanthropy to individuals and nations is also portrayed in similar language in 3 Macc 3:18 and Esth E 11.<sup>51</sup> The opposition of ὀλεθρία and εὐφροσύνη, as well as the unique phrase πυρὶ καὶ δόρατι, was discussed above. To all this we may perhaps add the use of the word σωτηρία in both books (3 Macc 6:33; Esth E 23) to describe what happened to the king.

In addition to the above-mentioned words and expressions found exclusively in the LXX in 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther, there are a number of words that appear in these two works and one other book in the LXX.<sup>52</sup> In this case as well, many of these words are clustered in the two royal letters in the Additions to Esther.

What conclusions can be drawn from the comparisons listed here? After all, as noted, they comprise only some twenty examples, by no means a substantial number of words or expressions common to both books. Nonetheless, I contend that these data make a decisive contribution to the determination of the relationship between the two works. First, several of these examples pertain to words whose earliest occurrence is attested in the LXX, and to a unique expression that appears

<sup>48</sup> See Kopidakes, *Το Γ' Μακκαβαίων και ο Αισχυλος*, 20. The verb does not appear in the AT. The combination of this verb with the object πίστις is attested also in an inscription dated to ca. 157 B.C.E. See C. Bradford Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period: A Study in Greek Epigraphy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934), 256, lines 8–9.

<sup>49</sup> The syntactic structure of the combination of the verb πιστεύω with πράγματα differs in the two occurrences. The corresponding verse in the AT has no affinity to 3 Maccabees.

<sup>50</sup> Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 276. As the syntax of the sentences differs totally, this parallel is not definitive.

<sup>51</sup> The similar words are ἔχομεν πρός, φιλανθρωπία, and πᾶν ἔθνος (Esth); ἅπαντας ἀνθρώπους (3 Macc); see Motzo, "Il rifacimento greco del 'Ester' e il 'III Macc,'" 276. However, these ideas and words are widespread in Hellenistic works on kingship and in royal documents. See, e.g., 2 Macc 14:9; *Let. Aris.* 290; Welles, *Royal Correspondence*, 141, lines 16–17. In 3 Macc 7:6 we find a similar combination in which ἐπιείκεια appears instead of φιλανθρωπία.

<sup>52</sup> κακοήθεια (3 Macc 3:22; 7:3; 4 Macc 1:4; 3:4 [twice]; Esth E 6); εὐνοέω (3 Macc 7:11; Dan 2:43; Esth E 23); εὐωχία (3 Macc 4:1, 8; 5:3, 17; 6:30, 35; 1 Esd 3:20; Esth C 10; E 22); σύνολος (3 Macc 3:29; 4:3, 11; 7:8, 9, 21; Sir 9:9; Esth E 24); μετέπειτα (3 Macc 3:24; Jdt 9:5; Esth B 7); ἀνήκεστος (3 Macc 3:25; 4:2 [according to some mss]; 2 Macc 9:5; Esth E 5); πυκνότερον (3 Macc 4:12; 7:3; 2 Macc 8:8; Esth E 2). These words are also rare in the Pseudepigrapha. See Albert-Marie Denis, *Concordance Grecque des Pseudépiques d'ancien Testament* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1987). In addition, note that these words do not belong only to the semantic field of royal correspondence.

nowhere else in ancient literature. Second, a majority of the examples of linguistic affinity between 3 Maccabees and Esther are concentrated in two of the Additions to Greek Esther: the royal letters. This is noteworthy. If we examine the unique linguistic links between 3 Maccabees and other books in the LXX, we find a range of fourteen shared words with Wisdom of Solomon, nine with Sirach, six with 4 Maccabees, and five with 1 Esdras. In all of these instances, the shared words are scattered throughout the books in question and are not concentrated in a defined literary unit. The unique verbal parallels between 2 and 3 Maccabees are larger in number, but, again, these are not restricted to a specific part of 2 Maccabees.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the clustering of words and combinations shared by 3 Maccabees and Esther in the royal letters in the Additions to Esther indicates close affinity between these letters and 3 Maccabees. Notably, the shared language does not come from the semantic field of royal correspondence; that is, this literary closeness cannot be attributed to genre. Third, backing this affinity are the previous lists of parallels between 3 Maccabees and Esther by Motzo, Moore, and Kopidakes. Even if not all definitive, most of the parallels cited there are concentrated in the royal letters. Fourth, some thirty years ago, based on the similarities in structure and content between the first letter in the Additions to Esther and the first edict of Ptolemy Philopator in 3 Maccabees (3:12–29), Moore postulated that the direction of influence was from the first edict in 3 Maccabees to the Additions to Esther. On the basis of their stylistic similarity, he concluded that both the first and second letters in the Additions were composed by a single author, in Greek, and after the composition of 3 Maccabees.<sup>54</sup> Despite Moore's convincing presentation of the data, not all scholars accept this conclusion.<sup>55</sup>

We now come to the heart of this exploration of the issue of literary dependence between the Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees. Based on Moore's conclusions regarding the authorship and language of the Additions, and the data presented here, I propose to take Moore's argument one step further. The concentration of the linguistic affinities between 3 Maccabees and Esther in the two royal

<sup>53</sup> For lists of the words and phrases found in both works that occur nowhere else in the LXX, see Cyril W. Emmet, "The Third Book of Maccabees," *APOT* 1:156; Hacham, "Third Book of Maccabees," 104–6.

<sup>54</sup> Moore, "LXX Additions to the Book of Esther," 384–85; idem, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 197–98. For a similar viewpoint on the relationship between the letters in these books, see Paul, "Le Troisième livre des Macchabées," 322–23. That Greek is the original language of the two letters in Esther is generally accepted; see R. A. Martin, "Syntax Criticism of the LXX Additions to the Book of Esther," *JBL* 94 (1975): 65–72; Emanuel Tov, "The 'Lucianic' Text of the Canonical and Apocryphal Sections of Esther: A Rewritten Biblical Book," *Textus* 10 (1982): 11 and n. 13.

<sup>55</sup> See the recent statement by Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua: "It is hard to say whether they were actually respectively drawn from the two parallel edicts of 3 Macc" ("Liberation Decree of 'Addition' E in Esther LXX," 76).



letters in the Greek Additions and the absence of linguistic or structural kinship between 3 Maccabees and the remainder of Greek Esther back my contention that these two letters specifically were composed *after*, and influenced *by*, 3 Maccabees in its entirety. If this were not the case, we would expect to find linguistic links between 3 Maccabees and the other parts of Greek Esther. This contradicts John J. Collins's observation,<sup>56</sup> based on the "verbal parallels between 3 Maccabees and Greek Esther, which are so close as to require us to assume literary influence," that "[i]t is significant that the parallels are not confined to the Greek additions to Esther, as we might expect if 3 Maccabees were prior."<sup>57</sup>

The existence of another Greek version of Esther—the Alpha Text—does not influence the conclusions presented here. The scholarly consensus tends overwhelmingly to the view that the Additions to Esther appearing in the AT are a later reworking of the ones found in the LXX.<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, the definitive kinship between Additions B and E and 3 Maccabees was somewhat blurred in their transfer to the AT; as noted, most, but not all, of the linguistic parallels appear also in the AT.<sup>59</sup> Karen H. Jobes takes a different position, arguing that the AT contains the more original version of the Additions, with the possible exception of Additions B and E.<sup>60</sup> The close affinity between 3 Maccabees and Additions B and E, and the assumed direction of influence from 3 Maccabees to the letters in the Greek Additions to Esther, rule out the possibility that the AT was earlier than the LXX with regard to these letters.<sup>61</sup>

The proposition that 3 Maccabees influenced the letters in the Additions to Esther perhaps helps resolve a difficult passage in the second royal letter. In Addition E 21–23, the king announces that God has turned the thirteenth of Adar into a day of rejoicing, whose observance is obligatory. This is impossible: earlier, the same edict grants the Jews permission to defend themselves on the thirteenth of

<sup>56</sup> For a similar critique, see Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 137 n. 35.

<sup>57</sup> Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 123 and n. 57.

<sup>58</sup> For a summary of the various opinions, see Kristin De Troyer, "The Letter of the King and the Letter of Mordecai," *Textus* 21 (2002): 176–87, based on her *The End of the Alpha Text of Esther: Translation and Narrative Technique in MT 8:1–17, LXX 8:1–17, and AT 7:14–41* (SBLSCS 48; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 351–63. See also Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 254–55, 257.

<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, not even a single word is shared *only* by 3 Maccabees and the two letters in the AT.

<sup>60</sup> Karen H. Jobes, *The Alpha-Text of Esther: Its Character and Relationship to the Masoretic Text* (SBLDS 153; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 232. She takes a more definitive position in the detailed discussion: "additions B and E in the AT more closely reflect the form of the additions when they were copied than does the LXX text of these additions . . . the AT preserves the earlier form of additions B and E" (p. 174).

<sup>61</sup> For another critique of Jobes, see De Troyer, *Alpha Text of Esther*, 361.

Adar, the day of their intended destruction. How, then, could this day be designated a holiday prior to the deliverance? Moore argues that these verses are secondary, and he sets them off parenthetically in his translation.<sup>62</sup> However, the assumption that a later redactor added these problematic verses to an ostensibly coherent text is difficult. One possibility, of course, is to view this as “simply the work of a careless redactor,”<sup>63</sup> similar to other inconsistencies and contradictions in this Addition.<sup>64</sup> Even if these verses are the result of carelessness, the assumption of influence by 3 Maccabees on this letter provides a clue to their inclusion. These verses treat topics found in 3 Maccabees: the celebration of the holiday on the day of deliverance, the transformation of destruction to joy, and the fact that, with the deliverance of the Jews, the king was saved as well. Moreover, these very verses contain some of the words shared only by 3 Maccabees and Esther. I suggest that the Addition’s author, who was influenced by 3 Maccabees and its terminology, incorporated matters drawn from 3 Maccabees in the conclusion of the letter, in line with his overall approach shaping the letter in accord with this work, as discussed below.

Based on the direct linguistic affinity demonstrated through the philological analysis of the vocabulary of the letters and 3 Maccabees, also taking into account their structural-contextual similarities, and perhaps the suggested higher criticism of the ending of the second letter, I conclude that the two royal letters added to the LXX of Esther were composed after 3 Maccabees and display its influence. This has no bearing on the question of the relationship between the remainder of Greek Esther and 3 Maccabees, nor on the issue of the date of composition of 3 Maccabees or of the Additions to Esther. It is possible that the Greek translation of Esther (without the letters) preceded 3 Maccabees and that the latter felt no need either to use the language of the translation or to respond to it in any way. Another possibility is that only the translation of the Hebrew of Esther preceded 3 Maccabees and that the Additions came after the composition of the latter work—and without its influence. Nor can we rule out a scenario in which 3 Maccabees was composed prior to the Greek translation of Esther, but that 3 Maccabees had no impact on Greek Esther. Only one definitive conclusion arises from the discussion here: the royal letters added to Greek Esther were written after 3 Maccabees and manifest its influence, for, if this were not the case, we would expect to find verbal links between 3 Maccabees and the remaining sections of Greek Esther.

<sup>62</sup> Moore, *Daniel, Esther and Jeremiah*, 234–35, 237. Note that Moore’s arguments differ from mine; see *ibid.*, 237.

<sup>63</sup> Crawford, “Additions to Esther,” 967.

<sup>64</sup> Such as noting the fact that the members of Haman’s family were hanged together with him in the gates of Shushan (E 18).

### III. DIASPORA JEWISH IDENTITY

The question of what the author of the royal letters in Esther hoped to achieve by creating affinity with 3 Maccabees belongs to the broader one of the purpose of the Additions. Opinions vary. Moore attributes the Additions to an attempt to add dramatic depth to this work and to lend greater plausibility to what is related there.<sup>65</sup> It is difficult, however, to understand how a letter referring to Haman as a Macedonian lends credence to the story, or how the addition of official royal edicts enriches its dramatic dimension. Erich Gruen represents another viewpoint. This scholar, who often notes the presence of humor in Hellenistic Jewish literature, finds a similar function for the humor in the Additions to Esther and in 3 Maccabees: to make a laughingstock of the great king who is convinced of his all-encompassing dominion yet fails to distinguish between supporter and opponent.<sup>66</sup> This explanation perhaps further elucidates the use of 3 Maccabees by the author of the Additions to Esther—after all, 3 Maccabees profoundly ridicules the king, his governorship, and his attitude toward the Jews.<sup>67</sup> But, as Gruen nowhere provides an explanation for what motivates this “irony and dark humor,” in and of itself, this observation is inadequate. Moreover, his suggestion that “the anachronistic allegation that Haman was a Macedonian . . . may be a sly hint to readers that nothing in the royal edicts should be taken seriously” ignores the implications of the epithet “Macedonian” in the Ptolemaic world. I prefer Sara Johnson’s approach, which views the incorporation of the royal edicts as an attempt to produce a supposedly genuine history, with allusions to the author’s present. According to Johnson, historical fiction serves to reinforce ideology, and the historical style of the decrees has “simply been coopted to lend the legend verisimilitude.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, over forty years ago Victor Tcherikover explained the second royal edict’s ascription of Macedonian ancestry to Haman as the shaping of the Esther story by using actual terms from the translator’s day. According to Tcherikover, against the background of escalating anti-Semitism in the Ptolemaic kingdom—in light of the Jews’ success and integration into the army and the royal administration—Haman was fashioned as

<sup>65</sup> Moore, “LXX Additions to the Book of Esther,” 383–84; see also David A. DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 119.

<sup>66</sup> Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 30; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 181, 186.

<sup>67</sup> For a comprehensive discussion, see Hacham, “Third Book of Maccabees,” 147–57, 169–71.

<sup>68</sup> Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 43–44 (on the second decree in Esther), 201–2, 209–15 (on the official decrees in 3 Maccabees).

a Macedonian minister who threatened the kingdom's stability, as opposed to the loyal minister, Mordecai the Jew.<sup>69</sup>

In my opinion, the motivation for what I have identified as the reliance on 3 Maccabees by the author of the royal edicts in the Additions to Esther inheres in the latter's perception of Jewish existence in the Diaspora. Although both texts are Diaspora works, each paints an intrinsically different picture with respect to the essential nature of this existence. Esther's portrayal places the relationship between the king and the Jews in a generally favorable light. Disturbing the idyll is not the king, but his vizier, who is revealed as a traitor to the monarchy. What sparks the crisis is a regrettable mistake, which the king attempts to rectify upon its discovery. Within the kingdom, the Jews constitute a loyal sector; Jews save the king's life and play an active role at court. Nor do the Jews have any innate interest in harming non-Jews; only in the absence of an alternative, when confronted by a non-Jewish attempt to murder them, do the Jews retaliate. Moreover, despite being granted permission to do so, "they did not lay hands on the spoil" (Esth 9:16). In some respects, in Esther the enemy of the Jews is a lone individual and his family. Indeed, the story relates that, prompted by their fear of Mordecai, many non-Jews converted to Judaism.

The crisis between the Jews and the regime is resolved in 3 Maccabees as well. Here, however, the king, not a dastardly individual from his retinue, generates the crisis, and throughout the book the king is explicitly and consistently portrayed as the knave responsible for persecuting the Jews. The king's attribution of the crisis to his advisors and courtiers in his second letter must be viewed simply as self-justification. In contrast to Esther, 3 Maccabees portrays the crisis not as a regrettable mistake but rather as a manifestation of profound Jewish-Gentile tension. Thus, 3 Maccabees nowhere describes Jewish involvement at court, and the person who saves the king's life is an apostate Jew (1:3). At the same time, in 3 Maccabees the Jews do not seek to harm non-Jews, and it is the hand of God that brings injury to the soldiers marching behind the elephants. At the story's conclusion, fear prevents the enemies of the Jews from doing them harm, and they even return Jewish property (7:21-22).<sup>70</sup>

This brief discussion discloses the distinct, underlying attitudes of these texts toward the relationship of the Jews to the regime: in Esther the Jews display confidence in Diaspora life, in the foreign regime, and in the king, whereas reservations and apprehension characterize the Jewish view of these facets in 3 Maccabees. Another contrast relates to Jews killing non-Jews: Esther freely recounts that Jews kill non-Jews. The Persian Jewish author felt secure enough in his environment to

<sup>69</sup> Victor A. Tcherikover, "Prolegomena," *CPJ* 1:24.

<sup>70</sup> This view of 3 Maccabees is widespread; see, e.g., John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE-117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 192. For the opposite view and a critique of it, see the literature in n. 75 below.

portray Jews killing their non-Jewish enemies. This is not the case in 3 Maccabees, where the Jews kill only renegade Jews (7:14–15) but no non-Jews.

Further, the threat against the Jews in each work differs in nature. The edict calling for the eradication of the Jews in Esther is the result of Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman and is incontrovertible. In contrast, in 3 Maccabees the persecution is grounded in Jewish refusal to participate in the Dionysian rites, but those who join the cult are not subject to the decree. In the reversal at the story's conclusion the Jews kill the renegades who participated in the pagan rites in accord with the royal decree. In other words, in Esther the decree is directed against the Jews; in 3 Maccabees, against Judaism.

Support for this understanding of the accentuation of the religious element in 3 Maccabees comes from a comparison of the feasts in the texts. If in Esther the feasts are a manifestation of the non-Jews' stupidity and materialism, in 3 Maccabees they also, and perhaps primarily, symbolize idolatry. Witness the statement in 3 Macc 4:16 that the king was "organizing feasts in honor of all his idols."<sup>71</sup> In 3 Maccabees the king and the Jews do not sit together to drink, whereas in Esther the feast held for Ahasuerus and Haman, hosted by the Jewish queen, is a crucial turning point in the deliverance of the Jews.

In summation, although the thematic-structural comparisons outlined in the first part of the article fail to reveal intertextuality in the form of a direct polemical relationship between the two texts, they do shed light on each work's definition of the Diaspora Jewish stance with respect to several issues: the degree of trust in the regime's goodwill toward Jews, the appropriate response to non-Jewish hostility, and identification of the main threat to Diaspora Jewish existence. The gap between the positions represented by the texts inheres in each one's apperception of Diaspora reality: the author of 3 Maccabees perceives a threatening alienation and strives to conciliate both the regime and the non-Jews, while retaining his strong adherence to Judaism. In contrast, the author of the book of Esther apparently experiences greater security in Diaspora existence and places trust in the Jewish representatives in government. In the absence of verifiable detail, however, it is nearly impossible to suggest a precise historical identification for the threatening circumstances reflected in 3 Maccabees.

It is in the view of the Diaspora in 3 Maccabees that we must seek the rationale for the incorporation of the royal letters in Greek Esther. These Additions, which voice the difficulty of Jewish life in the Diaspora, are in dissonance with the viewpoint emerging from the Hebrew. By rewriting the viewpoint of Hebrew Esther, these Additions introduce a new, hostile attitude to the book. As David DeSilva recently noted, the Additions reflect "the tension and animosity between Jew and Gentile," and Addition E, the second royal edict, represents

<sup>71</sup> συμπόσια ἐπὶ πάντων τῶν ἰδῶλων συνιστάμενος. Croy translates, "organized banquets at the sites of all his idols" (3 Maccabees, 17).

a different model for Jewish–Gentile relations in which the Gentile authorities acknowledge the positive contributions that Jews make. . . . This Addition gives voice to the hope of the Diaspora Jew that the blamelessness of their conduct . . . would be recognized and valued, rather than . . . their differentness. . . . The simple hope of the author, like that of many Jews, was that their neighbors would “permit the Jews to live under their own laws” . . . without let or hindrance.<sup>72</sup>

By relying on 3 Maccabees, the author of the royal edicts in Greek Esther underscores and strengthens these principles. I think this author found in 3 Maccabees a work compatible with his notions regarding Jewish–Gentile relations in the Diaspora, which he subsequently integrated in his Additions to Esther. One focal concept is basic Gentile hostility toward Jews, which then shifts and culminates in royal recognition of the Jewish contribution—and loyalty—to the kingdom. According to both 3 Maccabees and the Additions, this loyalty is sincere and unwavering; doubts are directed to the permanence of the king’s favorable attitude toward the Jews, voiced also by means of ironic ridicule of the king.<sup>73</sup> The joint celebration by the king and the Jews in both works expresses their authors’ hope for the preservation of this positive attitude on the part of the regime. By incorporating these elements in the letters in the Additions to Esther, their author reflects his view of the reality of his day; at the same time, by endowing these notions with historical backing, implying that this was also the case in the past, the author implants in the readers—familiar either with 3 Maccabees or the current situation—the sense that Jewish existence in the Diaspora, and Jewish–Gentile tension especially, was not a Ptolemaic–Egyptian innovation but part of a spectrum of similar events. The hope embedded in the analogy between these situations also emerges: just as the Jews were saved in Esther’s day and achieved ongoing recognition of their religious rights, such an outcome was feasible in the author’s day.

A final point: the intertextual affinity identified here between the letters in the Additions to Esther and 3 Maccabees may also work in the opposite direction and enhance our understanding of 3 Maccabees. Several verses there create the impression that, as opposed to most Gentiles, the Greeks had a positive attitude toward Jews (3 Macc 3:6–9). This determination is, however, contradicted elsewhere in the account with respect to the royal retinue, who must have been mainly Greeks (e.g., 2:26; 4:1, 4; 5:3, 21–22, 44; and 6:34). If we accept the assertion that the

<sup>72</sup> DeSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha*, 110, 123–25. See also Motzo, “Il rifacimento greco del ‘Ester’ e il ‘III Macc,’” 287. Clines provides a slightly different explanation, that the two documentary additions are to be seen “as a testimony to the impact of the truth of the Jewish religion upon outsiders, neighbours and overlords.” However, he is not sure if these Additions “were made to meet such a particular need in their own time” (*Esther Scroll*, 173–74).

<sup>73</sup> If the king mistakenly failed to recognize Haman’s hostility, he could perhaps also fail to recognize Jewish loyalty. Accordingly, the irony may reflect the author’s unconscious confession that, in actuality, the foreign king was not partial to Jews. For a similar phenomenon in 3 Maccabees, see Hacham, “Third Book of Maccabees,” 147–62, esp. 155 n. 30, 169–73.

author of the royal edicts shaped them in accordance with the viewpoint of 3 Maccabees, this then discloses his interpretation of the nature of Greek–Jewish relations in 3 Maccabees: profound enmity. In contrast to Gruen and Johnson, I contend that 3 Maccabees attributes dislike of Jews to Greeks as well. At the same time, because of the author’s aspiration, in telling of the kingdom in which he lived,<sup>74</sup> not to exacerbate the relationship between Jews and Greeks to outright conflict, 3 Maccabees downplays this position to some extent at the beginning of ch. 3.<sup>75</sup> Not bound by such constraints because his story relates to the Persian kingdom, the author of the royal letters in the Additions to Esther was able to articulate explicitly his notion—in all probability drawn from 3 Maccabees, as were many details found in the letters—that the Macedonian minister was the foremost Jew hater. The contribution of this intertextual tie between the two works is therefore mutual: in elucidating the reasons for the creation of this affinity, and in disclosing the author’s understanding of the text from which the parallels were drawn.

<sup>74</sup> Various considerations strongly support the premise that 3 Maccabees was composed during the Ptolemaic period, in the first century B.C.E. See, recently, Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 129–41, esp. 141; Passoni Dell’Acqua, “Terzo libro dei Maccabei,” 605–13.

<sup>75</sup> For their positions, see Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 231–34; Johnson, *Historical Fictions and Hellenistic Jewish Identity*, 157–59. For a detailed discussion of this matter and the notion that there is both a public and a hidden transcript here, see Hacham, “Third Book of Maccabees,” 157–62, 169–73.



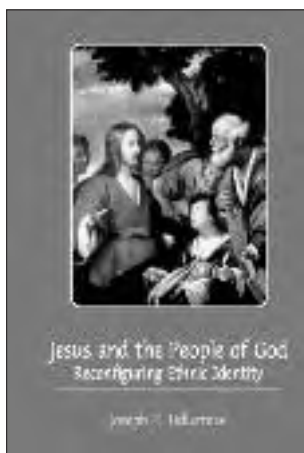
**HOW DID** the Jesus movement—a messianic sectarian version of Palestinian Judaism—transcend its Judean origins and ultimately establish itself in the Roman East as the multi-ethnic socio-religious experiment we know as early Christianity?

In this major work, Hellerman, drawing upon his background as a social historian, proposes that a clue to the success of the Christian movement lay in Jesus' own conception of the people of God, and in how he reconfigured its identity from that of *ethnos* to that of family.

Pointing first to Jesus' critique of sabbath-keeping, the Jerusalem temple, and Jewish dietary laws—practices central to the preservation of Judean social identity—he argues that Jesus' intention was to destabilize the idea of God's people as a localized *ethnos*. In its place he conceived the social identity of the people of God as a surrogate family or kinship group, a social entity based not on common ancestry but on a shared commitment to his kingdom programme.

Jesus of Nazareth thus functioned as a kind of ethnic entrepreneur, breaking down the boundaries of ethnic Judaism and providing an ideological foundation and symbolic framework for the wider expansion of the Jesus movement.

**JOSEPH H. HELLERMAN**  
is Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, Biola University, La Mirada, California.



Joseph H. Hellerman's  
**Jesus and the People of God**  
Reconfiguring  
Ethnic Identity

xii + 385 pp.  
New Testament Monographs, 21  
ISBN 978-1-906055-21-9  
hardback; \$95.00 (list price);  
\$47.50 (individual scholar's  
price, available only from  
the publisher)

*Joseph Hellerman's Jesus and the People of God takes a whole new approach to understanding the social dynamic at work in Jesus' public teaching and ministry. His suggestion that Jesus was attempting to redefine the people of God in terms of commitment to his understanding of God's rule, rather than ancestry or ethnicity, represents an important breakthrough in Jesus research. This substantial work deserves a careful hearing.*

Craig A. Evans,  
Payzant Distinguished Professor of  
New Testament, Acadia Divinity College,  
and author of *Jesus and his Contemporaries*.

*After centuries of not adequately recognizing the Jewishness of Jesus of Nazareth, recent scholarship has more than amply redressed this faux pas. But has the recent phase of the quest of the historical Jesus properly stressed those ways in which Jesus broke from the prevailing nationalism of his day?*

*Hellerman puts it all together, offering a compelling portrait of the Jewish Jesus who nevertheless saw the fulfillment of Sabbath and festivals, temple and purity laws in him.*

Craig L. Blomberg, Distinguished  
Professor of New Testament,  
Denver Seminary, and author of  
*Jesus and the Gospels*.



**Sheffield  
Phoenix Press**

[www.sheffieldphoenix.com](http://www.sheffieldphoenix.com)  
[phoenix.bibs@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:phoenix.bibs@sheffield.ac.uk)



## Reconsidering *Dikaiōma* in Romans 5:16

J. R. DANIEL KIRK

jrdkirk@gmail.com

244 S. 45th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

---

Pick up almost any English translation of the NT and Rom 5:16 will end with either “justification” (NRSV, RSV, NIV, NASB, ESV) or the roughly equivalent “acquittal” (NJB) as translations for the Greek *δικαίωμα*. Thus, the NRSV reads, “And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification (*δικαίωμα*).” Parallel to this phenomenon, German translations of Rom 5:16 end in *Gerechtigkeit* (ELB [Elberfelder Bibel], LUTH [Luther]) and *Freispruch* (HOF [Hoffnung für Alle]) and those in French read *justification* (LSG [Louis Segond]) and *l’acquittement* (BDS [Bible du Semeur]). Despite the pervasiveness of this reading, such translations are lexicographically problematic inasmuch as both BAGD and LSJ list Rom 5:16 as the only place in the extant corpus of Greek literature where *δικαίωμα* bears such a meaning.

Although mild defenses of the translation “justification” have been offered, I will argue that a better way forward is to render *δικαίωμα* with the well-attested meaning of “judgment,” “penalty,” or “reparation”—an action performed by a convicted person that satisfies the court and thus justifies the defendant. After summarizing the argument offered in favor of the translation “justification,” I will argue for “reparation” based on (1) inherent probability (that is, that Paul is more likely to use a word with a meaning his readers would understand), and (2) contextual considerations (these simultaneously undermine an assumption made in the argument for “justification” and support the alternative reading offered here).

### I. THE COMMON DEFENSE OF “JUSTIFICATION”

Although BAGD makes some reference to the linguistic possibility of “justification” as a translation of *δικαίωμα*, the principal argument commentators offer is that this translation is required on exegetical grounds.<sup>1</sup> Thus, we find a train of

<sup>1</sup> BAGD cites Raphael Kühner, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen sprache* (Hannover:

assertion running from Hans Lietzmann's commentary on Romans and Walter Bauer's Greek-English lexicon through Gottlob Schrenk's article in *TDNT* and into most contemporary commentaries to the effect that, since Paul must be offering the precise contrast to "condemnation" (κατάκριμα), he has in mind "justification"; he chose the unusual word δικαίωμα for stylistic purposes so that both words would end in -μα.<sup>2</sup>

As a first step toward addressing this claim, it is important to underscore that no stronger argument is being offered than an assertion of what the commentators feel is the obvious reading of the text. Thus, we find in Lietzmann, "εἰς δικαίωμα für εἰς δικαίωσιν (vgl. v. 18) wegen der andern Worte auf -μα."<sup>3</sup> C. E. B. Cranfield proceeds along similar lines (with reference to Bauer's lexicon), "δικαίωμα is apparently used here in preference to δικαιοσύνη or δικαίωσις (used in v. 18) because a counterpart to κατάκριμα is desired."<sup>4</sup> The same logic is clearly spelled out by James D. G. Dunn: "here it is chosen obviously as yet another -μα word to provide rhetorical balance to κατάκριμα. As such it has to be taken as the opposite of 'condemnation,' so 'justification, acquittal.'"<sup>5</sup> Two steps comprise these arguments: (1) we know what Paul is trying to do, that is, offer a precise antithesis to δικαίωμα, and (2) Paul can meet this expectation if we allow that he coined an idiosyncratic meaning for the term δικαίωμα for stylistic purposes.<sup>6</sup>

It is essential to underscore at this point that no argument has been offered to challenge the lexicography of Liddell and Scott and confirmed in Bauer. That is to say, no suggestion has been made to the effect that "justification" is an attested

---

Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1904) and Eduard Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik* (Munich: Beck, 1968) as demonstrating the possibility of a word ending in -μα referring to a completed action. The weight of this argument is dubious: linguistic possibility is far from providing sufficient grounds for positing an otherwise unattested meaning for a word. Meanings come from usage in context (from the uses of the word in a given language through its usage in a particular clause), not from linguistic possibility. Such arguments tread dangerously close to fallacies based on morphology or etymology inasmuch as they impute meaning to a word based on considerations of form and root rather than current usage (see James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961], esp. 107–18).

<sup>2</sup> Hans Lietzmann, *An die Römer* (HNT 8; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1933), 63; Gottlob Schrenk, "δικαίωμα," *TDNT* 2:219–23; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 1:287 n. 2; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKKNT 6/1; Zurich: Benziger, 1978), 324; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38A; Dallas: Word, 1988), 281; Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 6; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 285.

<sup>3</sup> Lietzmann, *Römer*, 63.

<sup>4</sup> Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:287 n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 281.

<sup>6</sup> One finds the same argument in Simon Légasse, *L'épître de Paul aux Romains* (LD 10; Paris: Cerf, 2002), 385 n. 86.

meaning of *δικαίωμα* outside of Rom 5:16. The arguments offered for such a translation function as pleas to set aside the agreed-upon lexicographical data in favor of this otherwise unattested meaning. Thus, although a review of word usage in the time period in question is a standard procedure in translation debates such as this, in this case agreement about the lexicographical data renders such a survey unnecessary.

## II. ΔΙΚΑΙΩΜΑ AS REPARATION

The first critique we would offer of the translation “justification” is perhaps more of a word of caution than anything else, caution against too readily jumping to the conclusion that Paul is using a word with a meaning that is unavailable to us from any other source and is therefore a meaning likely to be unfamiliar to his readers.<sup>7</sup> That is to say, it is inherently more probable that a speaker will use familiar meanings of familiar words than that he will invoke the wrong word simply because he likes the sound of it. The likelihood of a creative use of this word diminishes further once we recognize that Paul has used the word on several other occasions in this same letter, and each time within the standard, well-attested meanings (see below).

The argument suggested, for example, by Dunn might present us with a counter-argument to the effect that the context makes it so clear what Paul has in mind that his readers would have no trouble recognizing his novel use of the term. This brings us to contextual concerns that I suggest leave the translation “justification” on very shaky ground.

What Cranfield finds apparent and Dunn says is obvious is that Rom 5:16 provides us with clear antithetical parallelism: the opposite of “condemnation” is “justification,” and thus the latter is what Paul has in mind. Applying this line of reasoning to the immediately surrounding verses shows just how precarious this assumption is. Stepping back to v. 15, Paul demarcates the effect of Adam’s transgression by saying, “The many died.” Based on the assumption that Paul is outlining a predictable antithetical parallelism between Adam and Christ, we would expect him to say here, “The many will be made alive.” Instead, he talks about God’s gift and grace abounding to the many. Both the structure and the content of the antithesis are unbalanced.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, if for v. 17 we attempt to predict the Christ side of the Adam/Christ divide, based on what Paul says about the result of Adam’s sin, we will miss the mark. Opposed to “through one transgression death reigned,” we find neither, “through one act of obedience life reigned,” nor “through one act of

<sup>7</sup> The warnings in Barr (*Semantics*) are apropos at this point as well.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 179.

obedience Christ reigned.” Instead, we find a piling up of “grace” and “gift” similar to what we see in v. 15, and we hear of *recipients* reigning through Christ.

Thus, our first contextual observation is that anticipating the resolution of the apostle’s comparison is a precarious business in Rom 5:15–17. We should thus be wary of arguments whose force depends on an “obvious” resolution to an Adam/Christ parallel.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, these other verses should underscore that Rom 5:15–17 is precisely the place where Paul is *not* interested in the sorts of niceties of “rhetorical” structure that would cause him to choose one word over another simply because of the letters in which it ends. In word form, number of words, clause structure, and referents, the antithetical clauses are supremely unbalanced and unpredictable.

A possible counterpoint to my contextual claim is hinted at by both Lietzmann and Cranfield, who draw attention to v. 18. There the antithesis of *κατάκριμα* is, in fact, justification (*δικαίωσιν ζωῆς*). Thus, it might be reasonable to conclude on contextual grounds that justification is also the antithesis that Paul has in mind in v. 16.

The invocation of v. 18 is, however, a double-edged sword. For while v. 18 does ultimately provide “justification” as an antithetical resolution to “condemnation,” it does so by pointing to the means of justification expressed as coming δι’ ἐνὸς δικαίωματος (“through one [man’s] act of righteousness” [NRSV, NIV, NASB]). In other words, we have in the same passage (two verses after 5:16) a verse that uses the same word, *δικαίωμα*, also set in a clause in contrast to a clause about condemnation, but here the word means something akin to “righteous-making action,” or “reparation,” and it connotes Jesus’ death on the cross.<sup>10</sup> Thus, contextually, the stronger argument can be made for reading *δικαίωμα* in v. 16 not as the justifying verdict but rather as the just action that allows the judge to justify the defendant: “The gift, coming from many transgressions, led to reparation.” On this reading, what is in view is not the reversed verdict per se but the answer to the *κατάκριμα* itself—God’s gift meets the penalty of death incurred through Adam, and it does so using the “many transgressions” entailed in the crucifixion of Jesus.

Romans alone of Paul’s extant letters contains the word *δικαίωμα*, and two of the other three uses lend weight to the reading proposed here. The word first occurs in 1:32, where it denotes the sentence required by God’s law for lawbreaking: οἵτινες τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιγόντες ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 179. Byrne falls in step with the consensus reading of v. 16b by suggesting that the word “acquittal” nonetheless underscores that even in v. 16 the Christ side of the Adam/Christ divide is not what one might anticipate.

<sup>10</sup> See Klaus Haacker, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Römer* (THKNT 6; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1999), 121; Charles H. Talbert, *Romans* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 153; *pace* Cranfield, who sees the righteous act as referring to Jesus’ whole life of obedience (*Romans*, 1:289).

ἄξιοι θανάτου εἰσίν. Here δικαίωμα means “judgment” in the sense of what the judge orders a defendant to do in order for the court to be satisfied.<sup>11</sup> A case can be made for a similar reading of δικαίωμα in 8:4. There God’s sending of his son to die on the cross is said to result in the fulfillment of the δικαίωμα of the law in those who walk according to the Spirit. As in 5:18, the means by which the δικαίωμα is accomplished is the death of Jesus; this seems precisely calculated to meet humanity’s need as articulated in 1:32 (and 6:23): death. Because the law’s judgment of a death sentence has been fulfilled in Christ, those who are in Christ can be justified in the final judgment.<sup>12</sup> Paul creates a context in Romans in which δικαίωμα refers to a legal requirement of death, a requirement met in the cross of Christ. This consideration, rather than assumptions about what Paul must have wanted to say, should carry the greatest weight in the translation of 5:16.

Paul uses δικαίωμα one other time, in 2:26: “If the uncircumcised person should keep the requirements (δικαιώματα) of the law . . .” In this case Paul uses the plural, unlike the singular of the other passages, and his meaning echoes one major use of the plural from the LXX: the things the law requires.<sup>13</sup> This broader term could presumably include both positive precepts and punishments required for their violation, but in the context it seems to be pointing toward keeping the positive “ethical” precepts. Thus, in form and content it has a somewhat different referent from the other appearances in Romans, and in any event it provides yet another piece of evidence that Paul has not created a context in Romans in which his readers might expect δικαίωμα to mean “justification.”

### III. CONCLUSION

Given the paucity of supporting evidence and the complexity of Paul’s argument, we should resist the temptation to read “justification” into Paul’s Adam/Christ antithesis in Rom 5:16. Δικαίωμα does not elsewhere denote justification, and it need not do so here. In Rom 5:16b δικαίωμα denotes the reparation demanded by God in the face of transgression and further connotes a demanded death—a demand met in the cross of Christ. The clause in question is thus better

<sup>11</sup> Byrne notes this possibility, though he opts for the more general idea of “regulation” or “requirement” (*Romans*, 78 n. 32).

<sup>12</sup> This provides a better way forward in Rom 8:4 than attempting to explain the singular as a reference to one particular positive command such as lust (Robert Gundry, “The Moral Frustration of Paul before his Conversion: Sexual Lust in Romans 7.7–25,” in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday* [ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris; Exeter: Paternoster, 1980], 228–45) or covetousness more generally (John A. Ziesler, “The Just Requirement of the Law [Romans 8.4],” *ABR* 35 [1987]: 77–82), or as a reference to the law as a whole (e.g., Cranfield, *Romans*, 1:383–84).

<sup>13</sup> See Légasse, *Romains*, 159 n. 145.

translated something along these lines: “but the gift came through many transgressions leading to reparation.” Or, if one prefers to keep the terminology of righteousness visible, a more periphrastic rendering might go something like this: “but the gift came through many transgressions leading to the righteous requirement [of death] being met.” Romans 5:16b refers not to justification but rather to what leads to justification, and our translations will be more accurate and helpful as they find ways to reflect this.

# The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Revisiting Paul's Anthropology in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology

EMMA WASSERMAN  
wasserme@reed.edu  
Reed College, Portland, OR 97202

---

Few texts have been made more central to Christian doctrines of sin and human nature than ch. 7 of Paul's letter to the Romans. Romans 7:7–25 presents a dramatic monologue of inner turmoil and contradiction, "I do not do the good that I want, but the very thing I hate is what I do" (7:19).<sup>1</sup> This struggle pits not only good intentions against evil actions, but also the body against the mind, the flesh against the spirit, and God's law against sin. Augustine and Martin Luther both understood the monologue as a representation of the human will confessing its incapacity for goodness.<sup>2</sup> This very influential reading made an intense inner struggle with sin the normative human condition and placed Paul's text at the center of Christian theologies of sin.<sup>3</sup> Yet, although Romans 7 has been tremendously productive for later interpreters, historians in the nineteenth and twentieth cen-

I am grateful to Krister Stendahl, Wayne Meeks, and Merrill Miller for their helpful comments and criticisms on a draft of this article. I would also like to thank participants in the Seminar on Culture and Religion in the Ancient Mediterranean at Brown University, who read and commented on an earlier version in 2005, especially David Konstan, Ross Kraemer, Saul Olyan, and Stanley Stowers.

<sup>1</sup> Translations of Paul's letters are my own; all other translations are from the Loeb Classical Library unless noted.

<sup>2</sup> For a penetrating critique of this tradition, see Stendahl's classic essay, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," in *Paul among the Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 78–96.

<sup>3</sup> To give only two twentieth-century examples: Rudolf Bultmann (*Theology of the New Testament* [trans. Schubert Ogden; 2 vols.; London: Collins, 1960], 1:248–49) understands Romans 7 as the plight of the human being faced with its own sinful self-reliance, whereas Karl Barth (*The Epistle to the Romans* [trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns; 6th ed.; London: Oxford, 1968], 242) takes the monologue as the person compelled to recognize that "God is not to be found in religion."

turies have found it difficult to explain many aspects of the text. Even setting aside major issues such as Paul's understanding of sin, the Jewish law, or his anthropology, interpreters have had difficulty explaining Paul's use of literary and rhetorical forms or even the fact that the speaker claims to have died at the beginning of the monologue but then continues to speak for another twenty verses. This study proposes that the monologue of Romans 7 can be better understood in light of a Platonic discourse about the death of the soul. Read in the context of this moral tradition, Rom 7:7–25 emerges as an internal monologue that depicts the radical disempowerment of reason at the hands of the passions.

Discussions of extreme immorality in Plato, Plutarch, Galen, and Philo of Alexandria illuminate the plight of the speaker of 7:7–25 as that of reason or mind explaining its utter defeat at the hands of passions and appetites, represented as sin.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Romans 7 is most illuminated by the writings of Philo that similarly use the metaphors of death and dying to describe reason's disempowerment by passions and desires. Not only does Romans 7 use Platonic terms for the reasoning part of the soul such as νοῦς (mind) and ἔσω ἄνθρωπος (inner person), but the depiction of sin here fits with Platonic traditions of personification and metaphor that similarly represent passions and desires as an evil indwelling being that makes war, enslaves, imprisons, and sometimes even metaphorically kills the mind. This tradition also explains the contradiction between wanting and doing in 7:14–25 as the plight of mind so disempowered by passions that it cannot put any of its good reasoning desires into action. Platonic traditions make sense of the developing argument of Romans 7 and explain the language of mind, inner person, sin, passions, flesh, body, warfare, slavery, imprisonment, and death.

I want to make several points at the outset to clarify the nature and scope of this study. First, I do not argue that Paul is relying on Plato directly or that he consistently uses a Platonic model of the soul elsewhere in his letters.<sup>5</sup> Rather, I show that in the literary context of Romans 7, Paul uses certain premises that are identi-

<sup>4</sup> Though I build on their work, I argue against Stanley Stowers (*A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994], 269–72) and Troels Engberg-Pedersen (*Paul and the Stoics* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000], 239–46; idem, “The Reception of Greco-Roman Culture in the New Testament: The Case of Romans 7:7–25,” in *The New Testament as Reception* [ed. Mogens Müller and Henrik Tronier; JSNTSup 230; London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002], 32–57) who both argue that the monologue depicts a moral condition of ἀκρασία (weakness of will). Stowers does suggest that the moral problems in Romans 6–8 resemble the condition of ἀκολασία, or a “set disposition to do wrong” (*Rereading of Romans*, 279) but does not pursue the issue further.

<sup>5</sup> In my view, however, questions about the coherence of Paul's anthropology should be reconsidered in light of the variations characteristic of Hellenistic writings on moral psychology (see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996], 144).



fiably Middle Platonic and that these better account for the language, style, and argument of the text. Second, I do not argue that Paul is a philosopher or that his letters are informed only by philosophical or moral writings to the exclusion of any number of other traditions, discourses, or interests. Though interpreters have sometimes posed a Paul who is an apocalyptic thinker as antithetical to a Paul who has certain philosophical interests and skills, I can find no justification for the view that the selective appropriation of certain philosophical images and arguments necessarily conflicts with some uniquely Pauline (often apocalyptically conceived) religious sphere of interest and argument. In fact, I hold that issues central to Romans 7, such as the human capacity for good or bad behavior and for obedience or disobedience to God, gain immediacy in light of God's impending judgment of the world for those behaviors. Finally, this study suggests that certain views of Paul's apocalypticism may need to be rethought, especially the popular view that casts sin in Romans 5–8 as a so-called apocalyptic power. Though arguably sin could function both as a personified representation of the passions and as an invading "power," I simply cannot find historical evidence to support the theories of powers as usually formulated or any literary cues in the text that would substantiate such a reading. Despite their enormous popularity, then, I find that the theories of apocalyptic powers, as currently conceived, lack substantial historical merit.

## I. BEYOND THE BULTMANN–KÄSEMANN DEBATE

In the twentieth century, two major approaches to Romans 7 have tended to set the terms of debate about the interpretation of the monologue: the existentialist (or demythologizing) and the apocalyptic (or mythological). These positions emerged out of a famous debate between Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann and established two major premises about the meaning of Romans 7: first, that the speaker of the monologue represents a unified person; second, that sin is a demon-like entity that has entered the speaker from outside its body. While the first premise was foundational for Bultmann's theology, Käsemann developed the second in opposition to Bultmann as an attempt to recover the so-called mythological or apocalyptic aspects of Paul's thought. Though Käsemann rejected Bultmann's approach in many ways, he never questioned the idea that Rom 7:7–25 represented a unified self. As a result, one of the most popular interpretations of Romans 7 among scholars today is Käsemann's apocalyptic interpretation, which embeds a central assumption of its other, the existentialist or demythologizing reading.

As a Protestant existentialist theologian, Bultmann read the monologue of 7:7–25 as the self confronted with its own sinful self-reliance.<sup>6</sup> For Bultmann, the

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, "Romans 7 and the Anthropology of Paul," in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann* (trans. Schubert Ogden; London: Collins, 1960), 173–85;

speaker cannot do the law because the acts of identifying, understanding, and wanting to do God's law are sinful. So when the speaker makes statements such as, "I delight in the law of God in my inmost self (κατὰ τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον) but I see another law in my members that is making war on the law of my mind and making me a captive through the law of sin that is in my members (ἀντιστρατεύομενον τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοός μου καὶ αἰχμαλωτίζοντά με ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τῆς ἁμαρτίας τῷ ὄντι ἐν τοῖς μέλεσίν μου)" (7:22–23), this delight in the law is an act of disobedience to God. Bultmann also dismisses the idea that the monologue represents the divided Platonic soul, writing:

Just as his willing and doing are not distributed between two subjects—say, a better self and his lower impulses—but rather are both realized by the same I, so also are the "flesh" and "mind" (or the "inner man") not two constituent elements out of which he is put together. Man is split.<sup>7</sup>

The Platonic soul presents a number of problems for Bultmann. First, the Platonic theory entails a conception of mind or reason as a part of the soul with certain reasoning capacities, but not as a unified center of consciousness, reflection, and will as in the modern Cartesian tradition so foundational for Bultmann's existentialism. Second, Platonism entails optimism about the human capacity for reasoned reflection, self-control, and virtue because even in cases where reason cannot put its good judgments into action it is still intrinsically good. Bultmann cannot allow Paul a concept of the divided person because it seems to contradict certain Protestant doctrines of sin developed here in terms of a modern existentialist subjectivity. He thus rejects the notion of a divided soul in favor of the self that is fundamentally split, because this fits with certain Protestant constructions of sin and with modern conceptions of the subject as unified. Thus, without historical argument, he insists that Romans 7 actually portrays a unified self in the throes of a subject-object split ("man *is* split") as it comes to know itself as an object.

Scholars such as Christopher Gill have shown that ancients did not share the conceptions of self that Bultmann takes as normative, especially the unity and robust inner life that modernity attributes to it.<sup>8</sup> Yet, absent Bultmann's crisis of the knowing subject, there is no way to account for the division and alienation of

---

this view of Pauline anthropology permeates Bultmann's *Theology of the New Testament*. For criticism, see Robert H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology, with an Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology* (SNTSMS 29; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and David E. Aune, "Human Nature and Ethics in Hellenistic Philosophical Traditions and Paul: Some Issues and Problems," in *Paul in His Hellenistic Context* (ed. Troels Engberg-Pedersen; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 298–99.

<sup>7</sup> Bultmann, "Romans 7," 178 (italics original).

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Gill, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

Romans 7, where the narrator speaks repeatedly about sin, the flesh, and the members of its body as if they were alien and outside of its true self. In Rom 7:17 the speaker cries, "It is not I that am doing this, but the sin which lives in my members," which implies that the "I" is a more essential part of the person that stands in opposition to the flesh, members, passions, sin, and the body. Nevertheless, Bultmann's reading of the unified sinful self continues to be very influential. While many readers simply assume rather than defend this approach, Hans Dieter Betz has recently asserted that there is no ontological dualism between body and soul in Romans 7, and Troels Engberg-Pedersen has argued that the text depicts a whole person schizophrenically describing its different and conflicting forms of self-identification.<sup>9</sup> While Betz's argument rests on a misunderstanding of what he terms "Hellenistic dualism," Engberg-Pedersen's analysis also makes little sense of the monologue, because the speaker never identifies with sin, the passions, or the flesh. The narrator repeatedly invokes only one perspective, that of the speaking I who correctly judges good and evil and understands God's just law but cannot do what it knows to be right because it is trapped, enslaved, and at war with sin. The narrator does not deliberate; the audience never hears the voice of sin or the flesh; and there is no equivocation or appreciation of different views or perspectives. There is one viewpoint that is represented throughout, that of the speaking I that is powerless to put its good judgment into action.

In opposition to Bultmann, Ernst Käsemann attributed to Paul a supposed apocalyptic thought world that merges the human being and the cosmos.<sup>10</sup> So he countered: "Anthropology is the projection of cosmology. . . . Because the world is not finally a neutral place but the field of contending powers, mankind both individually and socially becomes the object of the struggle and an exponent of the powers that rule it."<sup>11</sup> While Käsemann accepts Bultmann's position that the speaker

<sup>9</sup> Engberg-Pedersen, *Paul and the Stoics*, 244; Hans Dieter Betz, "The Concept of the 'Inner Human Being' (ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) in the Anthropology of Paul," *NTS* 46 (2000): 335–39. Engberg-Pedersen can at least plausibly make a case that the soul is unified in Romans 7 by appealing to unified theories of mind propounded by the Stoics. The problem with his argument, however, is that Romans 7 consistently uses images and terms that fit with Platonic representations of inner conflict, not with Stoic ones. Betz, on the other hand, is so intent on making Paul an opponent of Hellenistic dualism (a replacement for Bultmann's gnostic dualism) that he arrives at a distorted theory by positing a strongly dualistic Hellenistic anthropology based on the relation of body and soul after death rather than during life. Other scholars simply assume that the text represents a unified self, as, e.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation and Commentary* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 463–66; and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* (2 vols.; WBC 38; Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:381–82.

<sup>10</sup> Käsemann's view is a prominent legacy of Martin Dibelius's powers thesis developed in *Die Geisterwelt im Glauben des Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1909).

<sup>11</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 150; idem, "On Paul's Anthropology," in idem, *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 1–31.

represents a unified self, he insists that the body of the believer has been invaded by hostile material beings or “powers,” the most important of which is Sin.<sup>12</sup> On this reading, when the narrator cries, “it is not I that do it, but the sin that lives in me” (Rom 7:17), he means that a quasi-demonic being, Sin, has entered his body from outside. The person is wholly implicated in a vast, supposedly apocalyptic battle that is taking place on a personal and cosmic scale.

Despite the criticisms of scholars such as Bruce Kaye and Stanley Stowers, most commentators have consistently assumed rather than justified Käsemann’s position, and it has become basic to most constructions of Paul’s apocalypticism.<sup>13</sup> Kaye and Stowers argue that it is wrong to deny Paul the literary use of personification and metaphor and that sin in Romans 5–8 makes more sense when read as a personification. Yet even setting aside these methodological considerations, one finds little basis for such conceptions of sin in Jewish texts that describe the work of nonhuman or demonic beings. With the possible exception of col. 3 of the *Rule of the Community* from Qumran (1QS 3), there are virtually no extant texts that depict external powers entering the body and controlling the person in the way that the theory envisions.<sup>14</sup> Though texts such as *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* give important roles to the Watchers, evil angels, and Beliar, these figures are never made into

<sup>12</sup> Those who have brought this theory to its logical conclusion have also claimed to find many other powers such as flesh, death, law, grace, mercy, and faith. So J. Louis Martyn holds that flesh and spirit are powers (“Apocalyptic Antinomies,” in idem, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* [Studies of the New Testament and Its World; Nashville: Abingdon, 1997], 111–23) and Martinus C. de Boer argues that death is also a power (*The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5* [JSNTSup 22; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988]).

<sup>13</sup> Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 179–89; Bruce N. Kaye, *The Thought Structure of Romans, with Special Reference to Chapter 6* (Austin: Schola, 1979), 32–47. See also Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning, and Development of the Pauline Phrase *hai archai kai hai exousiai** (SNTSMS 42; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Günter Röhser, *Metaphorik und Personifikation der Sünde: Antike Sündenvorstellungen und paulinische Hamartia* (WUNT 2/25; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> 1QS 3 states that the dominion of an Angel of Darkness is such that “all their afflictions and their periods of grief are caused by his enmity; and the spirits of his lot cause the sons of light to fall” (1QS 3:23–24; trans. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition* [Leiden: Brill, 1997]). Yet the text explicitly names an evil angel and soon equivocates about its role in human sin (1QS 4:23). This text does not provide sufficient warrant for such a totalizing conception of sin, its apocalyptic horizon, or its supposed connection to Paul. In contrast, an array of texts fuse human moral agency with some extrahuman agency, as in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Though late, the *Testament of Dan* focuses on the problem of anger in the soul and sometimes associates this with Beliar while at other times blames anger as a passion that rebels against reason: “Anger and falsehood together are a double-edged evil, and work together to perturb reason. And when the soul is continually perturbed, the Lord withdraws from it and Beliar rules it; conversely, if you keep the law, the Lord will stay and Beliar will flee” (*T. Dan* 4:7; trans. OTP). Cf. *T. Ash.* 1:5–9; *T. Iss.* 7:7; *T. Reu.* 5:6.

the proximate cause of evil for every human being.<sup>15</sup> Instead, these texts consistently attribute responsibility for human sin to both human and nonhuman agents, whether original or proximate. These figures also tend to emerge with myths that explain their origins, give them specific names, and ascribe to them specific and limited roles in human history. Despite the lack of historical grounds for understanding sin as a so-called apocalyptic or cosmological power, the theory is extremely popular and can be found in almost all commentaries on Paul's letters as well as in many studies of Paul's thought on sin and the law and his apocalypticism.

Two further arguments regarding sin in Romans 7 merit consideration: the connection to the evil impulse and to so-called confession literature associated particularly with texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Mark A. Seifrid argues that texts such as 1QH<sup>a</sup> 9:21–27 offer a first-person narrator who discusses human sin and iniquity in a direct address to God.<sup>16</sup> Yet this literature cannot account for basic features of Romans 7 such as sin's location in the body; the activities attributed to sin in killing, enslaving, and imprisoning the speaker; the role of passions, mind, inner person, flesh, and body in the monologue; or the speaker's extended self-reflection on its internal division and repeated complaints that it is unable to effect its good intentions. This divergence allows Seifrid to insist that Paul's refashioning of this tradition "has features which make it unique to Paul."<sup>17</sup> The supposed connection to what Seifrid understands as an "early Jewish confessing *ego*" is tenuous at best. Alternatively, some scholars also find in Romans 7 a Jewish tradition concerning good and evil impulses, as does Leander Keck, who draws on Joel Marcus and Roland Murphy.<sup>18</sup> The references to the human being's good and evil inclination in Genesis, Sirach, and writings from Qumran appear rather as folk theories of human motivation. Not only is there little evidence, but texts that do refer to good and evil inclinations do not show consistent patterns in the use of language,

<sup>15</sup> So, e.g., *1 En.* 15:8–10; 69:4–12; *Jub.* 10:1–9; 23:26; *Wis* 2:23–24; 6:17–20; cf. 1:13–14. *1 Enoch* 98:4 also claims that evil is humans' own fault and cannot be blamed on extrahuman forces, as does *Sir* 15:15; 21:27; 25:25; cf. 15:17; Pseudo-Philo, *L.A.B.* 3:2–3; 4 *Ezra* 7:46–61; 2 *Bar.* 54:14. See John J. Collins, "The Origin of Evil in Apocalyptic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Seers, Sybils, and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (JSJSup 54; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 287–300.

<sup>16</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, "The Subject of Rom 7:14–25," *NovT* 34 (1992): 322, as also Fitzmyer (*Romans*, 465–66) and Peter Stuhlmacher (*Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* [trans. Scott J. Hafemann; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994], 109–10), who combines the Jewish confessional and evil impulse interpretations.

<sup>17</sup> Seifrid, "Subject of Romans 7:14–25," 322.

<sup>18</sup> Leander Keck, "The Absent Good: The Significance of Rom 7:18a," in *Text und Geschichte: Facetten theologischen Arbeitens aus dem Freundes und Schülerkreis, Dieter Lührmann zum 60 Geburtstag* (ed. Stefan Maser and Egbert Schlarb; Marburger Theologische Studien 50; Marburg: Elwert, 1999), 66–75; Roland E. Murphy, "Yetzer at Qumran," *Bib* 39 (1958): 334–44; Joel Marcus, "The Evil Inclination in the Epistle of James," *CBQ* 44 (1982): 606–21; idem, "The Evil Inclination in the Letters of Paul," *IBS* 8 (1986): 8–21.

images, assumptions, or arguments that would warrant our regarding this notion as a distinct tradition or discourse and would justify connecting it to Romans. As a result, writers such as Marcus tend to harmonize a range of different Jewish and Christian texts rather than provide a careful historical consideration of any one of them. For example, he evaluates ἐπιθυμία (desire or appetite) as an evil impulse in James and Philo but relies on Harry Wolfson and so perpetuates a misunderstanding of the use and meanings of ἐπιθυμία.<sup>19</sup> Though it is certainly possible that a writer could have connected the notion of good and evil impulses to the idea of passions and desires, to establish this would require evidence and argumentation.

In contrast to the supposed confession or evil impulse interpretations of Romans 7, the reading advanced here develops a very different type of historical context for understanding the monologue. Against the larger paradigms of Bultmann and Käsemann, I argue that the self of Romans 7 is not whole but rather split between its rational and irrational parts, and sin is not an external being but rather represents the irrational parts consistent with Hellenistic moral discourse about just this type of inner turmoil. Romans 7 appropriates a Platonic discourse about the nature of the soul and describes what happens to its reasoning part when the bad passions and appetites get the upper hand.

## II. EXTREME IMMORALITY FROM PLATO TO PAUL

In the Hellenistic period, an important debate emerged among philosophers and moralists concerning the constitution of the soul and the theories of human motivation that follow from it. In a basic way, they formulate answers to questions such as, Why do people behave immorally? and What is to be done about human suffering and wickedness? by formulating theories of the soul that explain its function and malfunction. These theories of moral psychology are thus key to identifying human problems and developing philosophical teachings meant to remedy them. All schools of thought presume that when people behave wickedly, they do so because of some problem with the soul that can be identified and (at least potentially) corrected. Luckily, it is not necessary to detail every theory of moral psychology, because a limited set of premises and assumptions distinguish the Platonic model of the soul and inform the production of diverse arguments, images, and analogies.

Plato's theory of the soul varies, but in his later writings he arrives at the very influential proposal that the soul is composed of three parts, one rational and two

<sup>19</sup> Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (2 vols.; *Structure and Growth of Philosophic Systems from Plato to Spinoza* 2; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1947), 2:288–90.

nonrational.<sup>20</sup> So the *Phaedrus* (*Phaedr.* 253c–254e) envisions the soul as composed of the spirited part (τὸ θυμοειδῆς), the appetitive part (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν), and the reasoning part (τὸ λογιστικόν).<sup>21</sup> The reasoning faculty deliberates, evaluates the world, and forms judgments about appropriate actions, but the function of the appetitive and spirited faculties can be loosely described as bodily cravings and emotions. Where the reasoning part desires wisdom, the appetites desire objects such as food, drink, and sex, and temper (or the spirited part) desires honor that produces emotions such as anger, fear, and indignation. In some sense, appetites are analogous to modern concepts of instincts as unreflected and irrational drives, as they have objects such as sex or food, but they act automatically without reason in and of themselves.

Plato's moral psychology explains human motivation and action by positing a constant, ongoing, and often-violent struggle between rational and irrational parts. Moral and immoral behaviors have their origins in what happens inside the soul, and specifically in the strength or weakness of reason relative to the irrational faculties. Plato and later Platonists also emphasize the particular danger posed by the appetites.<sup>22</sup> For on this theory, appetites do not actually desire food and sex but rather the pleasure of satiety produced by eating food and having sex. Because this satisfaction is transient and unstable, the appetites ominously tend toward excess (*Rep.* 439d6–8). Unchecked, the appetitive desire for food leads inevitably to gluttony and the desire for drink to habitual drunkenness. In contrast, not only is the spirited part more responsive to reason, but emotions such as disgust, shame, and aversion are morally relevant even though not strictly rational. The appetites thus emerge as the fiercest and most dangerous part of the soul and the Platonic tradition envisions extremely immoral persons as those in whom appetites have risen to rule in reason's rightful place. Platonists also tend to associate the body with the appetites because they have an interdependent relation; that is, the appetites rely on

<sup>20</sup> This draws on Plato's theory as described in the *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, and the *Timaeus* rather than the earlier *Phaedo*. See A. W. Price, *Mental Conflict* (Issues in Ancient Philosophy; London: Routledge, 1995), 30–103; Sabina Lovibond, "Plato's Theory of Mind," in *Psychology* (ed. Stephen Everson; Companions to Ancient Thought 2; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 35–55; and John M. Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation," in idem, *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 118–37.

<sup>21</sup> Variation in the use of terms is characteristic of Middle Platonism. Most later writers refer to Plato's spirited part as the seat of passions or emotions (πάθη) and often designate passions and appetites together as πάθη, the irrational parts, or simply the worst parts of the soul.

<sup>22</sup> So in the *Phaedrus* (*Phaedr.* 253c–254e) the appetites are the more wild and uncontrolled of the two horses and only by constant and hard reining-in can reason make the appetitive horse weak and obedient. See, e.g., *Tim.* 86b–90a; and Galen, *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul* (in *Claudii Galeni opera omnia* [ed. C. G. Kühn; Paris: Bibliothèque Interuniversitaire de Médecine, De Boccard, 2001], 5:28) on cultivating the strength and weakness of the soul's parts.

the bodily senses to identify pleasures.<sup>23</sup> As a result, writers depict the appetites as allied with the body and flesh in their struggle against reason's rule.

The Stoic theory of moral psychology brings out the distinctiveness of Plato's theory.<sup>24</sup> In opposition to Plato, the early Stoics insist that the mind is unified so that bad actions are not the result of reason losing a battle against the other faculties, but rather of the mind approving of false propositions. This construes the problem of immoral action as a matter of the mind holding false beliefs. Philosophical discussions of Medea illustrate the Stoic position and exemplify the use of the internal monologue to depict moral-psychological states and dispositions. In Euripides' play, Medea responds to Jason's betrayal by murdering their two young children but has a monologue just prior to the infanticide where she deliberates about whether to kill them. Philosophers frequently appeal to this deliberation in arguing for their respective theories of mind and typically interpret it along the lines of "I know what I am about to do is bad, but anger is master of my plans, which is the source of human beings' greatest troubles."<sup>25</sup> So the Roman Stoic Epictetus explains that Medea commits infanticide by appealing to her reasoning: "It is because she regards the very indulgence of her passion and the vengeance against her husband as more profitable than saving her children" (*Diatr.* 1.28.6–8). Immoral actions result from competing claims about what is true, in this case claims about the value of the children's lives and of vengeance against Jason. Medea kills her children because she holds false beliefs; theoretically, if a Stoic teacher could have convinced her that these propositions were wrong, then she would not have killed them. For the Stoics, Medea does not waver because of a contradiction between her reason and her anger, as on Plato's model, but rather she only appears to contradict herself because her mind alternates so quickly between competing truth-claims.<sup>26</sup> In

<sup>23</sup> On Plato's complex view of the body-soul relationship, see Price, *Mental Conflict*, 30–103, esp. 36–40.

<sup>24</sup> See Tad Brennan, "The Old Stoic Theory of Emotion," in *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (ed. Juha Sihvola and Troels Engberg-Pedersen; The New Synthese Historical Library 46; Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1998), 21–70. Scholars distinguish the early Stoic theory of mind (sometimes termed the "orthodox" Stoic account) from later Stoic psychology associated with Posidonius, but John Cooper ("Posidonius on Emotions," in *Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Sihvola and Engberg-Pederson, 71–111) and Christopher Gill ("Did Galen Understand Platonic and Stoic Thinking on Emotions?" in *Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy*, 113–48) have both challenged the theory on the grounds that Galen misrepresents Posidonius.

<sup>25</sup> Gill argues for this interpretation of the Medean cry (*Personality*, 223).

<sup>26</sup> E.g., Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 446F–447A. Though Engberg-Pedersen argues that Paul operates with a Stoic moral psychology (*Paul and the Stoics*, 239–46; "Reception," 32–57), the images, language, and argument of Romans 7 fit with Platonic traditions of moral psychology, not Stoic ones. For example, the speaker of Romans 7 never vacillates between different judgments but rather correctly judges good and evil throughout; the problem is that the speaker is powerless to put this understanding into action. This makes sense on Platonic, but not Stoic, premises.



contrast, the second-century medical writer Galen draws on the analogy of the charioteer as he argues for a Platonic interpretation:

She knew what an unholy and terrible thing she was doing, when she set out to kill her children, and therefore she hesitated. . . . Then anger dragged her again to the children by force, like some disobedient horse that has overpowered the charioteer; then reason in turn drew her back and led her away, then anger again exerted an opposite pull, and then again reason. Consequently, being repeatedly driven up and down by the two of them, when she has yielded to anger, at that time Euripides has her say: "I understand the evils I am going to do, but anger prevails over my counsels." (*Hippoc. et Plat.* 3.3.14–16)<sup>27</sup>

Medea's deliberation exemplifies the battle between reason and emotion in the tripartite soul, and she commits murder when reason loses the battle.

Ancient philosophers often focus on the figure of Medea for the purpose of developing competing theories, but the particular moral condition she exemplifies (moral weakness, or *ἀκρασία*) is one among many. So, for example, though the sage is a morally perfect person who never behaves badly, philosophers usually insist that the vast majority of people sometimes or even regularly commit bad acts, while still others always do.<sup>28</sup> It is the more extreme types—those who always act immorally—that are most relevant and illuminating for Romans 7. I begin with the so-called tyrannical man of the *Republic* and then draw out points of continuity with similar discussions in Plutarch, Galen, and Philo of Alexandria.

The *Republic* describes in book 9 a case of the most miserable or wretched type of person as the tyrannical man. Plato first appeals to dreams as evidence that all persons have evil and lawless appetites:

Some of our unnecessary pleasures and desires seem to me to be lawless. They are probably present in everyone, but they are held in check by the laws and the better desires in alliance with reason. In a few people, they have been eliminated entirely or only a few weak ones remain, while in others they are stronger and more numerous. "What desires do you mean?" Those that are awakened in sleep, when the rest of the soul—the rational, gentle, and ruling part—slumbers. Then the beastly and savage part, full of food and drink, casts off sleep and seeks to find a way to gratify itself. You know there is nothing it won't dare to do at such a time, free of all control by shame or reason. It doesn't shrink from trying to have sex with his mother, as it supposes, or with anyone else at all, whether man, god,

<sup>27</sup> Translation from Galen: *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* (ed. and trans. Phillip de Lacy; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1978). See also *Hippoc. et Plat.* 4.6.17–27.

<sup>28</sup> Some philosophers fully articulate such a spectrum of moral types (as, e.g., Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 7; and Seneca, *Ep.* 75), but this is more often implicit (as, e.g., Galen, *Hippoc. et Plat.* 3.3.19–22). The early Stoics are a notable exception because they obviate moral progress by insisting that wisdom is all or nothing. Later Stoics, however, do develop theories of moral progress.

or beast. It will commit any foul murder, and there is no food it refuses to eat. In a word, it omits no act of folly or shamelessness. (*Rep.* 9.571b–d)<sup>29</sup>

The appetites (“the beastly and savage part”) get away from both reason and the emotions of the spirited part (“the better desires” and “shame”) during sleep. While all persons have these terrible and lawless appetites in their soul, certain conditions must hold for the appetites to realize fully their rebellious potential. The discussion of the tyrannical man that occupies most of book 9 explores the rise of the appetites to dominate fully during wake and sleep.

Plato’s tyrant-to-be is a degenerate son whose father serves as a poor example of moral behavior. He also receives a perverse mis-education at the hands of advisors who wish to rule through him and actively foster his appetites: “When those clever enchanters and tyrant makers have no hope of keeping hold of the young man in any other way, they contrive to plant in him a powerful erotic love (ἐρωτά) to be the protector of his idle and prodigal appetites (προσάτην τῶν ἀγρῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτοιμα διανεμομένων ἐπιθυμιῶν), like a great winged drone (ὕπόπτερον καὶ μέγαν κηρῆνά) to be the leader of those idle desires” (*Rep.* 9.572e–573a). The rebellion of the appetites requires the figure of a leader, a single monstrous appetite that acts as political and military commander and makes war against both the reasoning and spirited parts. This extended analogy anthropomorphizes the appetites as evil soldiers who obey a single monstrous appetite, variously a large winged bee, a ruling passion, or a “powerful erotic love.” So Plato writes, “And when everything is gone, won’t the violent crowd of desires that has nested within him (ἐννεοσττευμένας) inevitably shout in protest? And driven by the stings of the other desires and especially by erotic love itself (which leads all of them as its bodyguard), won’t he become frenzied and look to see who possesses anything that he could take, either by deceit or force? (τοὺς δ’ ὥσπερ ὑπὸ κέντρων ἐλαυνομένους τῶν τε ἄλλων ἐπιθυμιῶν καὶ διαφερόντως ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἑρωτος, πάσαις ταῖς ἄλλαις ὥσπερ δορυφόροις ἡγουμένου, οἰστρεῖν καὶ σκοπεῖν τίς τι ἔχει, ὃν δυνατόν ἀφελέσθαι ἀπατήσαντα)” (*Rep.* 9.573e). The monstrous ruler of the appetites emerges as if to answer the question, “if reason is not in control, who or what is?” Yet no scholar of ancient philosophy would argue that Plato actually views this “body guard” as external to the person as it clearly represents the appetites.

When the rise of the appetitive ruler is complete, the tyrant has within him a tyrannical ruling passion (*Rep.* 9.574d–575a). So Plato compares the soul of the tyrannical man more explicitly to the tyrannical form of rule:

<sup>29</sup> Translations of the *Republic* are from *Plato: Republic* (trans. G. M. A. Grube; Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992). Philo alludes to this text (*Leg.* 3.234) as does Plutarch (*Virt. vit.* 101A) discussed below.

Then, if man and city are alike, mustn't the same structure be in him too? And mustn't his soul be full of slavery and unfreedom, with the most decent parts enslaved and with a small part, the maddest and most vicious as their master? (καὶ ταῦτα αὐτῆς τὰ μέρη δουλεύειν, ἅπερ ἦν ἐπεικέστατα, μικρόν δὲ καὶ τὸ μοχθηρότατον καὶ μανικώτατον δεσπόζειν)? "It must." What will you say about such a soul then? Is it free or slave? "Slave, of course." And isn't the enslaved and tyrannical city least likely to do what it wants (οὐκοῦν ἢ γε αὖ δούλη καὶ τυραννουμένη πόλις ἥκιστα ποιεῖ ἃ βούλεται)? "Certainly." Then a tyrannical soul—I'm talking about the whole soul—will also be least likely to do what it wants, forcibly driven by the stings of a dronish gadfly, will be full of disorder and regret (καὶ ἡ τυραννουμένη ἄρα ψυχὴ ἥκιστα ποιήσῃ ἃ ἂν βουληθῇ, ὥς περὶ ὅλης εἰπεῖν ψυχῆς ὑπὸ δὲ οἷστρου ἀεὶ ἐλκομένη βίᾳ ταραχῆς καὶ μεταμελείας μεστὴ ἔσται). (*Rep.* 9.577d–e)

The dominant metaphors for the relation between reason and appetite are slavery and mastery, political power and rule. These metaphors and analogies layer and build on one another while the central point remains clear: reason has been utterly defeated by the irrational passions. Plato also insists that reason does not sanction bad acts, but rather this person "least of all does what he wishes."<sup>30</sup> Here the judgments and reflections of reason contradict the dispositions and actions of the person considered as a whole. The reasoning part has lost control and can do nothing but bewail and bemoan its plight.

Drawing on Plato's tyrannical man, Plutarch personifies and anthropomorphizes the appetites as "vice" and emphasizes its deceptive and violent activities. So he writes:

For by day vice, looking outside of itself and conforming its attitude to others, is abashed and veils its emotions, and does not give itself up completely to its impulses (ταῖς ὁρμαῖς), but often times resists them and struggles against them; but in the hours of slumber, when it has escaped from opinion and law (δόξας καὶ νόμους) and got away as far as possible from feeling fear or shame, it sets every desire stirring (κινεῖ), and awakens (ἐπανεγείρει) its depravity and licentiousness (κακόηθες καὶ ἀκόλαστον). It "attempts incest," as Plato says [*Rep.* 571d], partakes of forbidden meats, abstains from nothing which it wishes to do, but revels in lawlessness so far as it can, with images and visions which end in no pleasure or accomplishment of desire, but have only the power to stir to fierce activity the emotional (πάθη) and morbid propensities (τὰ νοσήματα δυναμένους). (*Virt. vit.* 101A)

<sup>30</sup> So also in the *Gorgias*, "For I say, Polus, that the orators and the despots alike have the least power in their cities, as I stated just now; since they do nothing that they wish to do, practically speaking, though they do whatever they think to be best (οὐδὲν γὰρ ποιεῖν ὧν βούλονται ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, ποιεῖν μέντοι ὅτι ἂν αὐτοῖς δόξη βέλτιστον εἶναι)." (*Gorg.* 466d–e; cf. *Rep.* 4.445b).

This text echoes the *Republic* where the lawless appetites stir up the lower faculties during sleep. Vice is a personification of the appetites that desire the unstable pleasures of forbidden food and sex and so “end in no pleasure or accomplishment of desire.” The text also casts vice as a malevolent being that lies in wait for an opportune time to rebel by stirring up the soul’s passions and desires. Elsewhere Plutarch depicts vice as a force that invades the soul, writing: “vice, without any apparatus, when it has joined itself to the soul, crushes and overthrows it, and fills the man with grief and lamentation, dejection and remorse” (*Am. Prol.* 498). He goes on to personify vice as a godlike entity that he sets in a court beside fortune, framing the treatise as a debate regarding which is worse; vice wins the day. Plutarch’s personification of an actual faculty of the soul (the appetitive part) by appealing to an abstraction (vice) lacks some of the creative luster of Plato’s indwelling tyrant, but certain assumptions about the malevolent and dangerous role of passions and desires enable this discussion—namely, passions and desires cause vice and immorality.

The second-century medical writer and Platonist Galen also discusses such moral-psychological problems in his *On the Passions and Errors of the Soul*. So he explains how the appetitive faculty may take control of reason: “And moreover, the ancients had a name in common use for those who have not been chastised and disciplined in this very respect: that man, whoever he is, in whom it is clear that the reasoning power (λογιστική) has failed to discipline (ἐκόλασεν) the appetitive power (ἐπιθυμητικήν δύναμιν) is called an intractable (σύνηθες) or undisciplined man (ἀκόλαστος).”<sup>31</sup> The text also warns of the special danger posed by the appetites:

Strive to hold this most excessive power in check before it grows and acquires unconquerable strength (ἰσχύον δυσνίκητον). For then, even if you should want to, you will not be able to hold it in check; then you will say what I heard a certain lover say—that you wish to stop but you cannot (ἔθέλειν μὲν παύσασθαι, μὴ δύνασθαι δέ)—then you will call on us for help but in vain, just as that man begged for someone to help him and to cut out his passion (πάθος ἐκκόψαι). For there are also passions of the body which because of their greatness are beyond cure (τῶν τοῦ σώματος παθῶν ἔνια διὰ μέγεθος ἐστὶν ἀνίατα). Perhaps you have never thought about this. It would be better, then, for you to think now and consider whether I am telling the truth when I say that the appetitive power often waxes so strong that it hurls us into love beyond all cure (ἐπιθυμητικήν δύναμιν εἰς ἀνίατον ἔρωτα πολλάκις ἐμβάλειν), a love

<sup>31</sup> Kühn, *Claudii Galeni*, 5:28; Paul W. Harkins, trans., *Galen: On the Passions and Errors of the Soul* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), 47. I have modified Harkins’s translation. The Greek text is from Kühn, 5:1, and page references are for both Kühn and Harkins. Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 86b–89d.

not only for beautiful bodies and sexual pleasures but also for voluptuous eating, gluttony in food and drink, and for lewd, unnatural conduct.<sup>32</sup>

The appetitive faculty is the most dangerous of the soul's parts, and when it becomes too strong reason cannot do anything to stop it. The complaint "even if he wants to" expresses the regret of the reasoning part, as does the lover who says, "I wish to stop but I cannot," and the analogy of the man begging for help. Though many writers associate such self-contradiction or conscious regret with persons suffering from *ἀκρασία*, or moral weakness, this text shows that this can be used to characterize more severe forms of immorality, as with the *ἀκόλαστος*.<sup>33</sup> Here the reasoning faculty has lost control but retains some type of self-awareness and regret about its condition.

Philo of Alexandria discusses extreme forms of immorality extensively in his treatises.<sup>34</sup> He also goes further in his use of analogy and metaphor and describes reason's defeat as a type of death.<sup>35</sup> So he interprets God's warning to Adam and Eve that they will die if they eat from the tree of life:

The death is of two kinds, one that of the man in general, the other that of the soul in particular. The death of the man is the separation of the soul from the body but the death of the soul is the decay of virtue and the bringing in of wickedness (ὁ δὲ ψυχῆς θάνατος ἀρετῆς μὲν φθορά ἐστι, κακίας δὲ ἀνάληψις). It is for this reason that God says not only "die" but "die the death," indicating not the

<sup>32</sup> Kühn, *Claudii Galeni*, 5:29; Harkins, *Galen*, 48.

<sup>33</sup> Galen elsewhere follows Aristotle in distinguishing *ἀκρασία* as a condition in which the mind regrets its bad actions, as opposed to worse conditions such as *ἀκολασία*, where the mind follows willingly. Different argumentative priorities seem to determine whether Galen takes the Aristotelian position. Here Galen's main interest is direct exhortation and advice, and the cry "I wish to stop but I cannot" serves to dramatize his warning about the appetites, whereas in more systematic contexts he denies that reason resists in cases of *ἀκολασία* (*Hippoc. et Plat.* 4.2.37–39; cf. Plutarch, *Virt. mor.* 445D–E). Similarly, Philo takes varying positions based on his argumentative priorities, as *Deus* 113 warns that reason may form an alliance with the passions and desires in the worst-case scenario, but *Conf.* 119–121 insists that even the worst types retain some degree of self-awareness. It should also be noted that Aristotle himself equivocates on the sharp distinction, as he points out that the one suffering from *ἀκρασία* "is easily persuaded to change his mind, but the latter [ὁ ἀκόλαστος] is not" (*Eth. nic.* 7.8).

<sup>34</sup> On Philo's Middle Platonic moral psychology, see Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 174–78; David T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* (*Philosophia Antiqua* 44; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 297–352; and the collection of essays in *Studia Philonica Annual* 5 (1993), in particular, Runia, "Was Philo a Middle Platonist? A Difficult Question Revisited," 112–40, esp. 125–40; and David Winston, "Response to Runia and Sterling," 141–46.

<sup>35</sup> I draw on the excellent essay by Dieter Zeller, "The Life and Death of the Soul in Philo of Alexandria: The Use and Origin of the Metaphor," *Studia Philonica Annual* 7 (1995): 19–55. Zeller's study, however, seeks to explain the origins of the metaphors rather than the underlying phenomenon that they capture.

death common to us all, but that special death properly so called, which is that of the soul becoming entombed in passions and wickedness of all kinds (ὅς ἐστι ψυχῆς ἐντυμβευομένης πάθεσι καὶ κακίαις ἀπάσαις). And this death is practically the antithesis of the death which awaits us all. The latter is a separation of combatants that had been pitted against one another, body and soul, to wit (ἐκείνος μὲν γὰρ διάκρισις ἐστι τῶν συγκριθέντων σώματος τε καὶ ψυχῆς). The former, on the other hand, is the meeting of the two in conflict (οὗτος δὲ τοῦναντίον σύνοδος ἀμφοῖν). And in this conflict the worse, the body, overcomes (κρατοῦντος μὲν τοῦ χειρόνος σώματος), and the better, the soul, is overcome (κρατουμένου δὲ τοῦ κρείττονος ψυχῆς). (*Leg.* 1.105–107)

Here the metaphors of death and dying describe the radical disempowerment of reason rather than its destruction.<sup>36</sup> Though Philo's main antagonists at first appear to be the body and soul, he subsequently describes soul-death as the result of a struggle between virtue, wickedness, and passions in keeping with Platonic assumptions about the interconnection of body, passions, and vice as opposed to soul, mind, and virtue. Consistent with Platonic assumptions, then, this text explains how, in the worst-case scenario, the body joins forces with passions, appetites, and vices and makes war against the mind.

Though Platonists frequently appeal to violent metaphors, no writer prior to Philo describes the irrational faculties' domination as death, most likely because it could seem to undermine the theory of the soul's immortality.<sup>37</sup> Although these metaphorical uses of death and dying are seemingly without precedent, they function in the same way as the more common Platonic metaphors of imprisonment, rule, warfare, and slavery. Other writers avoid claiming that the bad parts of the soul can kill reason, but the underlying moral-psychological phenomenon is the same as for Philo: in the struggle between the good and bad parts of the soul, when one part gains control of the other, writers describe this outcome variously as enslaving, imprisoning, conquering, and, in the case of Philo, also killing the other faculty. Notice how carefully Philo distinguishes between soul-death and bodily death as he continues: "But observe that wherever Moses speaks of 'dying the death,' he means the penalty-death (θάνατον τὸν ἐπὶ τιμωρίᾳ), not that which takes

<sup>36</sup> Similarly, see, e.g., "For truly nothing so surely brings death upon a soul as immoderate indulgence in pleasures (ἀμετρία τῶν ἡδονῶν)" (*Leg.* 2.78); "What issue awaits him who does not live according to the will of God, save death of the soul? And to this is given the name Methusalah, which means (as we saw) 'a dispatch of death.' Wherefore he is son of Mahujael (Gen 4:18), of the man who relinquished his own life, to whom dying is sent, yea soul-death, which is the change of soul under the impetus of irrational passion (ἡ κατὰ πάθος ἄλογόν ἐστιν αὐτῆς μεταβολή)" (*Post.* 73). Both passages adapt Stoic definitions of passions but do not undermine Philo's basically Platonic moral psychology (Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, esp. 174–75).

<sup>37</sup> Zeller, "Death of the Soul," 46. Zeller also suggests that Philo's use of these analogies derives from his exegetical reflections on biblical narrative, as they occur almost exclusively in the *Allegorical Commentary* and the *Quaestiones* (p. 23).

place in the course of nature. That one is in the course of nature in which soul is parted from body; but the penalty-death takes place when the soul dies to the life of virtue, and is alive only to that of wickedness (ὅταν ψυχὴ τὸν ἀρετῆς βίον θνήσκῃ τὸν δὲ κακίας ζῇ μόνον) (*Leg.* 1.107–8). Here again death is a metaphor for the defeat of reason. This text also demonstrates that the metaphors are flexible, as the wicked person dies with respect to virtue but lives with respect to wickedness, just as the evil passions can kill or put to death the mind.<sup>38</sup>

One further example from Philo underscores the creative use of literary personification and metaphor. Though he does not use death metaphors in this context, Philo depicts extreme immorality using the analogy of the mind imprisoned by passions: “When this mind is cast into the prison of the passions (τὸ δεσμωτήριον τῶν παθῶν), it finds in the eyes of the chief jailor (τῷ ἀρχιδεσμωφύλακι) a favor and grace, which is more inglorious than dishonor” (*Deus* 111–12). On this analogy, the passions represent both the jail and the jailor, but the figure of the chief jailor comes to the fore as the text continues: “the overseer (ἐπίτροπος) and warder (φύλαξ) and manager (ταμίης) of them, the governor (ἡγεμὼν) of the prison, is the composite whole and concentration of all the vices crowded together and diverse (σύστημα καὶ συμφόρημα κακιῶν ἀθρόων καὶ ποικίλων), woven together into a single form (εἰς ἓν εἶδος συνυφασμένων ἐστίν), and to be pleasing to him is to suffer the greatest of penalties” (*Deus* 113).<sup>39</sup> Philo explains his use of metaphor and analogy very clearly: the chief jailor represents the passions that hold reason captive in their prison.

Figures such as Philo’s chief jailor or Plutarch’s vice dramatize the ominous threat of the soul’s appetitive desires. Writers often associate this evil ruler with the appetites as well as with passions more generally, vices, flesh, and body.<sup>40</sup> Further, appeals to dualisms such as body/soul, passions/reason, and virtue/vice do not typically undermine Platonic tripartition. Rather, the conflation of the two irrational parts is characteristic of Middle Platonic writings that emphasize the rational/irrational divide.<sup>41</sup> Especially in exhortative contexts, writers like Philo, Galen, and Plutarch appeal to the rhetorical force of dualisms such as appetites/reason, body/soul, and body/mind, whereas they distinguish the three parts of the soul when it suits their interests elsewhere.

<sup>38</sup> Philo speaks positively of dying to bodily life as in *Mos.* 1.279; *Gig.* 14; cf. *Ebr.* 70; *Fug.* 90; being truly alive in *Leg.* 1.32, 35; 2.93; 3.52; *Post.* 12; 45; *Migr.* 21; *Her.* 201; *Congr.* 87; *Mut.* 213; *Somn.* 2.64; *Virt.* 17; *QG* 1.16, 70; 2.45; 4.46, 149, 238; and truly dead in *Her.* 53; 201; *Leg.* 3.35, 72; *Spec.* 1.345; cf. Plato, *Gorg.* 492e; *Laws* 1.106.

<sup>39</sup> This echoes *Rep.* 9.579b.

<sup>40</sup> E.g.: “For the passions of the body are truly bastards, outlanders to the understanding, growths of the flesh in which they have their roots (νόθα γὰρ καὶ ξένα διανοίας τὰ σώματος ὡς ἀληθῶς πάθη. σαρκὸς ἐκπεφυκῶτα, ἧ προσερούζονται)” (*Her.* 268); agricultural analogies inform the notion of harvesting the works of the flesh in *Agr.* 25.

<sup>41</sup> Dillon, *Middle Platonists*, 174–75; e.g., Galen, *Hippoc. et Plat.* 5. 7.22–23.

### III. EXTREME IMMORALITY AND THE DEATH OF THE SOUL IN ROMANS 7 :7–25

In Rom 7:7, a speaker emerges who gives an extended monologue regarding its inner turmoil. Platonic discussions of extreme immorality allow for a reading of the monologue as the self-description of one part of the soul, reason, explaining its radical disempowerment at the hands of the irrational passions. This reading not only holds together what are usually considered to be separate parts of the monologue, vv. 7–13 and vv. 14–25, but also explains how vv. 7–13 are a meaningful expression of a specific moral-psychological plight rather than a set of contradictory, convoluted, and *sui generis* statements, as scholars have sometimes found.

Three features of the discourse of extreme immorality are important for my reading. First, sin in Rom 7:7–25 makes sense in light of similar uses of figures such as a monstrous ruling passion, a jailor, and vice to represent the irrational parts of the soul. Like other writers, Paul typifies sin as an evil counter-ruler that kills, makes war, imprisons, and enslaves reason. Both the representation of the passions *as* sin and the activities attributed *to* sin make sense in light of this moral discourse. Second, the monologue attributes dispositions and capacities consistent with a Platonic conception of mind to the speaking “I.” In Rom 7:7–25, reason speaks and displays the intelligence, self-reflection and voice that are characteristic of the reasoning faculty in the Platonic tradition, and vv. 22–23 also use Platonic images such as mind and inner person. Third, the discussion of self-contradiction in 7:14–25 fits with depictions of extreme immorality that attribute reflection and regret to reason. Although several scholars have identified 7:14–25 with depictions of ἀκρασία (weakness of will), the whole monologue can be read more coherently as a presentation of a moral condition that is considerably worse than ἀκρασία as usually understood.<sup>42</sup>

Consistent with the rhetorical devices of apostrophe and προσωποποιία (speech-in-character), Rom 7:7 introduces a fictitious interlocutor.<sup>43</sup> This speaker

<sup>42</sup> Stowers (*Rereading Romans*, 269–72) and Engberg-Pedersen (*Paul and the Stoics*, 239–46; “Reception,” 32–57) envision ἀκρασία as a full-scale moral type such that a person could be diagnosed as an ἀκρατής, as in Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* 7.

<sup>43</sup> Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 269–72; Christopher Gill, “Did Chrysippus Understand Medea?” *Phronesis* 28 (1983): 136–49; idem, “Two Monologues of Self-division: Euripides, *Medea* 1021–80; and Seneca, *Medea* 893–977,” in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* (ed. M. Whitby and P. Hardie; Bristol: Classical, 1987), 25–37. So see Aelius Theon on the use of speech-in-character for states of mind: “Different ways of speaking would also be fitting by *nature* for a woman and for a man, and by *status* for a slave and free man, and by *activities* for a soldier and a farmer, and by *state of mind* for a lover and a temperate man, and by *their origin* the words of a Laconian, sparse and clear, differ from those of men of Attica, which are voluble” (*Exercises* 115–



responds to the false conclusion, “is the law then sin?” (7:7) by stating unequivocally “no” and then explaining that the law brought knowledge of sin. The conceptualization of the law as knowledge in v. 7 sets the stage for vv. 14–25, where the mind cannot put this knowledge into action, but vv. 7–13 explain that this knowledge incited the passions: “I would not have known desire (ἐπιθυμίαν) if the law had not said ‘do not desire (οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις).’ But sin found an opportunity in the commandment and worked in me every sort of desire (πᾶσαν ἐπιθυμίαν). Apart from the law sin is dead (ἄμαρτία νεκρά). I was once alive (ἔζων) apart from the law, but when the commandment came in, sin came to life and I died (ἡ ἄμαρτία ἀνέζησεν, ἐγὼ δὲ ἀπέθανον)” (7:7–10). The life of sin and the death of the speaker make sense when understood in light of Philo’s uses of the metaphors of life and death. So Philo attacks the sophists, “May we not go further and say that in your souls all noble qualities have died, while evil qualities have been quickened (τέθνηκε τὰ καλὰ, ζωπυρηθέντων κακῶν)? It is because of this that not one of you is really still alive” (*Det.* 74–75). Similarly, the speaker of Romans 7 complains that sin has come to life and killed (7:10, 11), worked death “in me” (7:13), and in v. 24 begs to be rescued “from this body of death.” These are different perspectives on the same underlying phenomenon.

One additional caveat is needed to make sense of the death metaphors in Rom 7:9–10. A consistent reading of life and death as moral-psychological metaphors for dominance would suggest that sin did not get the upper hand until the coming of the law, which would then contradict claims about sin elsewhere in the letter, especially in 5:13. These problems can be resolved, however, by taking the initial claim about sin as a retrospective reevaluation. On this interpretation, the law produces a reevaluation so that the speaker comes to know that in reality it was imprisoned, enslaved, and “killed” by sin. Such uses of death metaphors have precedent in a fragment from Menander:

Believe me, folks, I have been dead during all these years of life that I was alive. The beautiful, the good, the holy, the evil were all the same to me; such, it seems, was the darkness that formerly enveloped my understanding and concealed and hid from me all these things. But now that I have come here, I have become alive again for all the rest of my life, as if I had lain down in the temple of Asclepius and had been saved. I walk, I talk, I think. (*Pap. Didotiana* b1–15)<sup>44</sup>

The text characterizes the old life by darkness, death, and an inability to distinguish good and evil, the beautiful and the holy. As in Romans 7, the speaker claims

16; trans. *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* [trans. George A. Kennedy; Leiden: Brill, 2003]); Theon also notes, “This exercise is especially receptive to character types and emotions” (*Progym.* 8.75–76; trans. “The *Progymnasmata* of Theon: A New Text with Translation and Commentary” [ed. and trans. James R. Butts; Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate School, 1986]). Cf. Hermogenes, *Preliminary Exercises* 9.21; Aphthonius, 11.35R.

<sup>44</sup> Trans. from Zeller, “Death of the Soul.”

to discover its own death after the fact and this new state of awareness produces a drastic reconsideration of its previous life.

The identification of sin as a representation of the passions makes sense of the actions and characteristics of sin in Romans 7. Though on Plato's theory passions and appetites are not strictly capable of having intentions or forming plans, many moral-psychological discussions use literary personification in a way that implies that they do.<sup>45</sup> Thus, Plato represents the appetites as a monstrous winged bee and ruling passion, while Plutarch personifies the appetites as vice that "sets every desire stirring (*κινεῖ*), and awakens (*ἐπανεγείρει*) its depravity and licentiousness (*κακότητες καὶ ἀκόλαστον*)" (*Virt. vit.* 101A). Similarly, Philo personifies the soul's irrational parts as vice and passions that deviously attack reason, and he also uses figures such as a chief jailor or governor of the soul's passions. The role of sin in Rom 7:7–13 is closest to the writings of Plutarch and Philo that represent vice or wickedness as an indwelling appetitive ruler. Thus, in 7:7 the speaker claims that sin "aroused all sorts of desires"; sin deceives and kills in 7:11; throughout vv. 7–13 sin "kills" and "works death." When understood as a metaphor for sin's dominance and control, the death metaphors cohere with the metaphors of enslavement (7:14, 25) and warfare (7:23; 6:12). This reading also finds support in 7:5, which states that the law aroused sinful passions (*τὰ παθήματα τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*). Once sin is taken as a representation of these sinful passions, its life makes sense as a metaphor for dominance, and this domination in turn explains the terrible plight of mind throughout the monologue. These features of Platonic moral psychology also explain the force of the exhortations in Rom 6:12: "do not let sin rule in your mortal bodies to make you obey the passions" (cf. Gal 5:24). Conversely, the speaker is best understood as reason because Paul makes use of Platonic terms and images for the reasoning faculty and because he attributes reason and good judgment to the speaking "I."

As noted previously, Plato's model of the soul gives the mind alone the capacity to reason, reflect, and judge. This makes sense of why the narrator in Romans 7 speaks, reflects on its own disempowerment, understands God's just law, and knows the difference between good and evil despite being powerless to put these judgments into action. Thus, the speaker states in v. 12 that the law is "holy, just, and good," and its grasp of good and evil becomes painfully clear in vv. 14–25, as the speaker complains some eleven times that it understands the good but is unable to put this into action. The speaker never identifies with sin and never approves of what sin does, but rather continuously states and restates that it is powerless to put these good judgments into action because sin works to enslave, make war, and imprison. This plight makes sense when understood as the reasoning part of the soul powerless to put its judgments into action because of the domination of the

<sup>45</sup> See Cooper, "Plato's Theory of Human Motivation," 127–28.

passions. Like Plato's tyrannical man, Galen's undisciplined man, and Philo's mind in the prison house of the passions, Paul depicts reason as fundamentally good and rational but completely ineffectual. The restatement of this plight in vv. 22–23 also supports the identification of the speaker as mind. Here the speaker seems to stand outside itself and reflect on the nature of the struggle within the body as a whole, as the mind (νοῦς), the inner person (ἔσω ἄνθρωπος), and God's law have lost a war against sin that is allied with the members and the flesh. The νοῦς designates the reasoning part of the soul, as does the ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος, which is an analogy for the reasoning faculty that comes from the *Republic* (9.588c–591b).<sup>46</sup> The speaker is the ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος and the νοῦς that reflects here on its relation to the flesh and members. This interpretation requires that reason stand outside itself and reflect on itself, but this, too, is consistent with the literary use of the self-in-dialogue, where the mind often speaks about itself in the third-person.<sup>47</sup>

Platonic writers often implicate the body and flesh in the struggle between the rational and irrational faculties in a way that makes sense of the divide in 7:22–23 and 7:25. Sin dwells in the flesh and members throughout 7:14–25, but in v. 14 the speaker claims that it is “fleshly, sold under sin,” and in v. 25 asks, “who will rescue me from this body of death?” The union of the irrational parts of the soul with the flesh and body has many parallels in Platonic writings, as Philo writes in *On Flight and Finding*: “Goodness and virtue is life, evil and wickedness is death. . . . This is a most noble definition of a deathless life, to be possessed by a love of God and a friendship for God with which flesh and body have no concern” (*Fug.* 58).<sup>48</sup> This clarifies the speaker's statements throughout 7:14–25 to the effect that sin is located in its members and allied with the flesh and body against reason, the inner person. Verses 22–23 and 25 evoke the bodily perspective of the good mind completely trapped within the body that has conspired with sin. Thus construed, “I delight in the law of God in my inmost person, but I see another law in my members making war on the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin and death” (7:22–23) emerges as a restatement of the relation between sin and the ἐγώ that runs throughout the monologue. In fact, vv. 22–23 present a wordplay on

<sup>46</sup> *Republic* 9.588c–591b casts the appetites as residing in the belly, represented as a many-headed beast, the passions in the middle represented as a lion, and reason as a tiny man (the inner person) who sits on top. For a persuasive argument that 1 Cor 15:32 alludes to the lion and the many-headed beast, see Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Beasts at Ephesus,” in idem, *Paul and the Popular Philosophers* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 79–89.

<sup>47</sup> So Seneca's Medea says of her own mind, “My mind has secretly made some hideous decision, and does not yet dare confess it openly to itself” (*Medea* 906–19), and his Phaedra cries, “What could reason (*ratio*) do? Frenzy (*furor*) has won and rules, and a powerful God [*Amor*] dominates my whole personality (*tota mente dominatur*)” (*Phaedra* 177).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Plutarch: “the emotional part springs up from the flesh as from a root (ὥσπερ ἐκ ῥίζης τοῦ παθητικοῦ τῆς σαρκὸς ἀναβλαστάνοντος) and carries with it its quality and composition” (*Virt. mor.* 451A).

νόμος such that the “other law” in one’s members stands for the principle of self-contradiction itself, thus restating v. 21, “I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.” Read this way, vv. 22–23 also restate the central argument of vv. 7–21 to the effect that reason’s disempowerment is normative.

Romans 7:14–25 draws on a rich moral tradition that discusses, represents, and contests self-contradiction in the form of a dramatic monologue. As Plato insists that the tyrannical man “least of all does what he wishes” and Galen warns that the undisciplined man may cry, “I wish to stop, but I cannot,” so Paul’s narrator claims repeatedly that though it truly understands the good and just, it cannot put this judgment into action because of the war within. While Stowers and Engberg-Pedersen have understood Romans 7 as a depiction of ἀκρασία, or moral weakness, this approach provides a historical explanation only for the second half of the monologue in vv. 14–25 and understates the normative nature of the problem.<sup>49</sup> The monologue of Romans 7 does not simply describe internal struggle and conflict but rather explains the mind’s total defeat. Taking the whole monologue as a depiction of soul-death accounts for the totalizing domination of sin, the metaphorical death of the ἐγώ, and the self-contradiction that the speaker claims is normative (vv. 14–25).

Interpreters have taken an array of different positions on the identity of the speaker,<sup>50</sup> but this analysis of Romans 7 complements Stowers’s argument that the

<sup>49</sup> Stowers (*Rereading Romans*, 269–72) and Engberg-Pedersen (*Paul and the Stoics*, 239–46; “Reception,” 32–57) make the strongest case for identifying the plight of the speaker with ἀκρασία. Other scholars argue for some resonance with discussions of ἀκρασία, e.g., H. Hommel, “Das 7. Kapitel des Römerbriefs im Licht antiker Überlieferung,” *ThViat* 8 (1961–62): 90–116; A. van den Beld, “Romans 7:14–25 and the Problem of *Akrasia*,” *RelS* 21 (1985): 495–515; Reinhard von Bendemann, “Die kritische Diastase von Wissen, Wollen und Handeln: Traditionsgeschichtliche Spurensuche eines hellenistischen Topos in Römer 7,” *ZNW* 95 (2004): 35–63. Others have denied the relevance of such literature, e.g., Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, 1:248; and Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (trans. John P. Galvin; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 211–21. Theissen, for example, argues that the problem in Rom 7:14–25 is not ἀκρασία, but he misunderstands the moral literature.

<sup>50</sup> I cite only one or two examples of each of the main positions. For the autobiographical reading, see C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (MNTC; London: Collins, 1959), 104–5; for the identification with a Jewish boy prior to a mature interaction with the law, see W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1948), 15–35; Robert H. Gundry, “The Moral Frustration of Paul Before His Conversion: Sexual Lust in Romans 7:7–25,” in *Pauline Studies: Essays Presented to Professor F. F. Bruce on His 70th Birthday* (ed. Donald A. Hagner and Murray J. Harris; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 228–45; for identification with the plight of humanity generally in vv. 7–13 and with that of Christians in vv. 14–25, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (2 vols.; ICC; 6th ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 1:341; Dunn, *Romans*, 1:382–83; for identification with the unregenerate human being generally, see Käsemann, *Commentary*, 192; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 462–77; for identification with Adam, Israel, and Paul himself, see Brendan Byrne, *Romans* (SP 6; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 218.

narrator should be understood as an immoral Gentile.<sup>51</sup> Taking Romans 7 as an extreme condition fits with the enslavement to passions and a base mind in 1:18–32 and with the different types of problems that the letter ascribes to Jews and Gentiles. Though Paul depicts Gentile idolaters as horribly in thrall to their passions and highlights specifically sexual sins in 1:18–32, he never associates Jews with passionate excess and inappropriate sex.<sup>52</sup> Even though some Jews are hypocritical, boastful, under sin, disobedient, wicked, and some have been hardened and rejected at the present time, none of these problems has any obvious connection to the types of extreme degeneracy described in 1:18–32 and 7:7–25, except that Paul views them all as bad.

The analysis advanced here situates the text within the developing argument of the letter by understanding 7:7–13 as the beginning of a moral-psychological explanation of the situation of Gentiles under the law. Whereas v. 5 states, “sinful passions were aroused through the law,” the monologue then looks back to this situation using the literary device of the self-in-dialogue. The speech that begins in v. 7 clarifies the inciting role of law by developing a model of the extraordinarily wicked type of person who always does what it knows to be wrong. The inciting role of law also makes sense in light of this extreme condition, as several writers indicate that extremely immoral persons can be inflamed or incited by instructions, interventions, or punishments.<sup>53</sup> Such a perverse response to the teachings of the law happens to be one of a number of problems attributed to extremely wicked persons. Understood on these terms, the theses of vv. 4–6 are explained and qualified in vv. 7–25 and 8:1–11, respectively. Romans 7:7–25 presents the terrible past situation of the audience under the law, whereas 8:1–11 addresses the new situation available in Christ. Both discussions make extensive use of moral-psychological concepts, metaphors, and arguments, but 8:1–11 develops the new situation of the Christ believer in a way that responds to the plight detailed in ch. 7. On these terms, Rom 7:7–25 constitutes a climactic argument about the old situa-

<sup>51</sup> Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, 269–72; Thomas H. Tobin, *Paul's Rhetoric in Its Contexts: The Argument of Romans* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 237. For a strong argument that the inscribed audience of the letter is a Gentile one, see Runar Thorsteinsson, *Paul's Interlocutor in Romans 2: Function and Identity in the Context of Ancient Epistolography* (ConBNT 40; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2004), 87–122; Stowers, *Rereading Romans*, esp. 6–33.

<sup>52</sup> For example, the Jewish interlocutor introduced in 2:17 is boastful and hypocritical; the Jews in 3:1–31 are characterized by wickedness, and, like the Gentiles, they are under sin; in 5:14 all are sinful in the time between Adam and Moses; in chs. 9–11 Israelites wrongly pursue righteousness based on the law and have an “unenlightened zeal for God” (10:1); some are disobedient to the gospel (10:16), “hardened” (11:7, 25), afflicted with a “spirit of stupor” (11:8), guilty of trespass (11:11), and afflicted by “unbelief” (11:20); and in 11:28 they are enemies of God in relation to the gospel only.

<sup>53</sup> Plato, *Rep.* 8.563d–e; *Leg.* 3.689a–d; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.60; Polybius, *Hist.* 1.81; Seneca, *De clem.* 1.23.

tion under the law that explains how the problem of the law arises from a more basic moral-psychological condition, that of extreme wickedness or soul-death.

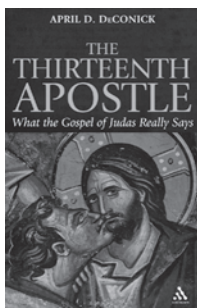
#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

In this essay I have argued that an appreciation for certain Platonic assumptions, images, and metaphors allows for a more coherent reading of Romans 7 as depicting reason's defeat at the hands of passions and desires. In making this case I have consciously avoided appeals to borrowings, parallels, backgrounds, or various types of "worldviews" such as Hellenistic, Jewish, Christian, or apocalyptic. Instead, I have understood Paul as having an intellectual repertoire and sought to explain certain aspects of that repertoire of interests and skills. Though the question of Paul's level of skill should remain open, his use of key moral-psychological assumptions and arguments is significant and requires explanation.

If the preceding analysis has substantial merit, it raises a number of questions about the developing argument of the letter, especially Romans 8, which responds so directly to the plight developed in ch. 7. I have argued elsewhere that Romans 8 continues to make use of moral-psychological assumptions and metaphors and that exhortations such as, "if you put to death the workings of the body, you will live" (8:13) call for the mind's domination of the passions that still threaten the embodied soul.<sup>54</sup> But why does ch. 8 explain the new option available in Christ in terms of an invasion of *πνεῦμα*? The role of *πνεῦμα* here may be illuminated by Philo's view of God's indwelling *λόγος*. In a number of contexts, Philo casts God's *λόγος* (or wisdom and sometimes *πνεῦμα*) as something that pervades the cosmos and reaches into human souls, where it assists the functioning of reason. Philo's God also sometimes withdraws the *λόγος* from the rational part of soul as punishment or restores it as reward. This notion of an indwelling part of God that becomes an instrument of punishment and reward may provide conceptual resources for understanding God's punishment in Rom 1:18–32 and restoration in 8:1–17 as well as statements about mind and *πνεῦμα* elsewhere in the letters (Rom 8:27; 12:2; 1 Cor 2:10–12, 16).

<sup>54</sup> Emma Wasserman, *The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* (WUNT; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008 [forthcoming]), ch. 3.

## New from Continuum!



### **The Thirteenth Apostle** **What the Gospel of Judas Really Says** *April D. DeConick*

In this new book, April DeConick offers a new translation of the Gospel of Judas, one which seriously challenges the National Geographic interpretation of a good Judas.

*"April DeConick makes a brilliant contribution to the conversation about this puzzling gospel, whose Sethian 'bitter voice' she hears as a sophisticated, ironic parody of apostolic Christianity's atonement-by-sacrifice theology and cultic activity. Engagement with the gospel of Mark and with movie versions of Judas bring first and second century sectarian conflicts into contemporary focus. I highly recommend this work for all scholars and students of the apocryphal and canonical gospels."*

– Jane D. Schaberg, Professor of Religious Studies,  
University of Detroit, Mercy, USA.

HC 978 0 8264 9964 6 • \$19.95 • October

---

## **New titles in the Romans Through History and Culture Series!**

### **Medieval Readings of Romans**

*Edited by William S. Campbell, Peter S. Hawkins, and Brenda Deen Schildgen*

This sixth volume of the Romans through History and Culture series consists of 14 contributions by North American and European medievalists and Pauline scholars who discuss significant readings of Romans through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to the eve of the Reformation.

PB 978 0 567 02706 1 • \$39.95 • November  
Romans Through History and Culture, 6  
T&T Clark International

### **Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians**

*Edited by David Odell-Scott*

*Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* explores the recent works by philosophers and theologians who engage Paul's letter to the Romans by scholars in the fields of New Testament studies, theology and philosophy from North America and Europe.

PB 978 0 567 02705 4 • \$39.95 • October  
Romans Through History and Culture, 7  
T&T Clark International

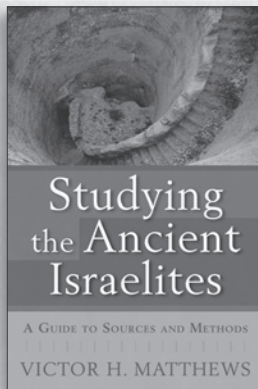
---

**Visit the new T&T Clark blog at [www.TandTClarkBlog.com](http://www.TandTClarkBlog.com)!**

These books are available from fine booksellers, or direct from Continuum **1.800.561.7704 • [www.continuumbooks.com](http://www.continuumbooks.com)**



# NEW FROM Baker Academic



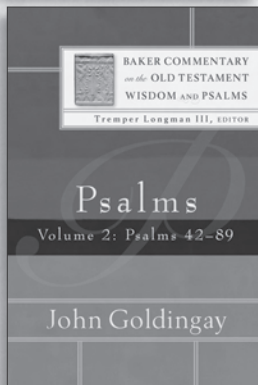
## Studying the Ancient Israelites

A GUIDE TO SOURCES AND METHODS

**Victor H. Matthews**

224 pp. • \$21.99p • 9780801031977

"Not only does Matthews write with the authority of a scholar with years of experience in the cultures of Israel and the ancient Near East, he also writes to bring the material to the educated layperson. This is an excellent background work, thus I would encourage all to read it as a prelude to any study of Israel. *Studying the Ancient Israelites* is full of practical, sensible help in understanding ancient Israel. The work contains specific examples concerning the various disciplines that have been used to study ancient Israel: archaeology, sociology, historical geography, historiography, and literary approaches."—**Mark W. Chavalas**, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse



## Psalms, vol. 2

PSALMS 42-89

**John Goldingay**

752 pp. • \$44.99c • 9780801027048

This is the second of a three-volume commentary on the Psalms, combining literary, historical, grammatical, and theological insight in a widely accessible manner.

### Praise for vol. 1:

"One of our premier interpreters, John Goldingay, offers here a comprehensive treatment of the Psalms. Rarely does one find such a combination of close attention to grammatical and syntactical features joined with literary sensitivity, and all of it aimed at theological appropriation of the Psalms."—**Patrick D. Miller**, Princeton Theological Seminary

## Also Available in the Baker Commentary on the Old Testament



### Song of Songs

**Richard S. Hess**

9780801027123

288 pp. • \$29.99c

"Hess's translation captures the passion of this love poem. . . . Complementing his exquisite translation is the spirited language of the commentary. . . . This book is a pleasure to read."—**Craig E. Morrison**, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*



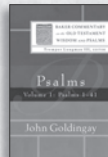
### Proverbs

**Tremper Longman III**

9780801026928

608 pp. • \$39.99c

"Longman is a good reader and has given us a learned and vigorously argued commentary."—**Richard J. Clifford**, SJ, Weston Jesuit School of Theology



### Psalms, vol. 1

PSALMS 1-41

**John Goldingay**

9780801027031

640 pp. • \$44.99c

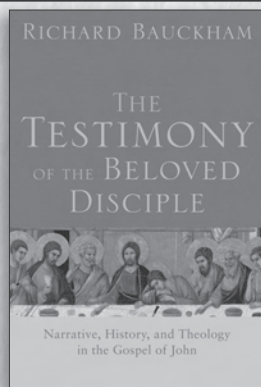
"This is a fine commentary on the first part of the book of Psalms, combining excellent scholarship and deep, practical spiritual reflection."—**Iain Provan**, Regent College

**Baker Academic**  
*Extending the Conversation*

Available at your local bookstore, [www.bakeracademic.com](http://www.bakeracademic.com), or by calling 1-800-877-2665  
Subscribe to Baker Academic's electronic newsletter (E-Notes) at [www.bakeracademic.com](http://www.bakeracademic.com)



# New Testament Studies from Baker Academic



## The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple

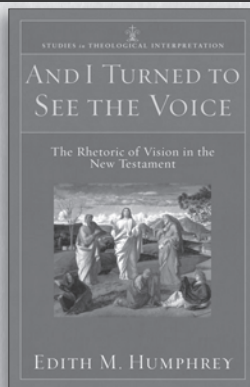
NARRATIVE, HISTORY, AND THEOLOGY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**Richard Bauckham**

9780801034855

288 pp. • \$29.99p

"This collection of twelve essays on historical and theological Johannine problems, written between 1993 and 2007, is preluded by a comprehensive introduction containing a scholarly program for Johannine research in the future. These studies will give us quite new stimuli for our understanding of the Gospel of John, for Professor Bauckham illuminates neglected historical and theological features of this unique text, which Clement of Alexandria rightly called the 'spiritual Gospel.' The author demonstrates that in our exegesis of John philological accuracy, profound historical knowledge, and genuine theological understanding must work together to gain new insights."—**Martin Hengel**, the University of Tübingen



## And I Turned to See the Voice

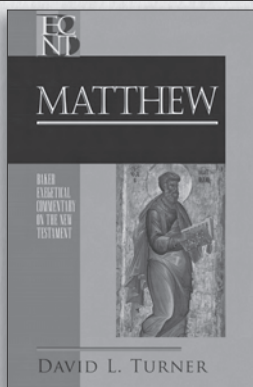
THE RHETORIC OF VISION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

**Edith M. Humphrey**

9780801031571

240 pp. • \$22.99p

"Humphrey surprises us with her ability to lift the veil from the mysterious vision-reports of the New Testament. She clarifies how the words and images of vision-reports work together to create the rhetoric of sacred texts. Humphrey has brought the vision-reports of the New Testament into full conversation with rhetoric and hermeneutics in a whole new way. She has produced a delightful work of great imagination and powerful argumentation in its own right."—**Duane F. Watson**, Malone College



## Matthew

**David L. Turner**

9780801026843

800 pp. • \$49.99c

**Available February 2008**

Turner offers a substantive yet highly accessible commentary on Matthew in this latest addition to the BECNT series. With extensive research and thoughtful chapter-by-chapter exegesis, Turner leads readers through all aspects of the Gospel of Matthew—sociological, historical, and theological—to help them better understand and explain this key New Testament book.

"This series has set a new standard in reader-friendliness with its attractive presentation that combines detailed exegetical comment on the Greek text with accessibility for those who have little or no knowledge of the original language of the New Testament."—**I. Howard Marshall**, University of Aberdeen

**B Baker Academic**  
*Extending the Conversation*

Available at your local bookstore, [www.bakeracademic.com](http://www.bakeracademic.com), or by calling 1-800-877-2665  
Subscribe to Baker Academic's electronic newsletter (E-Notes) at [www.bakeracademic.com](http://www.bakeracademic.com)



## Unpacking the Biblical Text

### **The Shadow of the Galilean**

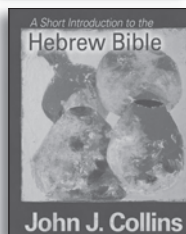
The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form

GERD THEISSEN

• 20th Anniversary Edition

"An achievement in 'narrative theology', illuminating the social world of Jesus from rich sources and imaginative reconstruction." —John Reumann

978-0-8006-3900-6 232 pp paper \$22.00



### **A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible**

JOHN J. COLLINS

VISIT [collinstext.com](http://collinstext.com)

With this well-tailored abridgment of his *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible with CD-ROM*, Collins provides a rich text especially designed for the undergraduate student.

978-0-8006-6207-3 320 pp paper \$30.00

### **From Jesus to the Gospels**

Interpreting the New Testament in Its Context

HELMUT KOESTER

Koester offers a lifetime's insights into the message of the historical Jesus and the traditions that shaped the Gospels and early Christian literature.

978-0-8006-2093-6 320 pp paper \$39.00

### **Taking Up the Cross**

New Testament Interpretations through Latina and Feminist Eyes

BARBARA E. REID, O.P.

Reid explores five theological "images" of the death of Jesus through conversation with the voices of women from Mexico, Bolivia, and Peru.

978-0-8006-6208-0 200 pp paper \$16.00

### **Judges and Method**

New Approaches in Biblical Studies, Second Edition

GALE A. YEE, EDITOR

This thorough update features original articles plus new essays on Gender, Cultural, and Post-Colonial Criticism. Includes study aid resources.

978-0-8006-3858-0 200 pp paper \$22.00

### **Dirt, Greed, and Sex**

Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today

Revised Edition

L. WILLIAM COUNTRYMAN

Includes updated text, notes, a new chapter on the "ethic of creation" and a new concluding chapter.

978-0-8006-6224-0 350 pp hardcover \$32.00

978-0-8006-3848-1 350 pp paper \$18.00



## **FORTRESS PRESS**

*An imprint of Augsburg Fortress*

At bookstores or call 1-800-328-4648 [fortresspress.com](http://fortresspress.com)

# Hermeneia



978-0-8006-6078-9  
800 pp hc \$80.00

## Mark

### A Commentary

ADELA YARBRO COLLINS  
HAROLD W. ATTRIDGE, Editor

Collins is in constructive dialogue with the wide range of scholarship on Mark—the latest historical-critical perspectives, apocalyptic literature, Jewish and Greco-Roman literature and popular biography of the first century.

This work is foundational for Markan scholarship.

*Recently published*

## Matthew 1-7

ULRICH LUZ

978-0-8006-6099-4 472 pp hc \$75.00

## Romans

ROBERT JEWETT

978-0-8006-6084-0 1,250 pp hc \$90.00



## Hermeneia on CD-ROM

### A Historical and Critical Commentary

PETER MACHINIST, Chair, Old Testament Board  
HELMUT KOESTER, Chair, New Testament Board

*Hermeneia on CD-ROM* captures the full text and apparatus of all 38 volumes in the series with the added advantage of the extremely useful and navigable Libronix Digital Library System. Every two years as new volumes are published, new updated CD-ROM versions will be made available to previous purchasers at an "update only" price.

0-8006-6199-1 Single User Edition \$1,000.00

0-8006-3857-3 Library Edition (4 users) \$1,750.00

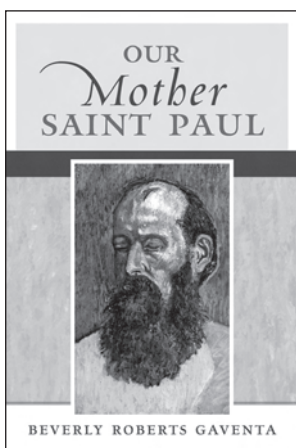


## FORTRESS PRESS

*An imprint of Augsburg Fortress*

At bookstores or call 1-800-328-4648 [fortresspress.com](http://fortresspress.com)

# Challenging the Way You Read Paul and Thomas



"After thousands of books on Pauline theology, one might suppose it impossible for anything new to be said. But Gaventa has posed a genuinely fresh question to Paul's letters . . . [This] is a book that makes us rethink not only what we thought we knew about Paul but also what we thought we knew about the importance of our own gendered identities. Gaventa's clear, even-handed exegesis leads us into surprising new insights."

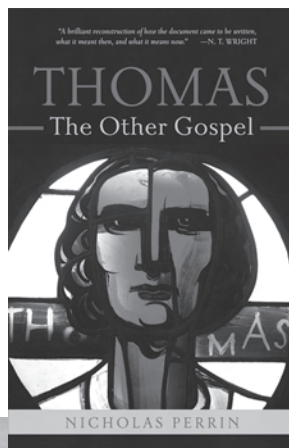
—Richard B. Hays

Paper • \$24.95 • ISBN: 978-0-664-23149-1

"This learned and careful analysis of the contemporary state of study of the *Gospel of Thomas* decisively calls into question the paradigm that seeks to place *Thomas* well within the first century. Here we have judicious scholarship from an expert in *Thomas* that demands a reassessment of the current state of research on *Thomas*, its dating, and its place in the development of early Christianity."

—Marianne Meye Thompson

Paper • \$19.95 • ISBN: 978-0-664-23211-5



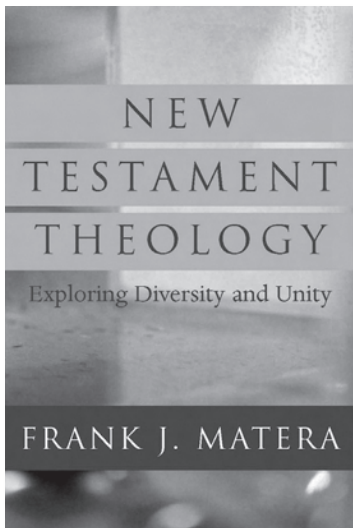
# WJK

WESTMINSTER  
JOHN KNOX PRESS

[www.wjkbooks.com](http://www.wjkbooks.com)

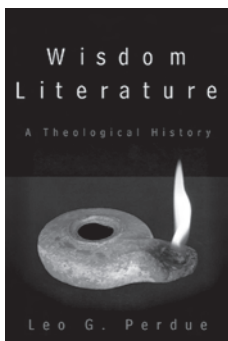
Phone: 1-800-672-1789 Fax: 1-800-445-8189 [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

# The Best in Biblical Theology

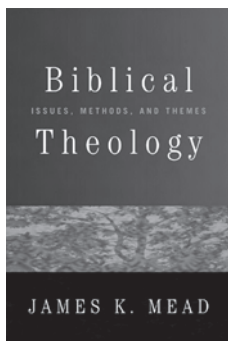


The New Testament provides its readers with a diverse unity. On the one hand, there are a variety of theologies in the New Testament. On the other, there is an underlying unity in these diverse theologies—a unity grounded in the experience of salvation the first Christians enjoyed through God's work in Jesus Christ. Acknowledging this, Frank Matera explores diversity and unity in the writings of the New Testament as he integrates both Protestant and Catholic approaches to yield rich exegetical and theological insights.

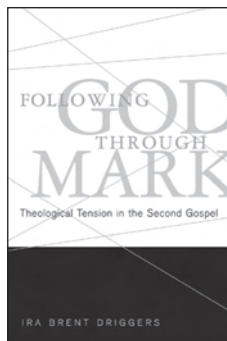
Paper • \$49.95 • ISBN: 978-0-664-23044-9



Paper • \$39.95  
ISBN: 978-0-664-22919-1



Paper • \$29.95  
ISBN: 978-0-664-22972-6



Paper • \$24.95  
ISBN: 978-0-664-23095-1

# WJK

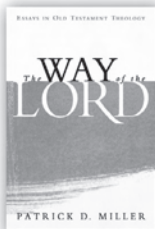
WESTMINSTER  
JOHN KNOX PRESS  
[www.wjkbooks.com](http://www.wjkbooks.com)

Phone: 1-800-672-1789 Fax: 1-800-445-8189 [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)



## RECENT BOOKS

from **EERDMANS**



### **THE WAY OF THE LORD**

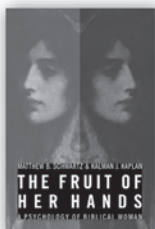
*Essays in Old Testament Theology*

**PATRICK D. MILLER**

"One of the very finest of contemporary exegetes, Patrick Miller writes on topics and texts of clear relevance to the church and our public life. Pastors, preachers, biblical scholars, and theologians will all be instructed by the wisdom and humility with which he approaches the most pressing and difficult questions of biblical interpretation."

— **Ellen Davis**

ISBN 978-0-8028-3272-6 • 351 pages • paperback • \$30.00



### **THE FRUIT OF HER HANDS**

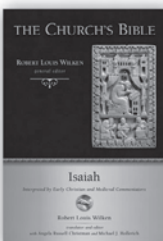
*A Psychology of Biblical Woman*

**MATTHEW B. SCHWARTZ** and **KALMAN J. KAPLAN**

"This informative, provocative, insightful, and eminently readable book both depicts and celebrates the women of Hebrew Scripture. Their independence, interdependence, courage, integrity, wisdom, and commitment are presented as an expression of covenantal biblical values."

— **Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin**

ISBN 978-0-8028-1772-3 • 207 pages • paperback • \$15.00



### **ISAIAH**

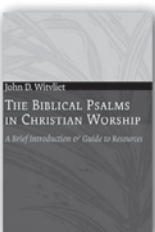
*Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators*

Translated and edited by **ROBERT LOUIS WILKEN**

"No other book of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament spoke so clearly to early Christian writers about the nature of their own faith and the identity of Jesus as did Isaiah. . . . Makes available a remarkably rich selection from the great volume of Christian commentary on Isaiah written during the church's first millennium."

— **Joseph Blenkinsopp**

ISBN 978-0-8028-2581-0 • 618 pages • hardcover • \$45.00



### **THE BIBLICAL PSALMS IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP**

*A Brief Introduction and Guide to Resources*

Calvin Institute of Christian Worship Liturgical Studies series

**JOHN D. WITVLIET**

"Witvliet offers practical theology of the highest order. His work is deeply grounded in good critical study and in the teaching of the church tradition. . . . An immensely rich resource."

— **Walter Brueggemann**

ISBN 978-0-8028-0767-0 • 189 pages • paperback • \$16.00



**WM. B. EERDMANS  
PUBLISHING CO.**  
2140 Oak Industrial Drive NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

At your bookstore,  
or call 800-253-7521  
[www.eerdmans.com](http://www.eerdmans.com)

## New Releases from Hendrickson Publishers

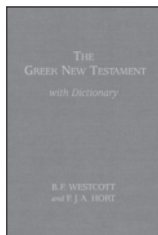
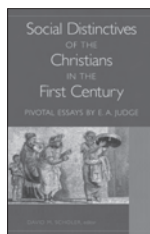
### Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century *Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge*

DAVID M. SCHOLER, EDITOR

January 2008

This is a collection of pivotal essays by E. A. Judge, who initiated many important discussions in the establishment of social scientific criticism of the Bible.

\$24.95 retail • ISBN 978-1-56563-880-8 • Paper • 232 pages • 5.5 x 8.5 inches



### The Greek New Testament with Dictionary

B. F. WESTCOTT and F. J. A. HORT

"The most noteworthy critical edition of the Greek Testament ever produced by British scholarship."

—Bruce M. Metzger, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary

\$34.95 retail • ISBN 978-1-56563-674-3 • Cloth • 900 pages • 5 x 7.375 inches

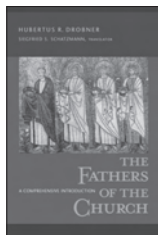
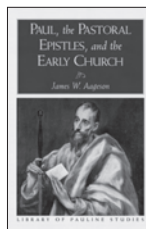
### Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, and the Early Church *Library of Pauline Studies Series*

JAMES W. AAGESON

January 2008

Even as Christianity has become increasingly global and traditions have developed and intersected in new ways, Paul remains deeply rooted in the church's theology, worship, and pastoral life. In both past and present, Paul's influence on the Christian church can hardly be overestimated.

\$24.95 retail • ISBN 978-1-59856-041-1 • Paper • 250 pages • 6 x 9 inches



### The Fathers of the Church A Comprehensive Introduction

HUBERTUS R. DROBNER

Presents the most important authors and works of the early history of Christian literature. Spanning the first seven hundred years of Christianity, Drobner introduces writers such as Philo, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine, among many others.

\$44.95 retail • ISBN 978-1-56563-331-5 • Cloth • 692 pages • 6 x 9 inches

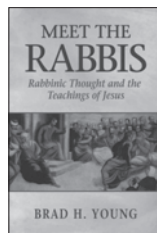
### Meet the Rabbis

#### *Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus*

BRAD H. YOUNG

*Meet the Rabbis* explains the significance of rabbinic thought to Jesus and the New Testament world and demonstrates its continued relevance to New Testament readers today.

\$16.95 retail • ISBN 978-1-56563-405-3 • Paper • 296 pages • 6 x 9 inches



**HENDRICKSON**  
PUBLISHERS

Toll-free: 800-358-1111

Outside continental U.S.: 978-532-6546

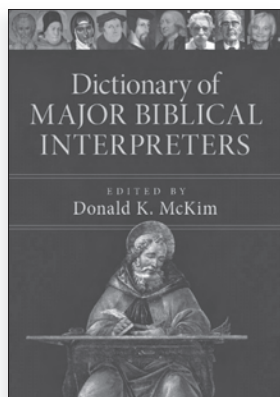
E-mail: [orders@hendrickson.com](mailto:orders@hendrickson.com)

Web site: [www.hendrickson.com](http://www.hendrickson.com)

---

## A WELL OF INTERPRETATION

---



### DICTIONARY OF MAJOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETERS

Donald K. McKim, editor

In over two hundred in-depth articles, this dictionary introduces key figures in the history of Christian interpretation. Reviewing the primary works, interpretive principles and historical significance of past interpreters, this volume is sure to replenish the work of biblical scholars today.

*“Indispensable for its contextualization of the work of biblical scholars from Abelard to Zwingli. . . . Belongs on the shelf of every serious student of theology.”*

—DAVID E. AUNE, University of Notre Dame

---

 **IVP Academic**  
Evangelically Rooted. Critically Engaged.

---

630.734.4000 • [ivpacademic.com](http://ivpacademic.com)

---



## GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL FLASHCARDS!

See and hear vocabulary flashcards on your MP3 player, video cell phone, and computer! All vocabulary is organized by chapter units, and references leading grammars. Developed by David M. Hoffeditz and J. Michael Thigpen.

**FREE Sample:** [www.ivocab.net](http://www.ivocab.net)



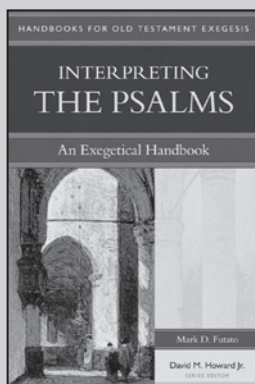
### IVOCAB BIBLICAL GREEK

\$32.99 | DVD-ROM | 926 flashcards | ISBN 978-0-8254-2756-5

### IVOCAB BIBLICAL HEBREW

\$32.99 | DVD-ROM | 2,187 flashcards | ISBN 978-0-8254-2755-8

iPod is a trademark of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. Compatibility with Apple products does not constitute an endorsement of this product by Apple Inc.



## A New Handbook for Students!

**Bruce Waltke:** "Futato takes his student by the hand through the complexities of Hebrew poetry, soars high to get a bird's eye view of the book and its themes, returns to earth and deftly guides through the thorny patch of textual criticism, gives 'Aha' moments in explaining form criticism and how the Psalter's categories refer to Christ, and ends with practical pointers on how to preach the book. Next time I teach the book of Psalms this will be my text."

### INTERPRETING THE PSALMS

Mark D. Futato; David M. Howard Jr., series editor

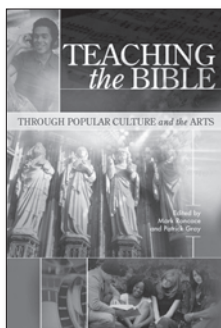
\$20.99 | pb | 272 pages | ISBN 978-0-8254-2765-7

**800.733.2607**

Professors can request examination copies  
by e-mailing us at [academic@kregel.com](mailto:academic@kregel.com)



## New and Recent Titles

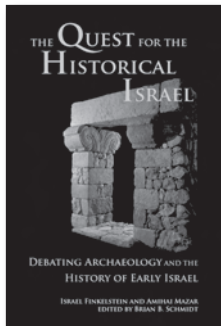


### **TEACHING THE BIBLE THROUGH POPULAR CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

***Mark Roncace and Patrick Gray, editors***

This resource enables biblical studies instructors to facilitate engaging classroom experiences by drawing on the arts and popular culture. It offers brief overviews of hundreds of easily accessible examples of art, film, literature, music, and other media and outlines strategies for incorporating them effectively and concisely in the classroom. Although designed primarily for college and seminary courses on the Bible, the ideas can easily be adapted for classes such as "Theology and Literature" or "Religion and Art" as well as for nonacademic settings.

Paper \$37.95 978-1-58983-244-2 402 pages, 2007 Code: 060353  
Resources for Biblical Study Hardback edition [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)



### **THE QUEST FOR THE HISTORICAL ISRAEL Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel**

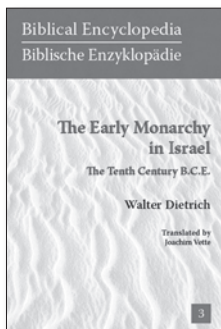
***Israel Finkelstein and Amihai Mazar***

***Brian B. Schmidt, editor***

The relevance of the biblical account for reconstructing early Israel's history has been debated for three decades. This book brings together a currently emerging "centrist" paradigm as articulated by two leading figures in the field. Although Finkelstein and Mazar advocate distinct views of early Israel's history, they nevertheless share the position that the material cultural data, the biblical traditions, and the ancient Near Eastern written sources are all significantly relevant to the historical quest for Iron Age Israel. The results of their research are featured in accessible, parallel syntheses of the historical reconstruction of early Israel that facilitate comparison and contrast of their respective interpretations.

Paper \$24.95 978-1-58983-277-0 220 pages, 2007 Code: 061717  
Archaeology and Biblical Studies 17 Hardback edition [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

Society of Biblical Literature • P.O. Box 2243 • Williston, VT 05495-2243  
Phone: 877-725-3334 (toll-free) or 802-864-6185 • Fax: 802-864-7626  
Order online at [www.sbl-site.org](http://www.sbl-site.org)



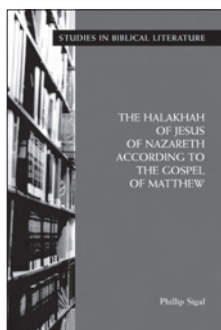
**THE EARLY MONARCHY IN ISRAEL**

**The Tenth Century B.C.E.**

***Walter Dietrich; Joachim Vette, translator***

Dietrich introduces readers to the stories of the early Israelite state from a variety of perspectives: literary-critical, historical, and theological; skillfully untangles the knotty questions related to the history of the period; and perceptively examines the development of this literary corpus as well as the other biblical material that came to be associated with it.

Paper \$47.95 978-1-58983-263-3 380 pages, 2007 Code: 063203  
Biblical Encyclopedia Hardback edition [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

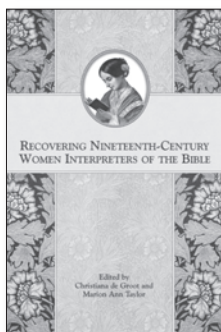


**THE HALAKHAH OF JESUS OF NAZARETH  
ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW**

***Phillip Sigal***

This is a republished edition of Sigal's pioneering work with a new preface by Eugene Fisher of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and an updating epilogue by Thomas Kazen of the Stockholm School of Theology.

Paper \$29.95 978-1-58983-282-4 292 pages, 2007 Code: 062518  
Studies in Biblical Literature Hardback edition [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)



**RECOVERING NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN  
INTERPRETERS OF THE BIBLE**

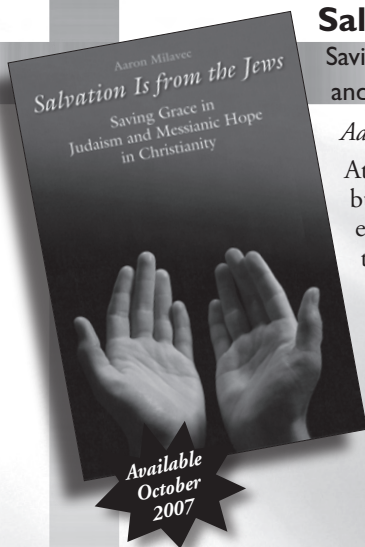
***Christiana de Groot and Marion Ann Taylor, editors***

This volume analyzes forgotten works from the nineteenth century written by women—including Christina Rossetti, Florence Nightingale, and Harriet Beecher Stowe—from various faith backgrounds, countries, and social classes engaging contemporary biblical scholarship. Each essay locates a female author in context, focusing on particular biblical passages to clarify her contributions.

Paper \$34.95 978-1-58983-220-6 256 pages, 2007 Code: 060738  
Symposium Hardback edition [www.brill.nl](http://www.brill.nl)

Society of Biblical Literature • P.O. Box 2243 • Williston, VT 05495-2243  
Phone: 877-725-3334 (toll-free) or 802-864-6185 • Fax: 802-864-7626  
Order online at [www.sbl-site.org](http://www.sbl-site.org)

# See What's New



## Salvation Is from the Jews

Saving Grace in Judaism  
and Messianic Hope in Christianity

*Aaron Milavec*

At each step of the way, Milavec's sure hand builds bridges of mutual understanding that enable both Christians and Jews to cross the chasm of distrust and distortion that has infected both church and synagogue over the centuries. Milavec securely brings his readers to that place where Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity can again be admired as sister religions intimately united to one other in God's drama of salvation.

**S978-0-8146-5989-2**

**Paper, 224 pp., 6 x 9, \$23.95**

*"With extraordinary candor, Aaron Milavec challenges traditionally held Christian misconceptions about the Jewish Faith and sets the record straight. Salvation Is from the Jews makes it abundantly clear that unlike its relationship to other religions, Christianity shares an intimate bond with Judaism—a common spiritual pilgrimage that deserves to be affirmed and celebrated."*

*Keith F. Pecklers, SJ*

*Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome*



1.800.858.5450 [www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)

**LITURGICAL PRESS**

# ANNUAL INDEX

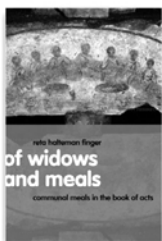
## Volume 126 (2007)

- Aasgaard, Reidar, "Paul as a Child: Children and Childhood in the Letters of the Apostle," 129
- Aschkenasy, Nehama, "Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens: The Carnavalesque in a Biblical Tale," 437
- Bartor, Assnat, "The Representation of Speech in the Casuistic Laws of the Pentateuch: The Phenomenon of Combined Discourse," 231
- Crislip, Andrew, "Lion and Human in *Gospel of Thomas* Logion 7," 595
- deSilva, David A., "Using the Master's Tools to Shore Up Another's House: A Postcolonial Analysis of 4 Maccabees," 99
- Foster, Robert L., "Shepherds, Sticks, and Social Destabilization: A Fresh Look at Zechariah 11:4–17," 735
- Fox, Michael V., "The Epistemology of the Book of Proverbs," 669
- Frolov, Serge, "Bedan: A Riddle in Context," 164
- Gardner, Gregg, "Jewish Leadership and Hellenistic Civic Benefaction in the Second Century B.C.E.," 327
- Gregory, Bradley C., "The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1–3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics," 475
- Grossman, Jonathan, "'Gleaning among the Ears'—'Gathering among the Sheaves': Characterizing the Image of the Supervising Boy (Ruth 2)," 703
- Hacham, Noah, "3 Maccabees and Esther: Parallels, Intertextuality, and Diaspora Identity," 765
- Havrelock, Rachel, "The Two Maps of Israel's Land," 649
- Hays, Christopher B., "Chirps from the Dust: The Affliction of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:30 in Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," 305
- Hedrick, Charles, "Realism in Western Narrative and the Gospel of Mark: A Prolegomenon," 345
- Hiebert, Theodore, "The Tower of Babel and the Origin of the World's Cultures," 29
- Horrell, David G., "The Label Χριστιανός: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity," 361
- Hutton, Jeremy M., "Isaiah 51:9–11 and the Rhetorical Appropriation and Subversion of Hostile Theologies," 271
- Kim, Hyun Chul Paul, "Jonah Read Intertextually," 497
- Kirk, Alan, "Karl Polanyi, Marshall Sahlins, and the Study of Ancient Social Relations," 182
- Kirk, J. R. Daniel, "Reconsidering *Dikaiōma* in Romans 5:16," 787

- Konstan, David, and Ilaria Ramelli, "The Syntax of ἐν Χριστῷ in 1 Thessalonians 4:16," 579
- Kraft, Robert A., "Para-mania: Beside, Before, and Beyond Bible Studies," 5
- Kugler, Robert, "4Q225 2 i 1–2: A Possible Reconstruction and Explanation," 172
- LaCocque, André, "The Deconstruction of Job's Fundamentalism," 83
- Leuchter, Mark, "'The Levite in Your Gates': The Deuteronomic Redefinition of Levitical Authority," 417
- Levin, Christoph, "The Yahwist: The Earliest Editor in the Pentateuch," 209
- Long, Jesse C., Jr., "Elisha's Deceptive Prophecy in 2 Kings 3: A Response to Raymond Westbrook," 168
- Milgrom, Jacob, "The Preposition מן in the תנ"ך Pericopes," 161
- Neyrey, Jerome H., S.J., "Encomium versus Vituperation: Contrasting Portraits of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," 529
- Novick, Tzvi, "Biblicized Narrative: On Tobit and Genesis 22," 755
- Owen, Paul L., "The 'Works of the Law' in Romans and Galatians: A New Defense of the Subjective Genitive," 553
- Ramelli, Ilaria, and David Konstan, "The Syntax of ἐν Χριστῷ in 1 Thessalonians 4:16," 579
- Sandoval, Timothy J., "Revisiting the Prologue of Proverbs," 455
- Schipper, Jeremy, "Did David Overinterpret Nathan's Parable in 2 Samuel 12:1–6?" 383
- Segal, Michael, "The Responsibilities and Rewards of Joshua the High Priest according to Zechariah 3:7," 717
- Sparks, Kenton L., "*Enūma Elish* and Priestly Mimesis: Elite Emulation in Nascent Judaism," 625
- Steiner, Richard C., "Why Bishlam (Ezra 4:7) Cannot Rest 'In Peace': On the Aramaic and Hebrew Sound Changes That Conspired to Blot Out the Remembrance of Bel-Shalam the Archivist," 392
- Stone, Michael E., "The City in 4 Ezra," 402
- Wagner, J. Ross, "Identifying 'Updated' Prophecies in Old Greek (OG) Isaiah: Isaiah 8:11–16 as a Test Case," 251
- Wasserman, Emma, "The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Revisiting Paul's Anthropology in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology," 793
- Wazana, Nili, "A Case of the Evil Eye: Qohelet 4:4–8," 685
- Ziegler, Yael, "'So Shall God Do . . .': Variations of an Oath Formula and Its Literary Meaning," 59

## BOOKS FOR

## NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARS



### OF WIDOWS AND MEALS

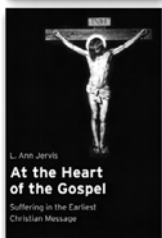
*Communal Meals in the Book of Acts*

**RETA HALTEMAN FINGER**

"A brilliant, provocative, and courageous study, with revolutionary implications for the contemporary church."

— **Robert Jewett**

ISBN 978-0-8028-3053-1 • 326 pages • paperback • \$28.00



### AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

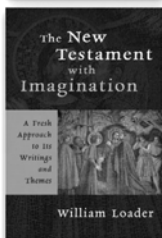
*Suffering in the Earliest Christian Message*

**L. ANN JERVIS**

"Ann Jervis brings both pastoral and exegetical insights to bear on the question of human suffering... A wise and gentle book."

— **Beverly Roberts Gaventa**

ISBN 978-0-8028-3993-0 • 163 pages • paperback • \$14.00



### THE NEW TESTAMENT WITH IMAGINATION

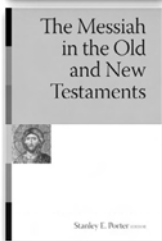
*A Fresh Approach to Its Writings and Themes*

**WILLIAM LOADER**

"Anyone who writes a clever introduction to the New Testament has my attention, and that's just what William Loader has done in *A New Testament with Imagination*... I will reconsider my textbook for NT in my Bible survey class because of this book."

— **Scot McKnight**

ISBN 978-0-8028-2746-3 • 216 pages • paperback • \$16.00



### THE MESSIAH IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

Edited by **STANLEY E. PORTER**

Ten expert scholars here address questions surrounding the concept of "messiah" and clarify what it means to call Jesus "messiah."

ISBN 978-0-8028-0766-3 • 282 pages • paperback • \$29.00

At your bookstore,  
or call 800-253-7521  
[www.eerdmans.com](http://www.eerdmans.com)



**WM. B. EERDMANS  
PUBLISHING CO.**  
2140 Oak Industrial Drive NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS

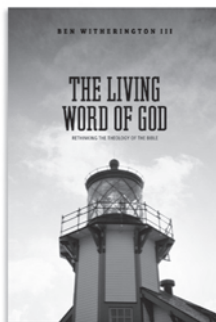


## **Making a Meal of It**

Rethinking the Theology  
of the Lord's Supper

**Ben Witherington, III**

\$19.95 | 6 x 9, 170 pages | Cloth  
ISBN 978-1-60258-015-4



## **The Living Word of God**

Rethinking the Theology of the Bible

**Ben Witherington, III**

\$24.95 | 6 x 9, 232 pages | Cloth  
ISBN 978-1-60258-017-6



1.800.537.5487 [baylorpress.com](http://baylorpress.com)  
... on the path of faith and understanding