

Matthew and the Rabbis: Symbol and Scripture in Gospel and Midrash

By

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To my parents

Jim and Sarah

שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטש תורת אמך

and to my wife

Melissa

אני לדודי ודודי לי

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
Chapter	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Atomistic vs. Contextual Exegesis in the New Testament and Rabbinic Literature	31
Atomism vs. Contextuality in Christian Scholarship	34
Rabbinic Atomism in Jewish Scholarship	57
Rabbinic Contextuality in Jewish Scholarship	64
Conclusion	76
III. Commemorative Symbols, Comparative Method, and Narrative Patterning	78
Commemorative Narratives and Symbols	80
Comparative Method: Preventing Parallelomania.....	93
Narrative Patterning: Citation, Allusion, and Metalepsis.....	104
Conclusion	114
IV. Challenging “Ongoing Exile” in Matthew and Rabbinic Literature	116
The Definition of Exile in Israel’s Scriptures.....	118
N. T. Wright and Ongoing Exile	119
Matthew’s Genealogy (Mt 1:1-17).....	128
Matthew’s Scriptural Citations in 1:23-4:16	133
Mt 1:23: Jesus as Immanuel	134
Mt 2:6: Jesus as David.....	136
Mt 2:15: Jesus’ Exile and Exodus	141
Mt 2:18: Children in Exile.....	143
Mt 2:23: Jesus as the Branch	144
Mt 3:3: Jesus Appears to Zion.....	147
Mt 4:15-16: Jesus’ Light in Israel.....	150
Exile in Rabbinic Literature.....	153
Exile in <i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	161
Conclusion	165
V. The People of Israel’s Sin and Forgiveness in Matthew and <i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	167

The “People” in Matthew	170
The People vs. Israel’s Leaders	177
Salvation for “All the People” in Mt 27:25	180
Summary.....	186
“Israel” and “Jews” in Matthew	187
Matthew’s Jewish Assembly	190
Summary.....	195
Sin and Ransom in Matthew.....	196
Sin and the Loss of the Temple	197
Sin as Debt in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Targums.....	199
Sin as Debt and Jesus as Ransom in Matthew	202
The People of Israel in <i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	205
Sin and Forgiveness in <i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	208
Sin as a Snare in the Tanakh and Dead Sea Scrolls.....	208
Sin and Slavery to the Nations in the Tanakh.....	209
Sin as a Snare and Slavery to the Nations in <i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	210
Conclusion.....	218
VI. Matthew’s Jesus as a Symbol of Israel.....	220
Matthew’s Vineyard Parable (Mt 21:33-46).....	223
Matthew’s Vineyard Parable and Isaiah 5 LXX.....	225
Matthew’s Vineyard Parable and the Targums to Isaiah and Jeremiah.....	229
Jesus as a Symbol of Israel in the Passion Narrative.....	235
Jesus’ Cup in Gethsemane: Lam 2:13 and 4:18.....	236
Jesus’ Arrest and Isa 5:25	238
Jesus’ Trial and Lam 1:19.....	240
Peter’s Denial and Isa 22:4.....	242
Jesus Exiled to the Romans and 2 Chron 36.....	243
Jesus as the Temple and Lam 2:15	245
Jesus’ Death as the End of Exile.....	247
Conclusion.....	248
VII. Adam and the Patriarchs as Symbols of Israel in <i>Genesis Rabbah</i>	250
Adam as a Symbol of Israel: <i>Gen. R.</i> 19:9	250
Jacob as a Symbol of Israel: <i>Gen. R.</i> 68:13	263
Jacob’s Sons as a Symbol of Israel: <i>Gen. R.</i> 92:3	276
Conclusion.....	280
VIII. Summary of Conclusions.....	282
Bibliography	288

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Anchor Bible Commentary
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>Arak</i>	<i>Arakhin</i>
ASR	<i>American Sociological Review</i>
<i>Avot</i>	<i>Pirke Avot</i>
<i>b.</i>	Babylonian Talmud
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>Ber</i>	<i>Berakhot</i>
BDB	The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>B. M.</i>	<i>Bava Metsia</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentary
<i>BS</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>Col</i>	<i>Colloquium</i>
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
ECNT	Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
<i>Est. R.</i>	<i>Esther Rabbah</i>
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
<i>Gen. R.</i>	<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
HOS	History of Oriental Studies
HTKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HTS</i>	<i>Hervormde teologiese studies</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Ign. Magn.</i>	Ignatius' <i>Letter to the Magnesians</i>
<i>JAAR</i>	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
<i>JAF</i>	<i>Journal of American Folklore</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>Jer. Comm. Matt.</i>	Jerome's <i>Commentary on Matthew</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>

<i>JTI</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
<i>Jub</i>	<i>Jubilees</i>
<i>Lam. R.</i>	<i>Lamentations Rabbah</i>
<i>Lev. R.</i>	<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	H. G. Liddell and R. Scott Greek-English Lexicon
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>m.</i>	Mishnah
<i>Maas. Sh.</i>	<i>Ma'aser Sheni</i>
<i>Meg.</i>	<i>Megillah</i>
<i>Me'il</i>	<i>Me'ilah</i>
<i>Mekh.</i>	<i>Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishamael</i>
<i>Midr. A.G.</i>	<i>Midrash Abba Gurion</i>
<i>M. K.</i>	<i>Moed Katan</i>
<i>MS</i>	Manuscript
<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>NA²⁷</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27 th ed.
<i>NAC</i>	New American Commentary
<i>NB</i>	<i>New Blackfriars</i>
<i>NCBC</i>	New Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
<i>NGC</i>	<i>New German Critique</i>
<i>NICNT</i>	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIGTC</i>	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
<i>NRSV</i>	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NT</i>	New Testament
<i>NTICC</i>	The New Testament in Context Commentaries
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i>Num. R.</i>	<i>Numbers Rabbah</i>
<i>Orig. Comm. Matt.</i>	Origen's <i>Commentary on Matthew</i>
<i>Pan. Aher.</i>	<i>Panim Aherot</i>
<i>PTMS</i>	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
<i>PRK</i>	<i>Pesiqta de Rav Kahana</i>
<i>PRS</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
<i>Qoh. R.</i>	<i>Qohelet Rabbah</i>
<i>Repr</i>	<i>Representations</i>
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
<i>SBL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>Shabb.</i>	<i>Shabbat</i>
<i>SHBC</i>	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
<i>Sifre Num.</i>	<i>Sifre to Numbers</i>
<i>Sifre Deut.</i>	<i>Sifre to Deuteronomy</i>
<i>SNTW</i>	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
<i>SP</i>	Sacra Pagina

STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
STR.....	<i>Sewanee Theological Review</i>
<i>Sukk.</i>	<i>Sukkot</i>
SUNY	State University of New York Press
<i>t.</i>	Tosefta
<i>Taan.</i>	<i>Taanit</i>
TgEst.....	Targum to Esther
TgLam.....	Targum to Lamentations
TgIsa	Targum to Isaiah
TgJer	Targum to Jeremiah
TgO.....	Targum Onqelos
TgPsJ.....	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
TNTC.....	The New Testament in Context
WBC	World Bible Commentary
WMANT.....	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
<i>y.</i>	Jerusalem Talmud
<i>Yalk.</i>	<i>Yalkut Shimoni</i>
ZTK.....	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

I. INTRODUCTION

In composing their Gospels, the evangelists drew on the Scriptures of Israel in order to shape their stories about Jesus.¹ The Gospel of Matthew, in particular, presents Jesus' life as the biblical story of Israel in review, so that by the end of Matthew's narrative, that which happened to Israel also happens to Jesus. Similarly, the rabbis who compiled the Midrash known as *Genesis Rabbah* present biblical figures like Adam and the patriarchs prefiguring the later experiences of biblical Israel.² Matthew and the rabbis highlight parallels between their respective figures and the scriptural account of Israel so that the individuals come to symbolize the biblical people. Both Gospel and Midrash push their readers to adopt these symbols as embodiments of the sacred history found in Israel's Scriptures, which those readers can then use to form and reinforce their own collective identities. In this dissertation, I argue that Matthew and the rabbis draw on Scripture in order to create symbols that embody the biblical past and speak to the present need for divine presence, endurance through hardship, and a sense of a shared destiny. The symbols in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* address the reality of corporate sin and the means of forgiveness, and provide a blueprint for how readers of the Gospel and Midrash should understand their collective identities as people of God.

My study of Jesus as a symbol of Israel focuses on the Matthean Vineyard Parable (21:33-46) and Passion Narrative (26:36-27:56). In these passages, Matthew incorporates words and sentences from Israel's Scripture into the Gospel narrative to show Jesus recapitulating

¹ There are problems with defining the Scriptures of Israel as a set "canon" of literature in Matthew's day. While attempting such a definition is outside the scope of this study, it is enough to say that Matthew uses many of the Scriptures that would later become canonized.

² With reference to *Genesis Rabbah* as a compilation, I will capitalize "Midrash." However, when discussing the content of *Genesis Rabbah* and other rabbinic compilations, as well as the scholarly study of these texts, I will refer to "midrash."

Israel's Babylonian captivity and exile. The cumulative effect of Matthew's use of Scripture is to portray Jesus as an individual who suffers his own captivity and exile in order to "save his people from their sins" (1:21). Matthew's Jesus is a representative of biblical Israel who suffers for Matthew's Israel—that is, the first-century people of Israel according to the Gospel narrative. In a similar way, *Genesis Rabbah* cites biblical verses that describe Israel's captivity and exile alongside verses that describe Adam, Jacob, and Jacob's sons (*Gen. R.* 19:9; 68:13; 92:3). In so doing, the rabbis portray figures from Genesis prefiguring biblical Israel. In these portrayals, Adam and the patriarchs are symbols of biblical Israel who suffer with rabbinic Israel; they are symbolic templates for confronting the problem of sin (which caused the biblical captivity and exile) and serve as reminders of divine forgiveness and benevolence.

Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* align their protagonists with biblical Israel's exile—i.e., expulsion from the Land of Israel—but neither the evangelist nor the midrashists view themselves, or contemporary Jews who reside in the Land of Israel, as living in exile. This point challenges the conclusions of both New Testament and rabbinic scholars who argue that Matthew and the rabbis understood the contemporary people of Israel as being "in exile" in the Land.³ In such assessments, "exile" carries various definitions, including (but not limited to)

³ For studies of Israel "in exile" in New Testament studies, see N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), esp. 268-72; Idem., *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), esp. 126-27, 203-04; Daniel G. Reid, "Jesus: New Exodus, New Conquest," in Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 91-118; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel," in Carey C. Newman, ed., *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1999), 77-100; Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of Atonement* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Andrew Mutua Mbuvi, *Temple, Exile, and Identity in 1 Peter* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin: The Economy of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), esp. 109-32; Nicholas G. Piotrowski, *Matthew's New David at the End of Exile: A Socio-Rhetorical Study of Scriptural Quotations* (Leiden: Brill, 2016). For studies of Israel "in exile" in studies of rabbinic

subjugation within the Land, a lack of divine action on behalf of the people, and/or the absence of a Davidic kingdom. However, the idea that a landed Israel is an “exiled” Israel contradicts the Matthean and rabbinic messages: the Gospel has Jesus enter into captivity and exile in his passion *on behalf of* Matthew’s landed people. Matthew’s Jesus takes on the consequences of his peoples’ sins in his individual exile, so that those people can know that they have been forgiven of their sins. Jesus’ substitution does no good for a people already in exile; the Matthean logic only holds if the people are landed and Jesus is exiled on their behalf. For *Genesis Rabbah*, Adam and the patriarchs are symbols *of* an exiled Israel, but they are symbols *for* the rabbis’ Israel, which, in the time that *Genesis Rabbah* is completed, is both in the Land and in Diaspora. The midrashic symbols speak to Jews in the Land (like the rabbis who wrote *Genesis Rabbah*) and outside the Land. Thus, to argue that the rabbis understood Jews in the Land to be “in exile” collapses two distinct rabbinic categories and obscures the messages that the rabbinic symbols impart.

In order to create symbols of Israel’s past that speak to the present, Matthew and the rabbis employ a hermeneutical device called narrative patterning, which occurs whenever authors draw on previous texts in order to frame and inform their own texts. A prime example of narrative patterning appears in the biblical presentations of Abraham and his son, Isaac.

literature, see Yitzhak F. Baer, *Galut* (New York: Schocken, 1947), 12-13; Arnold M. Eisen, *Galut: Modern Jewish Reflections on Homelessness and Homecoming* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Chaim Milikowsky, “Notions of Exile, Subjugation and Return in Rabbinic Literature,” in James M. Scott, ed., *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 265-98; Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, “Galut,” in Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik, eds., *EJ, Vol. 7* [2nd ed.] (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 352; Philip Alexander, *The Targum of Lamentations* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 32; Joshua Levinson, “There is No Place Like Home: Rabbinic Responses to the Christianization of Palestine,” in Natalie B. Dohrmann and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire: The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 99-120.

According to Genesis 12, Abraham and his wife, Sarah (then called Sarai), travel to Egypt to avoid a famine (12:10). Before entering Egypt, Abraham tells his wife, “I know that you are a woman beautiful in appearance, and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife’ and they will kill me and let you live. Say you are my sister (אֵתִי אָחֹתִי אֶהְיֶה)” (12:11-13a). Later in Genesis, Abraham does the same thing in Gerar that he had done in Egypt: in order to save his own life, he tells Abimelech, the king of Gerar, with reference to Sarah, “She is my sister (אֵתִי הִיא)” (Gen 20:2). Then, according to Genesis 26, when Isaac is in Gerar with his wife, Rebekah, he also tells Abimelech, “She is my sister (אֵתִי הִיא)” (Gen 26:7). Taken together, the cumulative effect of Genesis 12, 20, and 26 is to build a narrative pattern in the experiences of Abraham that Isaac recapitulates. The later writers of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are aware of the Bible’s narrative patterning, and they employ the device in their own readings of Scripture.

Matthew uses narrative patterning in order to describe Jesus as an individual recapitulation of biblical Israel. One of the most striking examples of Matthew’s presentation of Jesus with reference to Israel appears in the so-called fulfillment quotation of Hos 11:1 in Mt 2:15. Matthew states that Joseph brings his wife and newborn child to Egypt in order to escape King Herod (2:13-14). Joseph and his family remain in Egypt until Herod dies, and Matthew states that “this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’” (2:15).⁴ While Matthew links Jesus’ experience to the words of a biblical prophet, Hosea’s original audience (c. 8th century BCE) would not have understood the verse as a reference to Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, as the *original* context of Matthew’s citation states plainly, the “son” who comes out of Egypt is the collective people of Israel: “When Israel was a child I loved him,

⁴ All translations of the New Testament, as with all non-English sources, are my own unless otherwise noted.

and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos 11:1). The evangelist is not unaware of Hosea’s original context. To the contrary, Matthew assumes this context in order to draw an implicit parallel between Israel and Jesus. In choosing to cite Hos 11:1 in part, Matthew highlights the fact that God called Jesus out of Egypt just as God called Israel out of Egypt in the exodus. The evangelist assumes that readers have prior knowledge of the Hosean context, so that they can see God’s shared love for Israel and Jesus in calling them out of Egypt.

In order to appreciate the relationship between Jesus and Israel, one must read Matthew’s biblical citations in light of their original contexts, such that the verses before and after the cited verse add to its meaning in the Matthean context. By including partial citations that require knowledge of their original contexts, Matthew employs a literary technique known as “metalepsis.”⁵ This device allows the reader to discover narrative patterns between Jesus and Israel beyond those contained in the pages of the Gospel itself. Matthew’s quotation of Hosea is only one of many scriptural citations that use metalepsis to shape a Jesus in the image and likeness of Israel.

The rabbis who compiled *Genesis Rabbah* found similar parallels between biblical figures and Israel as a whole. However, whereas the Gospel is an original narrative about Jesus that the evangelist deliberately ties to the biblical narrative, the rabbis discover narrative patterns that already exist in the Bible itself. In juxtaposing biblical verses found throughout Scripture, *Genesis Rabbah* highlights narrative patterns that are not evident from a cursory reading of the biblical text. For example, in their commentary on Gen 12:10-20—the same text that initiates the narrative pattern between Abraham and Isaac—the rabbis notice a more expansive pattern

⁵ I will offer a fuller explanation of metalepsis in narrative patterning in Chapter 3.

between Abraham and all of biblical Israel. *Gen. R.* 40:6 shows that all the things that Scripture says about Abraham's experience in Egypt, Scripture also says about Israel in Egypt:

One finds that everything that was written about Abraham was [also] written about his children.... Of Abraham it is written, "And Abram went down into Egypt" (Gen 12:10) and of Israel it is written, "And our father went down into Egypt" (Num 20:15). Of Abraham it is written, "To sojourn there," and of Israel it is written, "We have come to sojourn in the land" (47:4).... Of Abraham it is written, "And it was, when Abram came into Egypt" (Gen 12:14); of Israel it is written, "These are the names of the children of Israel, who came into Egypt" (Exod 1:1). Of Abraham it is written, "And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away" (Gen 12:20); of Israel it is written, "And the Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out" (Exod 12:33).

This passage portrays Abraham as a prefigural précis of Israel's later slavery in, and exodus from, Egypt: just as Israel goes down to Egypt and comes out again, so does Abraham. While the biblical text never spells out this Abraham-Israel pattern, the rabbis find it. Thus, *Genesis Rabbah* makes the same assertion about Abraham and Israel as Matthew makes about Jesus and Israel. Both texts have individuals echoing Israel's collective exodus—with Jesus recapitulating the experiences of the people, and Abraham prefiguring them. Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* create narrative patterns—Matthew patterns the Gospel on the biblical narrative, and the rabbis identify patterns within the biblical material itself.

As with Matthew, *Genesis Rabbah* employs metalepsis in its presentation of the individual vis-à-vis Israel. The final scriptural juxtaposition in the above passage cites Gen 12:20 and Exod 12:33 to show that Abraham and Israel were both sent out of Egypt:

Of Abraham it is written, "And Pharaoh gave men orders concerning him, and they sent him away" (Gen 12:20); of Israel it is written, "And the Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out" (Exod 12:33).

The contexts of these partial citations reveal the further parallel that the Egyptians send Abraham and Israel away because God brings plagues upon Egypt. After Abraham tells Sarai to claim that she is his sister (Gen 12:13), Pharaoh takes her into his house (12:15). As a result, "the

Lord afflicted Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abraham's wife... and they sent him away with his wife" (12:17, 20b). Similarly, Pharaoh sends the enslaved people of Israel out of Egypt because the Egyptians have been afflicted with a series of plagues (Exod 7:14-12:32). In its original context, the verse that *Genesis Rabbah* quotes comes immediately after the tenth and final plague, the deaths of the firstborn of Egypt. Due to these plagues, "the Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out, for they said, 'We shall all be dead'" (12:33). Thus, the verses that surround *Genesis Rabbah*'s citations provide the reader with narrative patterns that the midrash itself never mentions.

The fact that Matthew and the rabbis execute the same hermeneutical operation (narrative patterning through metalepsis) will be a focus of this dissertation. It remains a common claim in rabbinic scholarship that midrashic exegesis is atomistic—that is, either unconcerned or unaware of the broader contexts of cited verses.⁶ While I will discuss the atomistic approach to rabbinic literature at some length in the following chapter, I offer here Carol Bakhos's recent conclusions, which represent the consensus:

[The notion] that a verse must be understood in its context, that what comes before and after the verse is important in determining its meaning, goes against the rabbinic atomistic, verso-centric approach. For the rabbis, verses are removed from their immediate context and recontextualized vis-à-vis other texts ostensibly by means of word association. Discrete verses serve as the midrash's *tesserae*. The rabbinic orientation toward intertextual reading runs in the opposite direction of reading verses in situ. They are to be read in isolation of that context and in light of other verses.⁷

Throughout my dissertation, I will offer my readings of *Genesis Rabbah* as test cases that challenge this view of rabbinic atomism; every instance of exegesis that I analyze from *Genesis*

⁶ I offer a full survey of atomistic approaches to rabbinic literature in Chapter 2.

⁷ Carol Bakhos, *The Family of Abraham: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Interpretations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 49 (emphasis original).

Rabbah is predicated upon what comes before and/or after the cited verses in their original biblical contexts.

The extent to which New Testament exegesis is atomistic continues to be debated. George Foot Moore's assessment in the 1920s that both rabbinic and NT approaches to Scripture are atomistic remains influential.⁸ Others have followed the opposite claim, first championed by C. H. Dodd in the 1950s, that both the NT writers and the rabbis attend to the original contexts of the verses they cite.⁹ Still others understand the Second Temple literature, New Testament, and earliest (tannaitic) rabbinic sources to use Scripture contextually, while the later rabbinic literature is atomistic.¹⁰ In some cases, the tendency of Christian scholars to distinguish between contextual NT exegesis and atomistic rabbinic exegesis is a result of theological convictions about Christianity's superiority over Judaism,¹¹ or the notion that Jews gradually lost a concern

⁸ See George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* [3 Vols.] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927). For examples of recent scholarship that continues to affirm Moore's conclusions, see Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Framework for Hearing God in Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 181-82; G. Walter Hansen, *Abraham in Galatians: Epistolary and Rhetorical Contexts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 204; Richard N. Longenecker, *Studies in Hermeneutics, Christology and Discipleship* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2004), 36-37.

⁹ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952); idem., *The Old Testament in the New* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963).

¹⁰ David Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992); cf. Klyne Snodgrass, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," in G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 29-54, esp. 42; Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* [NSBT] (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 106.

¹¹ See Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967).

for context in the centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE.¹² Whatever the reason for this bifurcation, it has the effect of caricaturing rabbinic Judaism as blasé in its approach to Scripture's literary and/or historical context, which contrasts with the NT writers' sober and deferential approach. I will demonstrate that both Matthew and the rabbis use Scripture contextually, and that the narrative patterns they build around Jesus and figures in Genesis, respectively, are dependent upon the contextual attention that metalepsis presupposes.

Indeed, it is through metaleptic narrative patterning that the First Gospel and *Genesis Rabbah* present the lives of individuals as summaries of Israel's saga. In the case of my examples of Jesus and Abraham above, along with being emblematic of Israel as a whole, these individuals embody abstract concepts that emerge from Israel's experiences, such as redemption and divine providence. Since Matthew's Jesus and *Genesis Rabbah*'s Abraham recapitulate and prefigure Israel's exodus from Egypt, they become concrete personifications of collective aspirations for liberation and autonomy. They also affirm the theological conviction that God intervenes on behalf of humanity.

Therefore, Jesus and Abraham cohere with Clifford Geertz's definition of symbols as "tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs."¹³ Moreover, as individuals who came out of Egypt, Jesus and Abraham symbolically partake in Israel's exodus. Thus, these figures are examples of how "the symbol... participates in that to which it points."¹⁴ Such participation provides those who adopt these symbols with a precedent for their own

¹² See David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

¹³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 1973), 91.

¹⁴ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 1957), 48.

participation in the ongoing story of Israel and its God. To the extent that the symbols of Jesus and Abraham embody the collective and express ideas to the group, they are both “declarative” and “mimetic”: they make declarations about collective history and identity, and also represent examples to be emulated.

Matthew’s linking of Jesus with Israel strengthens the biblical roots of the first-century Jesus movement, and also provides the Gospel’s readers with a symbol that encapsulates their shared convictions, aspirations, and identity. Similarly, since the authors of *Genesis Rabbah* see themselves (and their fellow Jews) as heirs of Abraham and the Israelites, they read Scripture in a way that produces an Abrahamic symbol to encapsulate the collective history and destiny of Israel in the rabbinic period. As I will show in the course of this study, the rabbis understand the Israel of their own day to be in slavery to Christian Rome, much like the biblical Israelites were enslaved in Egypt. Therefore, by noting that Abraham stands for all of Israel when he prefigures the exodus from Egypt, the rabbis have a symbol that points to their own eventual liberation from Roman bondage.

In this dissertation, I will focus on Jesus as a symbol of Israel in the Matthean Vineyard Parable (Mt 21:33-46) and the Passion Narrative (26:36-27:56). Matthew’s descriptions of Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion—foreshadowed in the parable and actualized in the passion—recapitulate biblical Israel’s suffering and exile at the hands of the Babylonians. First, Matthew’s Vineyard Parable describes a vineyard run by wicked tenants, who represent the “chief priests and Pharisees” (21:45). At the climax of the parable, the tenants seize the vineyard owner’s son (who represents Jesus), cast him out of the vineyard, and kill him (21:39). The parable is a foretaste of Jesus’ passion in Jerusalem, where the “elders and chief priests and scribes” will deliver him to the Romans to be crucified and killed (16:21; cf. 20:18-19).

The son being “cast out” (ἐξέβαλον) of the vineyard alludes to Jesus undergoing an “exile” during his passion that recalls his ancestors’ exile to Babylon. That Matthew sees the son’s fate as “exile” becomes clear when one compares Mt 21:33-46 to similar stories about the people of Israel being cast out of vineyards in the Targums to Isaiah and Jeremiah—Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible that were begun in the first-second centuries and completed around the third-fourth centuries CE.¹⁵ The Isaiah Targum describes the whole people as those who are “cast out” (מטלטלין) of the vineyard, which symbolizes the exile to Babylon (TgIsa 5:6). The targumic version of Jeremiah describes the “vineyard” (כרם) of Jer 12:10 MT as “my people” (עמי), and the Targum chastises the peoples’ “leaders” (פרנסיא) for having “cast them out” (טלטילתיון; TgJer 23:2). These targumic pictures of the entire people being cast out contrast with Matthew’s picture of the singular son being cast out. In light of a comparison between Matthew and the Targums, Jesus emerges as both a symbol of collective Israel and a recapitulative participant in Israel’s exile.

The Matthean Passion Narrative is the extended account of the events leading to Jesus’ death that the Vineyard Parable foreshadows. The evangelist draws on passages in Israel’s Scriptures—particularly the Septuagint (LXX)—in order to narratively pattern Jesus’ experiences on those of Israel. Specifically, Matthew patterns Jesus’ arrest by a Jewish crowd, trial before the Jewish council, transfer to the Roman Pilate, and crucifixion at Golgotha on biblical narratives that describe the destruction of Jerusalem and its first Temple, the captivity of the people, and their exile to Babylon. The Passion Narrative incorporates texts that describe Israel drinking the exilic “cup” (ποτήριον) of God’s wrath (Lam 2:13), the Babylonians’ seizure

¹⁵ For the Targums to Isaiah and Jeremiah having both Tannaitic (first and second century) and Amoraic (third through fifth century) phases of composition and redaction, see Bruce D. Chilton and Paul V. M. Flesher, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 169-97, 207-13.

of the Judahites (Isa 5:25; 22:4), the priests and elders' roles in Jerusalem's destruction (Lam 1:19), and the nations' mocking of Jerusalem (Lam 2:15), among others. Matthew's Jesus will also describe his impending crucifixion in terms of a cup from which he must drink (Mt 26:39); he will be seized (26:50) and tried before the chief priests and elders (26:59-60); and he will be mocked as he hangs on the cross (27:39). In recapitulating Israel's history, particularly the Babylonian aggression against the people and the exile from their Land, the Jesus symbol is declarative insofar as it confirms for Matthew's readers that their trust in Jesus' salvific death aligns with the scriptural story of Israel. As a symbol of a suffering Israel, Jesus also provides a mimetic picture of endurance under persecution, which the evangelist highlights as a concern for Jesus' followers (cf. Mt 5:10-12; 10:16-23).

Several studies have shown that Matthew's Jesus recapitulates various individuals and events in Israel's history, but these studies either do not treat or do not appreciate the Jesus-as-Israel motif in the Passion Narrative.¹⁶ For example, Peter Richardson assesses Jesus as an individualized Israel in the Gospels' Passion Narratives—which he refers to as the “Israel-idea”—and concludes, “the Israel-idea is found in the trial and death of Jesus only with difficulty; the writers have not allowed it to creep into the passion narratives to the extent it can

¹⁶ See Piotrowski, *New David*; Leroy A. Huizenga, *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Joel Kennedy, *The Recapitulation of Israel: Use of Israel's History in Matthew 1:1-4:11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); William L. Kynes, *A Christology of Solidarity: Jesus as the Representative of His People in Matthew* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991); Peter Richardson, “The Israel-Idea in the Passion Narratives,” in Ernst Bammel, ed., *The Trial of Jesus: Cambridge Studies in Honor of C. F. D. Moule* (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1970), 1-10.

be found even in other parts of the Gospels; there is no hint that Jesus is viewed as being himself Israel.”¹⁷

In William Kynes’s study of Jesus as a representative of Israel throughout Matthew, he analyzes the Gospel from start the finish, but completely skips over the Passion Narrative (26:36-27:56)—his analysis goes as far as the Last Supper (26:26-30) and then moves to Jesus’ resurrection (28:16-20).¹⁸ Similarly, Dale Allison, Jr.’s work on Matthew’s Jesus as a “New Moses” also contains a gap in analysis between the Last Supper and the moment of Jesus’ death (27:45-54).¹⁹ More recently, Joel Kennedy and Nicholas Piotrowski have offered in-depth studies of Jesus as Israel and David, respectively, but their analyses are limited to the first four chapters of Matthew.²⁰ Leroy Huizenga offers intertextual connections between Jesus and Isaac in Matthew’s Passion Narrative, but not between Jesus and Israel as a whole.²¹ In part, this dissertation will contribute to the lacuna in scholarship on Jesus as Israel in Matthew’s Passion Narrative.

Matthew presents Jesus as a symbolic personification of Israel in order to show that Jesus suffers and dies as a representative to “save his people from their sins” (σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν; 1:21)—an individual “ransom for many” (λύτρον ἀντὶ πολλῶν; 20:28). The First Gospel, along with other Jewish literature both before and after the first

¹⁷ Richardson, “Israel-Idea,” 9-10.

¹⁸ See Kynes, *Christology*, vii, 179-81.

¹⁹ See Allison, *New Moses*, viii, 261.

²⁰ See Kennedy, *Recapitulation*; Piotrowski, *New David*.

²¹ See Huizenga, *New Isaac*, 237-60.

century, sees sin as accumulating a debt that must be paid.²² As with Hellenistic Jewish literature from the Second Temple period (2 Macc 7:37-38; 4 Macc 17:20-22), the evangelist understands Jesus as a person who will “give his life” (δοῦναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ; 20:28) as a ransom-payment for sins.²³ Matthew’s Jesus must experience the consequences of Israel’s sins (i.e., exile and death) if he is to save his people from them.

According to the evangelist, the “people” (λαὸς) are always the people of Israel (i.e., ethnic Jews) who worship the “God of Israel” (15:31). While the Gospel includes Gentiles, they are not among the “people” to whom Matthew refers. Those of the “nations” (ἔθνη) who interact with Jesus do not become “Israel” through that interaction, and no Gentile ever follows Jesus in the Gospel; to the contrary, Gentiles either leave Jesus willingly (2:12), are commanded to leave (8:13), or Jesus leaves them (15:29). Thus, while many scholars assert that Matthew defines “Israel” as a *corpus mixtum* of Jews and Gentiles, or that Matthew presents the “church” (ἐκκλησία) as a “new Israel,”²⁴ the narrative itself does not bear out this conclusion. To be sure,

²² The Dead Sea Scrolls contain pre-Matthean references to sin as debt (e.g., CD 3:11-12; 11QMelchizedek), and Targum Onqelos refers to sin as debt after Matthew is written (e.g., Exod 10:17; Lev 5:2; 24:15 TgO). I will return to this metaphor in both DSS and Targum in Chapter 2.

²³ I will analyze the Maccabean literature with reference to Matthew more fully in Chapter 5.

²⁴ See, e.g., Wolfgang Trilling, *Das wahre Israel* (Munich: Kosel, 1964), 55-65; Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (London: SCM, 1966), 51-63; Douglas R. A. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 153; Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary (Volume 2: The Churchbook, Matthew 13-28)* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 770; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* [2nd ed.] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 600; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word, 1995), 623; Allan W. Martens, “Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance”: Parables of Judgment against the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation (*Matt 21:28-22:14, par.; Luke 13:6-9*),” in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 151-76, esp. 158-62; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* [trans. Robert R. Barr] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 212; Grant R. Osbourne, *Matthew* [ECNT] (Grand

the assembly of Jesus' Jewish disciples—the first fruits of Jesus' “assembly” ἐκκλησία—will expand to include people of “all the nations” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). However, Matthew's reference to a universal mission appears at the very end of the Gospel (28:19), and full Gentile inclusion is beyond Matthew's narrative horizon. Presumably, Jesus' ransom payment also saves Gentiles from their sins once they join the Jesus movement, but Matthew does not explicate this atonement process because the First Gospel is, first and foremost, a story about the people of Israel.

Matthew confirms that Jesus fulfills his mission to save his people from their sins in Mt 27:25. After Jesus tells his disciples that he will pour out his “blood of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28), Mt 27:25 has “all the people” (πᾶς ὁ λαός) cry out to Pilate for Jesus' crucifixion, saying, “His blood be upon us and upon our children” (27:25b). When the people demand that Jesus' blood be upon them, Matthew alerts the reader to the fact that “all the people” have unwittingly accepted Jesus' sanguinary means of atonement, and will therefore be saved from their sins when he sheds his blood on the cross.

The Gospel does not explain the precise nature of the “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) from which Jesus saves his people. The evangelist mentions the sins of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (12:31) and the shedding of righteous blood (23:35), but these are not sins of the “people” (λαός) as a whole. Rather, the perpetrators of these sins are the “scribes” (γραμματεῖς) and “Pharisees” (Φαρισαῖοι) who “sit on Moses' seat” as authority figures over the general population (23:2). As I will show, Matthew puts the scribes and Pharisees (as well as the chief priests and elders of the people) in a separate category from the people themselves. While Jesus will save his people from their sins, such salvation does not extend to the sins of Israel's leadership. According to

Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 791; Stanley P. Saunders, *Preaching the Gospel of Matthew: Proclaiming God's Presence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 220.

Matthew, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall “not be forgiven” (οὐκ ἀφεθήσεται; 12:32), and the shedding of righteous blood leads to the destruction of the Temple (23:32-24:2). Thus, Matthew only applies the atoning power of Jesus’ salvific death to the unspecified sins of “his people” (λαὸν αὐτοῦ).

This final point—that Jesus saves his people from their sins, but not the scribes and Pharisees—is one of the ways that Matthew makes a bifurcation between the people of Israel and their leaders who, despite being Jews, are regarded as outside the reach of salvation. Matthew makes the same bifurcation between the people and the “chief priests” (ἀρχιερεῖς) and “elders of the people” (πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ), who also hold positions of authority in Israel. The evangelist highlights the separation of these leadership groups from the people when the chief priests and elders plot to kill Jesus (26:3), but decide not to carry out their plan on Passover “lest there be an uproar among the people” (ἵνα μὴ θόρυβος γένηται ἐν τῷ λαῷ; 23:5). Again, the salvific mission of Matthew’s Jesus is directed to the people—that is, the general population of Israel—but not to any of Israel’s leadership groups in Jesus’ day. Jesus stands as a symbol of biblical Israel for Matthew’s people of Israel, and offers a site of collective identity for members of a nascent Jesus movement whose roots are planted in Israel’s Scriptures.

Matthew’s first-century presentation of Jesus as an Israel-symbol anticipates the similar symbol making in *Genesis Rabbah*, completed in the Land of Israel in the fourth or fifth century.²⁵ The authors of *Genesis Rabbah* read Adam (*Gen. R.* 19:9), Jacob (68:13), and Jacob’s

²⁵ The vast majority of scholars date Matthew after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, but some date the text before 70. For the minority position of a pre-70 date, see, e.g., John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: SCM, 1976); John Wenham, *Redating Matthew, Mark, and Luke: A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991); Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* [2nd ed.] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 608-09; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* [NIGTC] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 14-17; R. T. France, *The Gospel*

sons (92:3) in light of biblical accounts of Israel's suffering and exile at the hands of foreign nations. Through a series of scriptural juxtapositions, *Gen. R.* 19:9 presents Adam as prefiguring Israel's history: both Adam and Israel were placed into a good land (Eden and Canaan; cf. Gen 2:15; Jer 2:7); both received divine commands (cf. Gen 2:16; Exod 27:20); both transgressed those commands (cf. Gen 3:11; Dan 9:11), and were expelled from their lands as a result (cf. Gen 3:23-24; Jer 15:1; Hos 9:15). In the first half of *Gen. R.* 19:9's midrashic comparison, Adam represents Israel in right relationship with God: he is secure in his land and charged with commands. However, in the second half of the comparison, Adam is a negative symbol of collective Israel that concretizes the concepts of rebellion and punishment. Thus, the Adamic symbol contains a moral message for Israel in the rabbinic period to follow God's commands and to avoid transgressing them.

The rabbis also juxtapose biblical verses detailing Jacob's experience in Bethel (Gen 28:10-13) with verses that describe the destructive and exilic force of Babylon in the biblical period (*Gen. R.* 68:13). In this case, the rabbis employ metalepsis to point to God's eternal promise to Jacob: "The Land on which you lie I will give to you and your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth... and in you and your offspring all the families of the

of Matthew [NICNT] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 18-19; Donald A. Hagner, "Determining the Date of Matthew," in Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts, and Richard A. Burrige, eds., *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 76-92. Rabbinic scholars agree that *Genesis Rabbah* was finished some time between the latter half of the 4th century and the first half of the 5th century CE. See, e.g., Jacob Neusner, *Confronting Creation: How Judaism Reads Genesis: An Anthology of Genesis Rabbah* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 3; H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* [2nd ed.] (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 279-80; Myron B. Lerner, "The Works of Aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim," in Shmuel Safari, Zeev Safrai, Joshua Schwartz, and Peter J. Tomson, eds., *The Literature of the Sages, Part 2* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 149. There were some post-5th century additions to *Genesis Rabbah*, and scholars debate the extent of the additions. These additions are limited to material found in chapters 95-100, not referenced in this study. On provenance, Strack [*ibid.*, 280] states, "It is certain... that the redaction of GenR took place in Palestine."

earth will be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this Land” (Gen 28:13b-15a). As the recipient of this Land-oriented promise, Jacob becomes a symbol of a landed Israel vis-à-vis the “exiles” (גליות) that the rabbinic intertexts describe. *Genesis Rabbah* reads Jacob’s encounter with God at Bethel alongside a soon-to-be exiled biblical Israel in order to reiterate that the divine promise of the Land predates the Babylonian destruction of that Land. Whereas the exile in 586 BCE was a result of Israel’s sin, the rabbis show that Jacob, the individual called “Israel” (Gen 32:28), is symbolic of a people who reap the benefits of divine promises. Thus, the Jacob-symbol reminds rabbinic Israel of its privileged place in a divine plan despite the current lack of autonomy under Christian Rome.

Finally, *Genesis Rabbah* proposes parallels between Jacob’s sons and the biblical “exiles” (גליות) in order to present symbols of the whole people of Israel (*Gen. R.* 92:3). The midrashic discussion revolves around Jacob’s words to his sons in Gen 43:14: “May God Almighty give you mercy before the man [Joseph], that he may release to you your brothers—the other [brother, Simeon] and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved [of my children], I am bereaved.” The rabbis state that “the other” brother, Simeon, represents the ten lost tribes of Israel, and “Benjamin” represents the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. More, Jacob is bereaved, not for the possible loss of his children, but for the destruction of the First and Second Temples. Thus, *Gen. R.* 92:3 marks the most explicit instance of the rabbis using individuals to symbolize the whole people of Israel, so that the biblical patriarchs foreshadow Israel in both the biblical and post-Second Temple periods.

The rabbis read the “man” in Gen 43:14 not as Joseph, but as God, and connect the verse in Genesis to Exod 15:3: “The Lord is man of war.” They also include a citation of Ps 106:46 on the basis that it and Gen 43:14 share the Hebrew words for “mercy” (רחמים). Exod 15:3 and Ps

106:46 share very similar recollections of Israel's exodus from bondage in Egypt (cf. Exod 15:4-6, 13; Ps 106:7, 9-11). Gen 43:14 also shares an affinity with these intertexts insofar as it describes Jacob's desire to have his sons, Simeon and Benjamin, released from bondage to Joseph in Egypt. Thus, the symbol of the patriarchs in this verse (who represent all the tribes of Israel) furnishes the rabbis with a picture of Israel in the rabbinic period in slavery to Christian Rome.

The rabbis add a conclusion to Jacob's words not found in the Torah itself: "Although I am bereaved in the second [Temple's] destruction, I will not be bereaved continually." The rabbis take this narrative liberty because they know that, according to the biblical narrative, Jacob is *not* bereaved continually; rather, he is reunited with his children, he blesses each of them before he dies (Gen 49), and his children are also reconciled to Joseph (50:1-21). Since the sages read Joseph in *Gen. R.* 92:3 as God, the collective symbol of Jacob's sons provides readers of *Genesis Rabbah* with a symbolic picture of release from Roman slavery, the rebuilding of the Temple, and an idealized relationship with God. Thus, while Jacob's sons prefigure the biblical exiles, the rabbis comment on Gen 43:14 in order to form a symbol for the Israel of their own day.

As with Matthew's presentation of Jesus, *Genesis Rabbah* utilizes Adam, Jacob, and Jacob's sons to explain the theological concepts of sin and forgiveness for its readers. The Midrash uses its symbols of Israel within a theological framework that, following the Tanakh and Second Temple literature, sees sin as a trap or snare that locks people into bondage (e.g., Prov 12:13; Job 22:5; CD 4:13-19).²⁶ The physical manifestation of sin is the so-called "slavery" or "bondage" (עבדות) that Israel experiences under Gentile nations—in the rabbis' case,

²⁶ I will discuss this concept as it appears in the Tanakh and the Dead Sea Scrolls in chapter 5.

Christian Rome. The idea that sin leads to slavery also comes from the Tanakh, particularly Ezra/Nehemiah (cf. Ezra 9:6-9; Neh 9:36-37). According to the midrashic worldview, the collective suffering under Gentiles will purge Israel of its sins (cf. *Gen. R.* 41:9; 69:5), and through such worldly suffering (insofar as it eliminates sin), the people of Israel will experience life in the world to come (cf. 9:8; 26:6). In the midst of this suffering, the people's continued worship and repentance will precede a messianic era of Israel's liberation from Rome, the healing of Israel's wounds, the reconstruction of the Temple, and the resurrection of the dead (cf. 2:4-5; 10:4; 20:5; 26:2; 48:10-11; 56:2, 10).

In light of the rabbis' views of sin and slavery, *Genesis Rabbah* fashions symbols for rabbinic Israel that prefigure biblical Israel in sin (Adam) and/or symbolically partake in the abuses that Israel experienced from foreign nations (Adam, Jacob, and Jacob's sons). These symbols provide rabbinic Israel with templates for responding to their own sin and consequential lack of autonomy. The rabbis also read these figures from Genesis alongside verses whose contexts speak of worship, repentance, and endurance under suffering, which are the elements that will effect divine forgiveness. The symbolic uses of Adam and the patriarchs remind readers of *Genesis Rabbah* that salvation from sin and release from bondage is guaranteed because God forgave and freed biblical Israel in the past.

My comparison of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* shows that these texts contain interpretations of Israel's Scriptures that speak to similar issues—namely, sin and forgiveness, and the means of forging an identity based upon Israel's biblical past. Matthew and the rabbis explain reality within similar theological parameters, which, to use Jonathan Z. Smith's

terminology, reflects “more or less equal religious experiences.”²⁷ In several ways, the similarities between the Gospel and Midrash have import for the scholarly understanding of both. First, Matthew’s exegetical techniques and theological assumptions are proto-rabbinic in that they predate similar aspects of the later rabbinic literature. Matthew’s affinities with rabbinic exegesis locate the foundations of rabbinic exegesis in the first century, which challenges the idea that approaches to Scripture in the tannaitic period differ significantly from the later amoraic literature. To the extent that Matthew reflects proto-rabbinic tendencies, the Gospel provides scholars of rabbinics with an early example of exegesis that also appears in their primary texts. Such a view of Matthew is a basis for its use as an historical source for understanding the development of ancient Jewish thought.

My comparative analysis also places Matthew within Judaism, rather than at odds with it, and challenges that notion that the Gospel is anti-Jewish,²⁸ and/or seeks to condemn the people of Israel.²⁹ *Genesis Rabbah* is comfortable highlighting the sins of Israel, both past and present, but the Midrash does not promote a rejection or condemnation of Israel as a people. To the contrary, the rabbis’ discussions of sin, captivity, and exile are meant to provide Israel with a

²⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 49.

²⁸ See, e.g., Simon Légasse, “L’Antijudaïsme dan l’évangile selon Matthieu,” in M. Didier, ed., *L’évangile selon Matthieu* (Louvain: Gembloux, 1971), 417-28; Kenneth G. Newport, *The Sources and Sitz im Leben of Matthew 23* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 65; Herbert Basser with Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-based Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 19-20.

²⁹ See, e.g., Lloyd Gaston, “The Messiah of Israel as Teacher of the Gentiles,” in *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 24-40; Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 150; Martens, “Produce Fruit,” esp. 158-73.

guide for continuing as a people. When Matthew is read alongside *Genesis Rabbah*, the Midrash helps the reader to see that the Gospel is taking on a project similar to that of the rabbis.

Finally, in some NT assessments of Jesus' recapitulation of Israel, Jesus not only represents Israel, but Jesus *is* Israel.³⁰ This conclusion literally rechristens Israel, and co-opts Israel into an exclusively Christian model; it also removes all import or identity from Israel outside of Jesus, so that he becomes the only aspect of Israel's history worth saving for Christians. Yet, the conclusion that Matthew absorbs Israel into Jesus is both unnecessary and unfounded in light of the rabbis' presentation of individuals vis-à-vis Israel. *Genesis Rabbah* gives no hint that Adam, for instance, *is* Israel, or that Jacob's sons, who represent the twelve tribes, absorb the entire history of Israel. In no way is the reader of *Genesis Rabbah* justified in discarding Israel's history. Thus, the Midrash provides Matthean scholars with an alternative way to understand Jesus' relationship to Israel that does not carry the problematic connotations of Christian supersessionism.

The differences between the two corpuses are equally important. First, Matthew has Jesus suffering as a substitutionary ransom for the collective. *Genesis Rabbah*, on the other hand, has the collective suffering for its own sin and offers the stories of biblical individuals as microcosmic examples of how Israel can bear up under such suffering. While the religious worlds of Matthew and the rabbis are similar in form, and even share much of the same content, they are making quite different theological statements. Although Matthew notes that God forgives sins (6:15; 12:32; 18:35), Jesus also forgives sins (cf. 9:2-6) and does so for his people

³⁰ See, e.g., R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), 55; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 55; David E. Howerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 40, 44; Kennedy, *Recapitulation*, 180; Piotrowski, *New David*, 178, 192-94; 200-03.

when he suffers on their behalf (26:28). In *Genesis Rabbah*, divine forgiveness comes after collective suffering, as well as worship and repentance in the midst of such suffering. While the rabbis believe that a Messiah will save them from Gentile powers, the messianic era comes *after* Israel has suffered because of their sins and God has forgiven them. For Matthew, the Messiah comes *in order to* save the people from sins (1:21). Thus, while initial points of contact provide the occasion to bring Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* into dialogue, the differences between them reveal the specificities that make each text relevant and distinctive to the groups who adopt them—thereby maintaining the distinctiveness of the groups themselves.

This dissertation proceeds in eight chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 provide the exegetical and theoretical discussions that will inform my readings of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, and chapters 4-7 analyze the texts themselves. Chapter 2 surveys trends in both rabbinic and New Testament approaches to how the Gospels and Midrash utilize scriptural references. The chapter begins with Moore's assessments of rabbinic and NT atomism as a rejoinder to previous Christian scholars' polemical attempts to present Judaism and Christianity as polar opposites. Moore's views remain strong in New Testament studies, but Dodd's contextual approach is also prevalent. While rabbinic scholars do not trace their assessments back to Moore, the theory of atomism is favored in rabbinic studies.³¹ However, the past quarter century has seen an upsurge

³¹ See, e.g., James L. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 131-55; Arnold Goldberg, "The Rabbinic View of Scripture," in Philip R. Davies and Richard T. White, eds., *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990); David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Burton L. Visotzky, *Reading the Book: Making the Bible a Timeless Text* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006); Benjamin D. Sommer, "Concepts of Scriptural Language in Midrash," in *ibid.*, ed., *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012); Bakhos, *Family of Abraham*; Philip S. Alexander, "Rabbinic and Patristic Bible Exegesis as Intertexts: Towards a

in scholarship that argues for the role of biblical context in rabbinic literature.³² A review of the debates over atomistic and contextual exegesis in rabbinic and NT scholarship will foreground my own contextual readings of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*. I will argue that the biblical citations I treat in the Gospel and Midrash all depend on attention to Scripture's original context.

Chapter 3 focuses on the commemoration of symbols, comparative method, and the literary concept of narrative patterning. First, following Barry Schwartz, I discuss the idea of commemoration (“remembering together”) as a way that groups define and recall their collective identities.³³ Matthew and the rabbis both produce what Yael Zerubavel calls a “commemorative narrative”—that is, a narrative that comments on a shared past in order to convey a moral message.³⁴ Zerubavel notes that each new commemorative narrative is built upon a “master commemorative narrative,” which for Matthew and the rabbis is Israel's Scriptures.³⁵ The

Theory of Comparative Midrash,” in R. Timothy McLay, ed., *The Temple in Text and Tradition: A Festschrift in Honour of Robert Hayward* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

³² See, e.g., David Weiss Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Instone Brewer, *Techniques*; Alexander Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Aharon Shemesh, “Biblical Exegesis and Interpretations from Qumran to the Rabbis,” in Matthias Henze, ed., *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 467-489; Aaron Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Jeremy F. Hultin, “*Genesis Rabbah* 48:1-6: Reflections on Thematic Unity and Exegetical Method,” in Craig A. Evans and Jeremiah J. Johnston, eds., *Searching the Scriptures: Studies in Context and Intertextuality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 16-28.

³³ See Barry Schwartz, “The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory,” *SF* 61 (1982): 374-402; idem., *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), esp. 8-12.

³⁴ Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

authors of the Gospel and Midrash draw upon Scripture in order to provide their readers with a sense of a common biblical past, and they use their own commemorative narratives (and symbols therein) to shape their messages about sin, salvation, and the human-divine relationship—ideas already found in the master commemorative narrative.

After discussing commemoration, I show how symbols function within commemorative narratives. Matthean and rabbinic symbols serve as sites of commemoration in that they concretize ideas and provide meaning for readers each time they encounter the texts. Such commemoration reinforces a sense of group cohesion and provides a means for marking shared values. I will demonstrate that Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* contain symbols that are both “mimetic,” insofar as they offer examples for the group, and “declarative,” in that they make declarations about the group’s common history and identity.

The second part of chapter 3 establishes a comparative method, since the ensuing analyses of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are predicated upon various levels of comparison between Israel’s Scriptures, the New Testament, the Targums, and the Midrash. I begin with Samuel Sandmel’s comments on “parallelomania”—the tendency of comparativists to overemphasize supposed similarities between texts and then posit the direction of derivation between them.³⁶

In order to construct a comparative method that attends to both similarity and difference without positing dependence, I begin with William Paden’s notion of “world building,” which proposes that different religious “worlds” may be similar in form, but different in content.³⁷

³⁶ See Samuel Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL* 81 (1962): 1-13.

³⁷ See William E. Paden, *New Patterns for Comparative Religion: Passages to an Evolutionary Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); idem., “World,” in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 2000), 334-50.

Paden's theory allows for a bilateral approach to comparison that is both cognizant of similarities and attentive to differences. Jonathan Z. Smith proposes a related approach that looks for analogies between comparables, rather than a "genealogical" relationship that posits directions of derivation.³⁸ Smith's focus on analogical comparison also allows him to highlight the differences in the comparative project that provide scholars with the data necessary to make specific claims about both entities under evaluation. In his comparative work between the New Testament and the Targums, Bruce Chilton echoes Smith's understanding of analogical comparison. Chilton states that while analogies exist between the two corpuses, we should not attempt to establish genealogical relationships between the NT and the later Targums.³⁹ In order to show how analogical comparison works for Matthean-targumic comparison, I offer an example between the Aramaic translation of Psalm 91 and Matthew's use of Psalm 91 in Mt 4:6. This example highlights the fact that Matthew and Targum share a similar view of Psalm 91, but that the differences between how the psalm is applied in both texts preclude the idea that Matthew is dependent on the Targum or vice versa.

The third part of chapter 3 deals with narrative patterning—that is, the construction of patterns via recapitulated stories. I offer three literary mechanisms for identifying narrative patterns: citation (both explicit and implicit), allusion, and metalepsis. Citations reproduce three or more successive words from a precedent text (A) into a dependent text (B). An "explicit" citation is one that comes after an introductory statement. Matthew's citation of Hosea, for example, which begins with "this was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet," is an

³⁸ See Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 47-49.

³⁹ See Bruce Chilton, "Reference to the Targumim in the Exegesis of the New Testament," in Eugene H. Lovering, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* 34 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995).

explicit citation of Hosea. An “implicit” citation, on the other hand, does not include an introductory statement. Had Matthew not included the reference to the prophet and merely claimed, “Out of Egypt I called my son, Jesus,” this would constitute an implicit citation of Hosea. Since it is difficult to identify one or two words in a dependent text as a “citation,” I will call instances of words outside of a successive phrase “allusions.” To use the same example from Matthew, an allusion to Hosea 11:1 would be, “Joseph went to Egypt and then brought his son out from there”—the words “Egypt,” “son,” and “out” could allude to Hos 11:1, but because the sentence is not part of a successive phrase, it cannot be called a citation. Finally, “metalepsis,” which I have outlined above, entails reading the context of the precedent text beyond the words cited on the page. These literary mechanisms will provide the basis for identifying narrative patterns of Israel in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*.

I dedicate Chapter 4 to dispelling the popular scholarly idea that the people of Israel in Matthew’s narrative are living in ongoing “exile.” Specifically, I analyze Matthew’s genealogy (1:1-17) and the so-called fulfillment citations in Matthew 1-4 to show that the people are not in exile. After challenging the “in exile” view of Matthew, I move to the similar view in rabbinic scholarship that the rabbis understood Israel in the Land to be in “exile.” I highlight rabbinic material that argues against this idea, and also show that *Genesis Rabbah* has no conception that Jews in the Land are Jews in exile. This chapter will foreground chapter 5, in which I show that the people in Matthew are in sin-debt in the Land—not in exile—and Israel in *Genesis Rabbah* is in slavery (עבדות), rather than exile (גלות).

Chapter 5 proceeds in two parts, the first dedicated to Matthew and the second to *Genesis Rabbah*. Part one explains the meaning of Matthew’s conviction that Jesus “will save his people from their sins” (1:21), as this statement informs the passages I treat in the following chapter.

First, I treat each instance of λαὸς in the Gospel to show that Jesus’ “people” are the people of Israel—that is, ethnic Jews. As noted above, Israel’s leaders (scribes and Pharisees; chief priests and elders), although part of Israel, are not included among the “people.” Although Gentiles interact with Jesus, they are not among the collective “people” to whom Matthew refers in the narrative. Finally, I argue that Jesus accomplishes salvation from sin for “all the people” (of Israel) in his death (cf. 1:21; 26:28; 27:25).

After dealing with the instances of λαὸς, I show that the terms “Israel” (Ἰσραήλ) and “Jews” (Ἰουδαίους) also solely apply to those who share Jesus’ ethnic background. The “assembly” (ἐκκλησία) of Jesus’ followers in Matthew is also ethnically Jewish, but will become open to Gentiles by the end of the Gospel (28:19). Showing that Matthew is a narrative about Israel qua Israel will provide the foundation for Matthew’s use of Jesus as a symbol of biblical Israel *for* Matthew’s Israel.

Second, I explain the nature of “sin” (ἁμαρτία) according to Matthew. Gary Anderson and Nathan Eubank have shown convincingly that Matthew adopts the view of sin as a debt.⁴⁰ Matthew presents Jesus as a “ransom for many” (20:28) that pays off his people’s debt, so that early Jesus followers can be assured that their sins are forgiven despite the loss of the Temple after 70 CE.

The second part of chapter 5 begins by showing the concern for Israel in *Genesis Rabbah*. In order to do this, I cite passages from *Genesis Rabbah* that conceive of sin as a collective snare that accompanies Israel’s enslavement to Christian Rome. After establishing this view of sin and slavery, I conclude the chapter with examples of how collective suffering, repentance, and worship are necessary for divine forgiveness. These attributes of midrashic theology provide the

⁴⁰ See Gary Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Eubank, *Wages*.

necessary background for understanding the function of *Genesis Rabbah*'s symbols, which I treat in chapter 7.

Chapter 6 contains my reading of the Matthean Vineyard Parable (Mt 21:33-46) and the Passion Narrative (26-27). First, I argue that the Vineyard Parable foreshadows the exilic nature of the Passion Narrative insofar as it describes Jesus (the parabolic “son”) being “cast out” (ἐκβάλλω) of the vineyard (21:39). As similar vineyard stories in the Targums have the whole people of Israel “cast out” (טלטל) as a metaphor for Israel’s exile, Matthew’s cast out son emerges as a representative for his people. Second, I show that the Passion Narrative describes Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion via citations and allusions to biblical Israel’s captivity and exile. Matthew uses metalepsis to form narrative patterns between Jesus and Israel that provide a message about endurance under suffering and the assurance of forgiveness.

Chapter 7 analyzes three passages in *Genesis Rabbah* (*Gen. R.* 19:9; 68:13; 92:3) that use Adam, Jacob, and Jacob’s sons as symbols of biblical Israel for rabbinic Israel. Every verse that the rabbis cite is dependent upon metalepsis for a full picture of the midrashic narrative patterns. *Genesis Rabbah*’s presentation of Adam in *Gen. R.* 19:9 is of an anti-mimetic symbol; the rabbis view him as an example for rabbinic Israel not to follow. Adam is also a negative declarative symbol, as his experience in the Garden of Eden reminds rabbinic Israel of a sinful past that should be eschewed in the present. Jacob, on the other hand, is a positive mimetic and declarative symbol. While he is compared with the biblical “exiles” in *Gen. R.* 68:13, his own narrative (*Gen* 28:10-15) is juxtaposed with that of the exiles in order to emphasize divine Land promises to Israel, and to provide rabbinic Israel with a template for living in the Land under Christian Rome. Finally, the patriarchs in *Gen. R.* 92:3 represent biblical Israel in slavery. In its contextual use of Scripture, however, *Genesis Rabbah* is able to fashion Jacob’s sons into a

collective symbol that declares Israel's past and future redemption. These symbols provide rabbinic Israel with sites of commemoration that clarify collective identity and right conduct, including endurance, worship, and repentance.

I end the dissertation with a summary of my conclusions, which includes my comments on the advantage of reading Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* as comparative literature.

II. ATOMISTIC VS. CONTEXTUAL EXEGESIS IN RABBINIC LITERATURE AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

In my treatments of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, I propose that the authors of both texts utilize metalepsis in their citations of biblical verses that are meant to draw the reader's attention to the broader scriptural context. However, the extent to which the rabbinic and New Testament authors attended to the context of the biblical verses they cited remains an open question in scholarly circles. While the prevailing understanding in rabbinic scholarship is that the rabbis used Scripture atomistically—that is, without attention to its broader context—a more contextual understanding of rabbinic exegesis makes better sense of the material in *Genesis Rabbah* this dissertation addresses. New Testament scholars are generally split in their readings of NT exegesis as either atomistic or contextual. However, those scholars who argue that the NT attends to Scripture's context often claim that the later rabbinic literature lacks a similar attention. This chapter surveys the debate between atomistic and contextual exegesis in order to foreground my own assessments of *both* Matthean and rabbinic exegesis as thoroughly bound to Scripture's original context. While rabbinic literature sometimes uses Scripture atomistically, I argue—with other scholars whose chorus has become stronger in the past quarter century—that we have overemphasized atomism without giving due attention to contextual exegesis in rabbinic literature. Similarly, while I do not deny the existence of atomistic exegesis in the New Testament, I suspect that those who read the Gospels atomistically are, for the most part, missing the broader biblical contexts to which the evangelists point with their scriptural citations.

This chapter proceeds in two main parts. The first part is dedicated to Christian scholars' assessments of NT and rabbinic exegesis, and the second part focuses on treatments of rabbinic material by Jewish scholars. I make this bifurcation between Christian and Jewish scholarship in

order to highlight several points: (1) Christian scholars feel compelled to comment (both positively and negatively) on rabbinic exegetical methods because they are thought to be useful for understanding New Testament exegesis, but, for the most part, the support for their conclusions on rabbinic literature comes from within Christian circles; (2) on the whole, those Christian scholars who argue against the consensus on rabbinic atomism tend not to critically engage Jewish scholarship in making their claims for contextuality; (3) Jewish scholars have their own circles within which they debate the nature of rabbinic exegesis, and rarely attend to what is being said in Christian circles, unless Christian scholars makes particularly egregious mistakes in their readings of rabbinic literature; (4) such mistakes go unnoticed by other Christian scholars who, despite their engagement with rabbinic literature, do not seem to be engaging with Jewish scholarship; (5) the Jewish scholars who I identify as challenging the consensus on atomism do not explicitly position their arguments as rejoinders to those who agree with the consensus. Thus, both Christian and Jewish scholars are making arguments about the nature of rabbinic exegesis, but there is little deliberate interaction either between Christians and Jews or between proponents of atomism and advocates of contextuality.

I begin part one with the work of George Foot Moore, who concluded in the 1920s that both the New Testament and rabbinic literature are atomistic. Moore's conclusions on atomism came, in part, as a response to the prevailing Christian understanding of rabbinic Judaism at the time as wholly different from, and inferior to, Christianity. While I affirm Moore's desire to combat the erroneous dichotomy between Judaism and Christianity, I disagree with his readings of NT and rabbinic literature. Although Moore's theory of atomism was accepted initially, C. H. Dodd began to promote a contextual approach to both rabbinic and NT exegesis in the 1950s. I favor Dodd's contextual approach over Moore's atomism, but I do not endorse the tendency of

some proponents of contextuality (such as Robert Gundry and David Instone-Brewer) to claim that the New Testament's contextual exegesis is qualitatively different than the rabbis' later atomistic exegesis. At worst, this supposed bifurcation between NT and rabbinic exegesis can lead to a reversion to the pre-Moorian Christian view of later rabbinic Judaism as inferior. At best, it constitutes a misunderstanding of the way the rabbis used Scripture, and it creates an unnecessary divide between first-century NT thought and rabbinic thinking several centuries later. Variations on Moore's atomism and Dodd's contextuality continue to appear in Christian studies of New Testament and rabbinic literature, and a consensus is by no means imminent.

In part two, I move to assessments of atomism by Jewish scholars of rabbinic literature. As James Kugel has promoted a view of atomism that has remained strong since his work on the topic began in the 1980s, I begin my survey of atomism with reference to his work. Kugel does not claim that *all* rabbinic exegesis is atomistic, but he strongly emphasizes the rabbis' atomistic tendencies. Though I challenge Kugel's atomistic theory, his approach continues to inform much of the field. At the same time, there have been Jewish scholars since Kugel (e.g., David Weiss Halivni, Alexander Samely, Azzan Yadin, and Aaron Koller) whose work shows a rabbinic concern for biblical context. However, with rare exception, these studies of rabbinic contextuality do not quite describe the approach I will take in this dissertation. Whereas I argue that the rabbis engage in the kind of specifically metaleptic exegesis that requires knowledge of the cited verses' immediate contexts, most approaches to the rabbinic material argue for a more general attention to the entire Tanakh or to the plotlines of specific passages. While these studies are useful for nuancing the overgeneralization of atomism, they define contextuality differently than I do. Noting such differences will highlight my own view of metaleptic contextuality in anticipation of the upcoming chapters.

Atomism vs. Contextuality in Christian Scholarship

Since the early twentieth century, the dominant scholarly consensus has been that early Jews and Christians employed an atomistic approach to Scripture in which the scope of citations is limited to single verses that are juxtaposed and interpreted without regard for their broader biblical context(s). In 1927, George Foot Moore—a Presbyterian scholar and minister who was very conversant in rabbinic Judaism—concluded that the rabbinic and New Testament writers were atomistic in their uses of Scripture. In his masterful three-volume study entitled *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, he states that rabbinic literature utilizes an “atomistic exegesis, which interprets sentences, clauses, phrases, and even single words independently of the context or the historical occasion... combines them with other similarly detached utterances; and makes large use of analogy of expressions, often by purely verbal association.”⁴¹ Soon after this description of rabbinic interpretation, Moore notes, “The interpretation of the Scriptures in the New Testament is of precisely the same kind.”⁴² Thus, for Moore, rabbinic and New Testament approaches are equally unconcerned with upholding the contextual integrity of Scripture in their respective interpretations of it.

Two hermeneutical principles lead Moore to his conclusions about rabbinic atomism. First, he alludes to the rabbinic “conviction that everywhere in his revelation [of Scripture] God

⁴¹ George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* [3 Vols.] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), 1.248. Paul Humbert categorized targumic exegesis as “atomistic” before Moore’s comments regarding Tannaitic literature, more generally. See Paul Humbert, “Le Messie dans le Targum des prophètes,” *RTP* 44 (1911), 20.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1.249.

is teaching religion and that the whole of religion is contained in this revelation.”⁴³ Second is the related “principle that in God’s revelation no word is without significance.”⁴⁴ Moore mentions, but does not list, the seven rules for interpretation attributed to Hillel, as well as the expanded list of thirteen rules attributed to R. Ishmael.⁴⁵ Included in these rules are the related concepts of *gezerah shavah* (גזירה שווה)—verbal analogy between a word or words in disparate verses—and *kayotze bo bemaqom aher* (כיוצא בו במקום אחר), by which a verse is understood via verbal or thematic resonance with another verse elsewhere in Scripture. Rules like these, which allow for a focus on single words and phrases, have the potential to produce atomistic readings of Scripture; but, again, Moore does not cite these rules explicitly, nor does he offer any examples from the primary literature to support his generalization.

Moore does, however, offer examples of atomistic exegesis in the New Testament, which he says are “comparable to that of the Palestinian rabbis.”⁴⁶ The first of these examples is Jesus’ proof of the resurrection of the dead in Mt 22:31-32: “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Despite Moore’s understanding of these verses as atomistic, Matthew’s exegesis here is attentive to Scripture’s original context. First, Mark and Luke specify that Jesus’ quotation comes from “the passage about the bush”—that is, Moses’ encounter with God at the burning bush in Exodus 3-4 (cf. Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37). While the First Gospel does not specify that Jesus’ words are from “the

⁴³ Ibid., 1.248

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 1.248-249.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.250.

passage about the bush,” the quotation is the same one from the other Synoptics, and the Greek phrase that the Gospels use (ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ ὁ θεὸς Ἰακώβ) is most closely reflected in Exodus 3-4 (θεὸς Ἀβραάμ καὶ θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ καὶ θεὸς Ἰακώβ; cf. Exod 3:6, 15; 4:5 LXX). In the context of Exodus 3, God promises to deliver Israel from Egyptian slavery and to bring them up to the land of Canaan as an everlasting memorial:

I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.... I have come down to deliver (להציל) out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up (ולהעלות) out of that land to a good and large land, a land flowing with milk and honey.... The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob... is my name forever, and this is my memorial (זכר) for all generations.” (Exod 3:6, 8, 15)

Matthew’s Jesus draws on the context of Exodus 3 in order to claim that just as God delivered Israel from slavery and brought them up to a new land, God will likewise deliver and bring up the dead from their graves through resurrection. In taking this conceptual step, Jesus follows the Psalms that use the language of Exodus 3 with application to individuals being rescued from death: “Lord, deliver my life (חלצה נפשי)... for your memorial (זכרך) is not in death” (Ps 6:5-6); “Lord, you have brought up my life from *Sheol* (העליה מן־שאול נפשי); you restored me to life.... Give thanks for the memorial (לזכר) of [God’s] holiness” (Ps 30:4-5). Thus, the reference to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Mt 22:31-32 draws on the contexts of both Exodus and Psalms as proof for the resurrection—Jesus’ statement is anything but atomistic.⁴⁷

In a footnote to his atomistic reading of Mt 22:31-32, Moore refers to similar proofs for resurrection found in rabbinic literature, which he deems atomistic. Specifically, he alludes to the proof the rabbis adduce from Deut 32:39a: “I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal” (cf. *Sifre*

⁴⁷ Moore [1.250] also adduces Paul’s allegories of Sarah and Hagar (Gal 4) and his “allegorizing upon Jewish midrash” in 1 Cor 10:1-4, but Moore flags these as instances of “allegorization” rather than “atomism.”

Deut. 32:9; *b. Sanh.* 91b).⁴⁸ The rabbis equate the parallels “kill” and “make alive” with “wound” and “heal” in order to show that God has the ability to raise people from the dead. The talmudic version of this midrash reads:

Our rabbis taught: “I kill and I make alive” might be interpreted that [God] kills one and gives life to another, and [the circle of] life goes on. But the Scripture [also] states, “I wound and I heal.” Just as “wound” and “heal” refer to the same person, so also “I kill” and “I make alive” must refer to the same person. This refutes those who maintain that resurrection is not found in the Torah. (*b. Sanh.* 91b)

Although the focus on individual words in *Deut* 32:39 may seem to be atomistic, the rabbis are drawing on Scripture’s broader context in order to present the verse as a reference to resurrection. The statement about God killing and making alive in 32:39 comes immediately after the assertion that, unlike the God of Israel, other deities lack the power to “rise up” and defend human beings: “The Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants.... Then he will say, ‘Where are their gods? [...] Let them rise up (יקומו) and help you; let them be your protection! See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me; I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal’ (32:36-39). The rabbis deem *Deut* 32:39 an appropriate proof for resurrection precisely because of its surrounding context: other deities are unable to “rise up” themselves—let alone raise up those who worship them—whereas the God of Israel is greater than the other gods insofar as the Lord has the power to raise people from the dead. Thus, as with its NT counterpart in *Mt* 22:31-32, the proof for resurrection in the rabbinic literature is not adduced, to use Moore’s phrase, “independently of the context” of Scripture.

Although I find Moore’s evidence for atomism unconvincing, I affirm his desire to highlight exegetical similarities between Judaism and Christianity, which was a much-needed critique of the contemporary scholarly view that the two religions were wholly at odds. One of

⁴⁸ Moore incorrectly cites *b. Sanh.* 90b with reference to this passage; it actually appears in the following folio, 91b. See *ibid.*, 1.250 n. 1.

the ways that Moore was able to combat the erroneous understanding of Judaism and Christianity as antithetical was to posit that the New Testament and rabbinic writers both engaged in atomistic scriptural exegesis.

In arguing for a shared atomistic approach, Moore was responding to the notion, popularized by Ferdinand Weber, that Judaism and Christianity were polar opposites.⁴⁹ The outcome of the Weberian view was to position Christianity as a faith in a loving, relational God who was antithetical to the abstract and distant God of a legalistic Judaism. For example, in his *Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften* (1897), Weber writes,

Jewish monotheism is in conflict with the Trinitarian concepts of Christianity.... The Jewish concept of God does not allow the unfolding of the one divine being in divine persons.... The lack of recognition that God, in holiness, is the love communicating itself to the other, and partaking in the other, undermined the perception of the Trinitarian concept of God and made the Jewish concept of God into a monistic abstract.⁵⁰

In a 1921 article titled “Christian Writers on Judaism,” Moore critiqued Weber’s formulation of Judaism as based on Christian doctrinal biases.⁵¹ Although Moore admits that he does not fully understand the meaning of the “abstract monotheism” and/or “monism”⁵² to which Weber alludes but never defines, Moore delivers a resounding critique of Weber’s unfair and inaccurate

⁴⁹ See Ferdinand Weber, *Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften* (Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke, 1897).

⁵⁰ Ibid., 153-54: “... zum trinitarischen Gottesbegriffe des Christentums ist der jüdische Monotheismus in Gegensatz.... Der jüdische Gottesbegriff keine Entfaltung des Einen göttlichen Wesens in göttlichen Personen zulässt... Der Mangel an der Erkenntnis, dass Gott in der Heiligkeit die sich selbst mitteilende, entgegenkommende, dem Anderen einwohnende Liebe ist, inderte die Erfassung des trinitarischen Gottesbegriffs und machte den jüdischen Gottesbegriff zu einem abstract monistischen.”

⁵¹ See George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *HTR* 14 (1921): 197-254.

⁵² In his critique of Weber, Moore [ibid., 252] refers to Weber’s “‘abstract monotheism’—whatever that may be.”

reading of rabbinic sources as a foil for Christianity.⁵³ In identifying rabbinic exegesis as atomistic, Moore focused on NT texts that he (mis)understood to be similarly atomistic in order to dispel the supersessionist notion of Christianity's superiority to Judaism.

Henry J. Cadbury, a student of Moore's with a Quaker background, followed his teacher in describing New Testament exegesis as atomistic. In an article on Jesus' titles in Acts that appeared in the fifth volume of *The Beginnings of Christianity* (1933), Cadbury notes the "atomistic use of Scripture [by] the early Christians."⁵⁴ His evidence for this claim comes from the ways that Matthew and Luke apply various partial citations of Isaiah 53 to Jesus' healing (Mt 8:17), "his avoidance of publicity" (Mt 11:17-18), his being "numbered with the transgressors" in Lk 22:37 (cf. Isa 53:12 LXX), and Luke's application of Isa 53:7-8 to Jesus in Acts 8:32-33—the last of which Cadbury says applies "to Jesus in some sense not clear to us."⁵⁵ While these citations may well be atomistic, Cadbury does not go any further in his assessment of NT exegesis than Matthew and Luke's use of Isaiah 53.⁵⁶ He offers an example of NT exegesis that conforms with Moore's theory, without critically engaging Moore's proposals. Those who

⁵³ See *ibid.*, 237-48.

⁵⁴ See Henry J. Cadbury, "The Titles of Jesus in Acts," in F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds., *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 5: *Additional Notes to the Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1933), 369.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ For a sound argument that Matthew's use of Isa 53 is atomistic at Mt 8:17, see Lidija Novakovic, "Matthew's Atomistic Use of Scripture: Messianic Interpretation of Isaiah 53.4 in Matthew 8.17," in Thomas R. Hatina, ed., *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels, Volume 2: The Gospel of Matthew* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 147-62.

continue to champion an atomistic understanding of New Testament exegesis, especially with regard to Isaiah 53, often call on Cadbury to support their claims.⁵⁷

Despite Cadbury's affirmation of Moore's thesis, the insistence that New Testament exegesis is atomistic was not met with universal approval. Arguing against atomistic interpretation in the New Testament, C. H. Dodd, a Welsh Protestant scholar, first popularized the notion that the New Testament used Scripture contextually. Writing in the early 1950s, Dodd states,

[For the New Testament writers] large sections of the Old Testament scriptures, especially from Isaiah, Jeremiah and certain minor prophets, and from the Psalms... were understood as *wholes*, and particular verses or sentences were quoted from them... as pointers to the whole context... [I]t is the *total context* that is in view, and is the basis of the argument... [We ought to] abandon the mistaken idea that [NT exegesis] is essentially a mechanical process of bringing together isolated "proof-texts" and their supposed "fulfillments," and recognize that the governing intention is to exploit whole contexts.⁵⁸

Many others have since corroborated Dodd's view that the New Testament writers respected the Old Testament context.⁵⁹ Dodd also extended his thesis of contextual exegesis to rabbinic

⁵⁷ Citing Cadbury and others, Morna Hooker critiques the idea that the NT writers "used the Scriptures in a 'synthetic' rather than 'atomistic' manner." See Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1959), esp. 9-10; idem., "Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?" in William H. Bellinger and William R. Farmer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (London: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 88-103. Donald Juel also quotes Cadbury, and concludes, "atomistic exegesis was widely practiced by both Christians and Jews." Donald Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 125. For Juel's affirmation of Hooker's view, see *ibid.*, 119-33; cf. Novakovic, "Atomistic Use," 148-49.

⁵⁸ C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet, 1952), 126, 132 (emphasis original); cf. idem., *The Old Testament in the New* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 20.

⁵⁹ See Hays, *Echoes*, passim; Allison, *New Moses*, 1-23, esp., 19-20; Lars Hartman, "Scriptural Exegesis in the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Problem of Communication," in M. Didier, ed., *L'évangile selon Matthieu* (Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), 131-52; Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 19; Wim J. C.

literature: “[quoting] a single phrase or sentence not merely for its own sake, but as a pointer to a whole context [was] a practice by no means uncommon among contemporary Jewish teachers, as they are reported in the rabbinic literature.”⁶⁰ Dodd’s thesis accomplishes what Moore’s atomistic approach did from the opposite angle—namely, to show that the methods of early Jewish and Christian exegesis are not antithetical.

Although Dodd’s rebuttal to atomism promotes a view of Christianity and Judaism sharing a common approach to Scripture, subsequent NT studies would use Dodd’s claims to reinforce the old Weberian divide between Judaism and Christianity. In 1967, Evangelical scholar Robert Gundry followed Dodd in highlighting contextual NT exegesis. However, unlike Dodd, Gundry did not attribute the same contextual exegesis to the rabbis. Instead, Gundry refers to the “arid academicism” of the rabbis, which produced a “caustic pilpulism” in their biblical interpretation—that is, attention to minute and/or unimportant details.⁶¹ Using his atomistic presentation of rabbinic exegesis as a foil for Matthew’s more contextually informed exegesis, Gundry states, “rabbinic hermeneutics are supremely oblivious to contextual exegesis whenever

Weren, “Jesus’ Entry into Jerusalem: Mt 21, 1-17 in the Light of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint,” in C. M. Tuckett, ed., *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 121-23; G. K. Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), esp. 127; Warren Carter, “Evoking Isaiah: Matthean Soteriology and an Intertextual Reading of Isaiah 7-9 and Matthew 1:23 and 4:15-16,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119/3 (2000): 503-20; George J. Brooke, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 66; George Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 919-95, esp. 920; Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalms 118 in the Gospel of John: An Intertextual Study on the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 19-20; Leroy Andrew Huizenga, “The Matthean Jesus and the Isaac of the Early Jewish Encyclopedia,” in Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy A. Huizenga, eds., *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009), 63-82.

⁶⁰ Dodd, *Old Testament*, 15.

⁶¹ Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew’s Gospel: with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967), 205, 213.

they wish,” but Matthew “does not deal atomistically with the OT in the sense that he does not search either haphazardly or systematically for isolated proof-texts.”⁶²

Although Gundry does not cite any primary rabbinic sources or contemporary Jewish scholars for support of his claims about rabbinic atomism, he does supply a footnote that refers to Weber’s *Jüdische Theologie*. In the section of *Jüdische Theologie* to which Gundry provides a note, Weber offers examples of the rabbinic conviction that single words have various meanings.⁶³ For instance, with reference to the talmudic dictum that each word of Scripture can be understood in seventy different ways (*b. Sanh.* 34a), Weber concludes that, according to the rabbis, God “speaks not in the manner of humans, who always associate only one sense with every word, rather [God] has shaped his word in such a way that it has a different sense.”⁶⁴ Yet, multi-layered meaning in Scripture is not the same thing as an atomistic use of Scripture; that the rabbis’ found multiple meanings in single words is not evidence for Gundry’s assertion that rabbinic exegesis is arid, or that the rabbinic treatment of Scripture is haphazard. Though he does not have primary evidence on which to stand, Gundry still revives the Weberian view of rabbinic Judaism that Moore (and Dodd) rejected.

⁶² Gundry, *Use*, 205, 208. Gundry goes on to claim that in rabbinic exegesis “each phrase of the OT text is made to fit a new historical situation regardless of context and [contains]... far-fetched allegorical interpretations and ingenious world-play,” whereas Matthean exegesis constitutes “a new and coherent hermeneutical approach to the OT.” *Ibid.*, 213. Elsewhere Gundry mentions the “atomistic nature of rabbinic literature when it comes to soteriology.” *Idem.*, “The Inferiority of the New Perspective on Paul,” in Robert H. Gundry, *The Old is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 196-97.

⁶³ See Gundry, *Use*, 205 n. 7.

⁶⁴ Weber, *Jüdische Theologie*, 86: “Er redet nicht nach der Weise des Menschen, der mit jedem Worte immer nur Einen Sinn verbindet, sondern er hat sein Wort so gestaltet, daß es einen mannichfaltigen Sinn hat.”

Gundry also includes a reference to a 1895 study by Franklin Johnson in the same footnote in which Weber appears.⁶⁵ Like Weber, Johnson asserts that the rabbis found “multiple reference”—that is, multiple meanings—in their readings of Scripture.⁶⁶ Johnson does not explicitly describe rabbinic exegesis as “atomistic,” but he does vitriolically stress the qualitative difference between the New Testament and rabbinic uses of Scripture as well as the superiority of Christianity over what he portrays as a deranged rabbinic Judaism. In his attempt to downplay any substantive similarities between New Testament and rabbinic interpretation, Johnson states, when the reader pierces below the surface [of rabbinic literature], he finds but little [similarity]; and it vanishes wholly when he searches the New Testament for the obscurities, the superstitions, the cabalisms, the puerilities, the absurdities, the insanities, which stare at him from every page of the rabbinic interpretations of the sacred writings.⁶⁷

In light of Gundry’s use of scholars like Weber and Johnson, it is not surprising that he contrasts his picture of rabbinic atomism with the contextual exegesis of the first Gospel writer, whose “theological depth and coherence of the hermeneutical principles (in sharp contrast with Qumran and rabbinic exegesis) demand the unique genius of the kind of man Jesus must have been.”⁶⁸ In Gundry’s view, contextual exegesis becomes evidence for the uniqueness of Jesus, whose conventions may align with the Judaism of his time, but whose intellect fully transcends it. Gundry’s conclusions, then, are a repackaging of the Weberian approach, which presents Christianity as both antithetical and superior to Judaism.

⁶⁵ Franklin Johnson, *The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old Considered in Light of General Literature* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1895). While Gundry only refers to p. “376f.” of this work, the reference is part of an entire chapter dedicated to “Rabbinic Interpretation” (372-87).

⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, 376.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 379.

⁶⁸ Gundry, *Use*, 215.

While Christian scholars do not necessarily endorse Gundry's supersessionist presentation of the relationship between rabbinic and New Testament exegesis, the idea that the rabbis midrashically manipulated single verses remains common in NT circles. For example, in his study of early Jewish exegesis of Isaiah, Donald Juel cites "Cadbury's point"—namely on "the atomistic use of Scripture [by] early Christians"⁶⁹—to support his claim that "atomistic exegesis was widely practiced by both Christians and Jews. The rabbis felt free to interpret... verses from Isaiah as they did others in the Bible, without regard for context."⁷⁰ However, that atomistic exegesis is shared between Christians and Jews was not Cadbury's point, since he only comments on Christian exegetical tendencies. While Juel does well to engage Jewish scholars such as James Kugel and Gary Porton on other aspects of midrash, he stands on Cadbury to support this particular claim about Jewish atomism.⁷¹

Juel is aware that the rabbis had the capacity to attend to biblical context, but he presents atomism as the main method of rabbinic exegesis:

The occasion for... a [midrashic] comment can be an unusual word, an apparent redundancy... or even an apparent contradiction between two passages. A mechanism connects the comment with the text, whether a wordplay, an analogy, or an inference. Comments are usually restricted to a word or phrase, though they may arise from larger units as well.⁷²

⁶⁹ Cadbury, "Titles," 369.

⁷⁰ Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 125. Also see Jan Willem Doeve, *Jewish Hermeneutics in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1953), 64, 95-96; Donald A. Hagner, "When the Time Had Fully Come," in Carl Edwin Armerding and W. Ward Gasque, eds., *Dreams, Visions, and Oracles: The Layman's Guide to Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 1977), 97; Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* [2nd ed.] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 21-24.

⁷¹ For Juel's references to Kugel and Porton (and others) see Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 15-16.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 42.

While I would agree with Juel that the occasion for a midrashic point can be (indeed, often is) something like a wordplay or analogy, this does not mean that the rabbinic commentary—that is, the point the rabbis are trying to convey to the reader—is restricted to the word or phrase that is highlighted. The problem with Juel’s assessment is that it is an incomplete description of the rabbinic project. As my metaleptic reading of rabbinic literature will show, the actual *comments* that the rabbis make on the single word or phrase are often ancillary to the broader theology to which their seemingly atomistic readings point.

Whereas Juel cites Cadbury to make comments on Jewish atomism, later New Testament scholars cite Juel to do the same thing. For instance, in his study of Mark’s Gospel, Thomas Hatina includes a footnote to Juel in his discussion of Joel Marcus’ argument for the Gospel’s attention to biblical context.⁷³ Hatina notes, “one wonders, given Marcus’s acquaintance with the relevant Jewish primary literature, why he has not allowed for atomistic exegesis since this was the norm in early Jewish interpretation.”⁷⁴ While Hatina footnotes Juel’s review of Marcus immediately after making this claim, Juel himself does not offer an explicit treatment of Jewish atomism in the review.⁷⁵ More, Hatina reflects no engagement with Jewish scholars on the topic of Jewish atomism; rather, the discussion of Jewish uses of Scripture is kept within Christian

⁷³ See Joel Marcus, *Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992).

⁷⁴ Thomas R. Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark’s Narrative* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 42; Steve Moyise offers a qualifying comment on Hatina’s assertion: “Hatina puts it too strongly when he claims that atomistic exegesis was the ‘norm’ for early Jewish interpretation but it would be difficult to maintain the opposite.” Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 17; cf. idem., “The Wilderness Quotations in Mark 1:2-3,” in R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed., *Wilderness: Essays in Honor of Frances Young* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 78-87, esp. 82.

⁷⁵ See Juel’s review of Marcus’s *Way of the Lord* in *JBL* 114 (1995): 147-50.

circles, and the conclusions about Jewish exegesis have their roots in Christian scholarship of the early 1930s.

Richard Hays, whose use of metalepsis I will follow in my analysis of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, steps outside Christian circles for his view of rabbinic exegesis. Specifically, he draws on the work of James Kugel who, as I will show in the next section, is among the most well-known proponents of rabbinic atomism. In his now classic study of Paul's metaleptic use of Scripture, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Hays claims that Paul's contextual approach differs from the later rabbinic atomistic approach proposed by Kugel.⁷⁶ Hays asserts that, among other factors, based on the "late dating of the rabbinic material, it becomes evident that midrash provides only an indirect analogy to Paul's reading, calling attention by contrast, for example, to Paul's relatively greater interest in the original narrative context of his scriptural citations."⁷⁷ Hays's assessment of Pauline contextuality is correct. However, he makes an unfair bifurcation between Paul's contextual approach and rabbinic atomism. As I will show, the later rabbinic material is just as concerned as Paul is with the original narrative context of scriptural citations.

In the latest edition of the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (2013) NT scholars offer a definition of midrash that highlights atomism without attention to contextuality. Under the sub-heading, "Rabbinic Midrash," Craig Evans and Lidija Novakovic—both Baptist ministers—write,

As an interpretive procedure, midrash refers to a creative employment of various exegetical techniques, such as etymology, word play, catchwords, analogy and logical inference to interpret Scripture. Many of these techniques focus on minute details in the text, such as

⁷⁶ For Hays's endorsement of Kugel's atomistic understanding, see Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 224 n. 23.

⁷⁷ Hays, *Echoes*, 161.

individual words or the shapes of the letters, without regard to the authorial intention or larger literary context in which they appear.⁷⁸

This definition of midrash represents a revision of an earlier edition of the *Dictionary* (1992), in which Evans made the now omitted comment that “many of... the rules” for midrashic interpretation according to R. Ishmael “are contrived and atomistic... and have little or nothing to do with the literary or historical context of the scriptural passage under consideration.”⁷⁹ While the lack of reference to atomism in the revised edition is a welcomed change, the more recent definition still describes atomism without using the actual term. Again, as with Juel’s assessment, this Christian description of rabbinic midrash is partially true—the rabbis do, sometimes, approach Scripture in these very narrow ways. However, this is not the *only* way that the rabbis read the Bible, and to present this fanciful brand of atomism as the primary method of exegesis is to present a caricatured version of rabbinic approaches to Scripture. More, when such an exaggerated picture of rabbinic Judaism, lacking any balance, appears in a dictionary produced for Christian audiences, the result will be to distance Christians (scholars and non-scholars alike) and the New Testament from rabbinic literature.

In contrast to these descriptions of rabbinic atomism, other Christian scholars have rightly identified the rabbis’ attention to biblical context. David Instone-Brewer, for example, challenges the assessment of atomistic rabbinic exegesis as Moore presented it. In his *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE*, Instone-Brewer what he believes to be pre-70 traditions from Mishnah/Tosefta, the Talmuds, and the Midrash, Instone-Brewer argues, “the

⁷⁸ Craig A. Evans and Lidija Novakovic, “Midrash,” in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. 2nd Edition (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 589.

⁷⁹ Craig A. Evans, “Midrash,” in Joel B. Green, Scott McKnight, I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 545.

predecessors of the rabbis before 70 CE”—e.g., Hillel and Shammai, Yohanan ben Zakkai, and other tannaitic authorities—“did not interpret Scripture out of context, did not look for any meaning in Scripture other than the plain sense, and did not change the text to fit their interpretation, though the later rabbis did all these things”;⁸⁰ accordingly, pre-70 approaches to Scripture “differ significantly from those which predominate in later rabbinic exegesis.”⁸¹

Despite Instone-Brewer’s insistence on a bifurcation between pre- and post-70 exegesis, as he admits, his dating can only be speculative since he extracts his supposedly pre-70 traditions from the very “later rabbinic” corpuses for which he disqualifies contextually informed interpretations. He notes, “precise dating remains unattainable, and the term ‘70 CE’ in this study must be regarded as signifying the beginning of an era rather than an exact date. It is also impossible to say that very exegesis surveyed here originates before 70 CE, and it is certain that many pre-70 exegeses exist in anonymous traditions which are not included.”⁸² Indeed, Instone-Brewer is aware of the difficulties in assigning dates to rabbinic collections, but he often puts too much confidence in the notion that the Mishnah preserves an early saying.⁸³ For example, regarding Hillel’s seven *middot*—rules for exegesis—Instone-Brewer admits that precise dating

⁸⁰ Instone-Brewer, *Techniques*, 1. This idea that proto-rabbinic writers interpreted Scripture in light of its literal context aligns with Maren Niehoff’s assessment of Second Temple Alexandrian Jewish interpreters such as Demetrius and Philo. See Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 51-57, 145-51.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ For Instone-Brewer’s acknowledgements regarding the difficulties of dating, see *ibid.*, 4, 11-13.

is “difficult,” but that the material is “likely to be old.”⁸⁴ He has been criticized for his uncritical approach to dating, and several Jewish scholars have exposed weakness in Instone-Brewer’s treatment of rabbinic sources.⁸⁵ For example, Catherine Hezser’s review begins,

The present volume... cannot be recommended. This reviewer was alarmed at the author’s obvious lack of knowledge of recent scholarship on rabbinic literature, naïve dating habits, misleading segmentation of the text, and statements which are simply wrong. Therefore all those who are not experts in rabbinic literature... have to be warned at the outset: this is how one should not go about studying rabbinic texts.⁸⁶

The fact that several NT scholars reviewed the same work approvingly shows that scholars of Judaism and Christianity continue to talk past one another.⁸⁷

Instone-Brewer’s dating of the New Testament is equally problematic. He states, “The cutoff point of 70 CE is significant for both Jewish and Christian sources. Most, and perhaps all, of the New Testament was completed by 70 CE, and the whole of Judaism was transformed by

⁸⁴ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁵ See especially the reviews of Instone-Brewer’s *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament*, Volume 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) by Alan Avery-Peck, *CBQ* 68 (2006): 545-46; Günter Stemberger’s review in *JSJ* 37 (2006): 116-20; cf. Gary G. Porton’s review of Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament: Vol. 2A, Feasts and Sabbaths: Passover and Atonement* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2011) in *CBQ* 76 (2014): 140-41.

⁸⁶ Catherine Hezser, Review of *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament*, Volume 1, *JJS* 56 (2005): 347-49, here 347.

⁸⁷ See, e.g., the reviews of Instone-Brewer’s second volume of *Traditions* by Craig A. Evans, *BBR* 25 (2015): 425-26; Daniel M. Gurtner, *Themelios* 38 (2013): 267-68; Timothy L. Carter, *JSNT* 34 (2012): 120. In his review of the same volume, Daniel Harrington notes the “sharply critical assessments” of Stemberger and Hezser, but concludes that work “can be a help toward entering more deeply into the task of using rabbinic texts in dealing with the New Testament.” See Daniel J. Harrington, *STR* (2011): 291-92, here 292. John P. Meier notes the “still-widespread anachronistic use of later sources for determining the legal situation in early first-century Palestinian Judaism; see, e.g., the uncritical use of later rabbinic texts in David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002)” John P. Meier, “The Historical Jesus and the Historical Law: Some Problems within the Problem,” *CBQ* 65 (2003): 52-79, here 67 n. 36.

the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 CE.”⁸⁸ I can think of no NT scholar who would agree with Instone-Brewer’s assertion that the whole of the NT predates 70 CE, but his view does explain his desire for isolating pre-70 sayings in rabbinic literature—since his main goal in doing so is to elucidate comparable tendencies in NT exegesis.⁸⁹ Indeed, his dating of both rabbinic and NT texts betrays his theological presupposition that the post-70 Church misunderstands the biblical interpretations and legal discussions found in the (supposedly pre-70) New Testament.

According to Instone-Brewer, only pre-70 material is of value for the Christian because anything after 70 represents a misrepresentation of Jewish NT teaching:

The Early Church lost touch with its Jewish roots in or before 70 C.E.... [70 CE] marked the beginning of the loss of Jewish culture within the Church.... The Church very quickly forgot its Jewish roots, and thereby lost contact with much of the Jewish background of the NT writings. The date of 70 C.E. was also very significant for Jews because the destruction of Jerusalem at this time marked a complete break with many aspects of Jewish culture.⁹⁰

Thus, Instone-Brewer assumes a bifurcation between Second Temple Judaism (of which, according to his dating, the NT is a part) and later rabbinic Judaism (and patristic Christianity). For him, any biblical exegesis or legal discussion after the destruction of the Second Temple represents a defective religious tradition, so that the Judaism of the rabbis becomes differentiated from the purer religion of the New Testament.

Issues of dating and theology notwithstanding, Instone-Brewer does show that much exegesis preserved in rabbinic literature (whatever its date) is not atomistic. He analyzes texts

⁸⁸ Instone-Brewer, *Traditions*, vol. 1, 1. In a footnote to this statement [n. 1], he writes, “Parts of the Gospels, the Pastoral Epistles, and Revelation may originate from after 70 CE, but the fact that they do not overtly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple is a good indication that they originated earlier.”

⁸⁹ See Instone-Brewer, *Techniques*, 1-2.

⁹⁰ Instone-Brewer, *Divorce*, 238.

primarily from halakhic sources with occasional parallels in later midrash aggadah—to which he, of course, assigns a pre-70 date—and concludes, “every single scribal exegesis examined could be quoted as an example to show that Scripture was interpreted according to its context,” and many of these passages “cannot be understood at all without reference to the context of the text which is quoted.”⁹¹ Some scriptural citations in Instone-Brewer’s examples reflect his conclusion more strongly than others. The following example that he cites from *Tosefta, Berakhot* 6:24 shows varying degrees of contextuality:

Hillel the Elder said, “At the time of gathering, dispense; at the time of dispensing, gather. At the time that you see that the Torah is precious in all Israel and all rejoice in it, you are dispensing it. As it is written, ‘There are those dispensing and gathering more’ [Prov 11:24]. At the time that you see that the Torah is forgotten from Israel and there is not anyone attending to it, you are gathering it. As it is written, ‘A time to act for the Lord’” [Ps 119:26] (*t. Ber.* 6:24)

Instone-Brewer notes that the portion of the verse cited at the end of this passage (Ps 119:26) evokes the context of the entire verse, since the latter half states, “they have made void your Torah” (הפירו תורתך). The reference to Torah in the unstated part of the verse aligns with Hillel’s words about the Torah being forgotten from Israel (החורה משתכחה מישראל).⁹² Without this latter half of the verse, the reader cannot see how the first half—“A time to act for the Lord”—relates to Hillel’s discussion about Torah, and therefore the unstated part of Ps 119:26 is required for understanding the proof-text.

However, as far as I can tell, the first verse cited in the passage (Prov 11:24) does not relate to Hillel’s discussion of the Torah. The entire verse reads, “There are those dispensing, but acquiring more; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want” (מישר אדל מחסור) (יש מפזר ונוסף עוד וחשך). Neither Prov 11:24, nor Prov 11 as a whole, mentions the Torah or

⁹¹ Idem., *Techniques*, 167, 169.

⁹² See *ibid.*, 40-41.

teaching. Commenting on Prov 11:24 Instone-Brewer states, “In Proverbs the analogy of scattering seed is applied to liberality in general. The use of this text is therefore... a Peshat understanding of the proverb.”⁹³ While the Tosefta passage may not violate the assumptions of Proverbs as a whole, the context of this verse in no way explains or adds to Hillel’s discussion of the Torah. Thus, the broader context of Prov 11:24 is unnecessary for a proper understanding of the discussion of the Torah as it appears in the Tosefta.

As we will see, Instone-Brewer’s distinction between exegetical style before and after 70 is unnecessary, since the rabbis whose writings appear in the fifth century *Genesis Rabbah* (as much as those of the early first century) also interpreted Scripture according to its original context. Still, Instone-Brewer does show that some tannaitic halakhic discussions cite a verse for support of given point—as with Hillel’s point about the times for dispensing and gathering in the Tosefta—but it is the uncited *immediate context* of the verse which contains that actual support.

In their comparative study of the Gospels and rabbinic literature, Michael Hilton and Gordian Marshall cite *y. Ber.* 2:8 as evidence that the rabbis attended to a passage’s context. The Talmud interprets Song of Songs 6:2 and opens by quoting the first part of the verse: “My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens” (Song 6:2a). In its initial citation of Song 6:2, the Yerushalmi omits the final clause, “and gather lilies,” but then refers to it in the interpretation:

“My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens”—“My beloved”—this is the Holy One, blessed be He. “Has gone down to his garden”—this is the world. “To the beds of spices”—this is Israel. “To feed in the gardens”—these are the nations of the world. “*And gather the lilies*”—these are the righteous whom he causes to depart from among them. (*y. Ber.* 2:8, my emphasis)

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

Since the discussion eventually includes “and gather the lilies,” it is clear that the partial citation at the start of the discussion is meant to encompass the entire verse. Based on this passage, Hilton and Marshall claim, “We often find that the rabbinic writings give the reader only half the quotation required: they assume a knowledge of the Bible, and a reader who can complete the quotation.”⁹⁴ However, while the later inclusion of “and gather lilies” shows that the rabbinic writer has the whole of Song 6:2 in mind, as it were, this example does not support the conclusion that Hilton and Marshall assign to it. The author of this passage obviously does not expect readers to complete the quotation, since the author completes it for them. Because it provides the missing part of the verse, the Talmud here does not presume that readers already know the context.

A stronger case for rabbinic contextual exegesis can be found in Craig Keener’s four-volume commentary on *Acts*. Keener cites two examples of rabbinic exegesis, one mishnaic and one talmudic, in support of his balanced view that while the “rabbis did not always assume a passage’s context, they sometimes did.”⁹⁵ Keener’s first example, *m. Avot* 3:2, reads, “If two sit together and exchange no words of Torah (תורה), then they are like an assembly of scoffers, for it is written, ‘nor sit in the assembly of scoffers’” (Ps 1:1). While the Mishnah ends its citation at Ps 1:1, the next verse in the Psalm says of the righteous person, “For his delight is in the Torah (בתורה) of the Lord” (Ps 1:2). While the Mishnah does not cite Ps 1:2, the rabbis can be understood as presuming knowledge of the uncited verse that mentions “Torah” because that verse supports their argument: if those who delight in Torah are righteous, then those who

⁹⁴ Michael Hilton and Gordian Marshall, *The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism: A Study Guide* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 63.

⁹⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Volume 2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1588; cf. *idem.*, *Matthew*, 108-09. I thank Dr. Keener for bringing this citation to my attention (personal correspondence, March 25, 2015).

“exchange no words of Torah” are, by implication, the “scoffers” described in Ps 1:1. While Keener does not refer to this kind of exegesis as “metaleptic,” the fact that the reader must go to the portion of Ps 1:1 that is not cited shows that the Mishnah utilizes metalepsis.

Keener’s second example, this time from the Yerushalmi, states,

There were three good gifts that the Holy One, blessed be he, gave to Israel: forgiving people, bashful people, and kind people.... Bashful people? Where [do we find it in Scripture]? “... that the fear of him may be before your eyes...” (Exod 20:20). This is a mark of a bashful person who will not readily sin. (y. *Qidd.* 4:1, §2)

The passage cites Exodus 20:20b, but the scriptural “proof” for a reference to bashful people comes in v. 20c, immediately after the cited text. The whole of Exod 20:20 reads,

- (a) “Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear, for God has come to test you,
- (b) that the fear of him may be before your eyes,
- (c) *so that you may not sin*” (my emphasis).

According to the Yerushalmi, this verse describes a “bashful person” who fears God and, therefore, “will not readily sin.” The rabbis quote only the middle part (b) of Exod 20:20 and then paraphrase *rather than quote* the final clause (c), “so that you may not sin.” The rabbinic claim that a bashful person does not readily sin only makes sense in light of the entire verse, so the authors must presume that readers are familiar with the whole of Exod 20:20. Once again, Keener highlights an instance of metalepsis in rabbinic literature insofar as the Yerushalmi alludes to part of a biblical verse that it does not explicitly quote.

Jeremy F. Hultin, whose specialization is in early Christian literature,⁹⁶ has recently offered a non-atomistic reading of *Genesis Rabbah*.⁹⁷ He includes Moore’s quote on atomism in

⁹⁶ See Jeremy F. Hultin, *The Ethics of Obscene Speech in Early Christianity and Its Environments* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

a footnote,⁹⁸ and then sets out to show that the biblical verses in *Gen. R.* 48:1-6 are “taken from passages that have certain verbal and thematic similarities, suggesting that they contribute... to the overall reading of the midrash.”⁹⁹ Hultin searches the biblical contexts of the cited verses in order to establish a relationship between those verses that is based on their immediate contexts.

Gen. R. 48:1-6 discusses Gen 18:1: “And the Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the opening of his tent in the heat of the day.” The midrash begins with a citation of Ps 18:36: “You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand has upheld me, and your condescension made me great” and states that this verse “alludes to Abraham [insofar as] ‘and your right hand has upheld me’ [refers to God protecting Abraham] in the fiery furnace, in famine, and in [his battle with] the kings” (*Gen. R.* 48:1). The trials of “famine” and “kings” refer to the biblical narrative (cf. Gen 12:10; 14:1-16); the “fiery furnace” (כבשן האש) refers to an extra-biblical story of Abraham in the furnace that fashioned his father’s idols (cf. *Gen. R.* 38:13). Hultin argues that the midrash notes Abraham’s altercation with the “kings” in Gen 14:1-16 because “the oaks of Mamre” (אלני ממרא) in Gen 18:1 links to the only other instances of “oaks of Mamre” in the Tanakh, which appear immediately before and near the end of the passage about Abraham and the kings (cf. Gen 13:18; 14:13). Thus, Hultin shows that the rabbis are aware of the broader context of Gen 13-18 in that they connect the stories of Abraham in Gen 14 and 18 via their shared references to the “oaks of Mamre.” However, this kind of contextuality is not strictly metaleptic, because the words shared between Gen 14 and 18

⁹⁷ Idem., “*Genesis Rabbah* 48:1-6: Reflections on Thematic Unity and Exegetical Method,” in Craig A. Evans and Jeremiah J. Johnston, eds., *Searching the Scriptures: Studies in Context and Intertextuality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 16-28.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 18 n. 5.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 18.

do not provide any additional meaning for understanding the midrash. Rather than using the immediate context of the cited verses in order to make a theological statement, the rabbis here seem to be playing a game of word association that has little bearing on the actual discussion.

Hultin also identifies single words or phrases from the contexts of cited verses that link the varied points about Abraham throughout *Gen. R.* 48:1-6. He notes that the contexts of five of the six scriptural citations in *Gen. R.* 48:1-6 contain the words “devour” (אכל) and “fire” (אש).¹⁰⁰ Two examples will suffice to illustrate Hultin’s point. First, Psalm 18, from which the midrash cites v. 36, says of God, “Smoke went up from his nostrils, and devouring fire from his mouth (ואש־מפיו תאכל)” (18:8). Second, *Gen. R.* 48:5 connects the appearance of the Lord to Abraham (Gen 18:1) with Lev 9:4, which states, “for today the Lord appeared to you.” The context of Leviticus 9-10 also contains references an animal sacrifice and the sons of Aaron being “consumed” (תאכל) before the Lord with “fire” (אש) (cf. Lev 9:23-24; 10:2). Hultin shows that the common linguistic/thematic element of consumption by fire also echoes the biblical context of Gen 18:1, which begins the larger story of God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by “fire” (19:24). Gen 19:28 adds that Abraham saw “the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace (הכבשן),” which, according to Hultin, links the Sodom and Gomorrah story with the first trial mentioned in the midrash—that of Abraham in his father’s “fiery furnace” (כבשן האש).

Thus, by highlighting the words and themes that reappear throughout the scriptural contexts of *Gen. R.* 48:1-6’s citations, Hultin provides evidence that the rabbis are aware of biblical context. However, the uses of the cited verses reflect rabbinic cleverness more so than any broader theological agenda. Indeed, Hultin admits that the midrash makes sense without the scriptural references to “fire” that appear in (somewhat) close proximity to the rabbinic

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, 22-23.

quotations.¹⁰¹ Hultin's reading of *Genesis Rabbah* is intriguing, and *Gen. Rab.* 48:1-6 does cite texts whose contexts have linguistic connections. However, the connective tissue of the midrash is limited to single words (e.g., אכל, אש, כבשן) that appear in verses that are some distance from the rabbis' actual citations and do not add to an understanding of the midrashic discussion. Hultin's arguments would be more intriguing if the contexts of the cited verses helped to explain the logic behind the midrash.

The examples of contextual rabbinic exegesis from Instone-Brewer, Keener, and Hultin are welcomed in light of the prevailing understanding in NT scholarship that rabbinic interpretation is generally atomistic. While atomism exists in rabbinic exegesis, more and more NT scholars are pointing to the fact that attention to biblical context is also prevalent. Instone-Brewer and Keener, in particular, provide examples of the kind of attention to immediate biblical context for which I will argue in my readings of midrash. However, my analysis of *Genesis Rabbah* will also provide evidence to counter Instone-Brewer's claim that amoraic rabbinic literature is atomistic.

Rabbinic Atomism in Jewish Scholarship

The majority of Jewish scholars have affirmed Moore's theory of atomism without citing him directly. Carol Bakhos's 2014 assessment echoes Moore's claims from nearly 90 years earlier:

[The notion] that a verse must be understood in its context, that what comes before and after the verse is important in determining its meaning, goes against the rabbinic atomistic, verso-centric approach. For the rabbis, verses are removed from their immediate context and recontextualized vis-à-vis other texts ostensibly by means of word association. Discrete verses

¹⁰¹ Hultin [ibid., 23] notes that the logic of the midrash "does not rest solely on the verse's larger biblical context, for, as we have seen, the verses are quite intelligible without reference to the occurrences of 'fire' in their proximity. But it can hardly be coincidental that five of the six... verses do have these nearby references to fire."

serve as the midrash's *tesserae*. The rabbinic orientation toward intertextual reading runs in the opposite direction of reading verses in situ. They are to be read in isolation of that context and in light of other verses.¹⁰²

Bakhos's conclusion sounds remarkably like that of Moore, who, to repeat for the sake of clarity, described the rabbis' approach as "atomistic exegesis, which interprets sentences, clauses, phrases, and even single words independently of the context... combines them with other similarly detached utterances; and makes large use of analogy of expressions, often by purely verbal association."¹⁰³ However, Bakhos does not cite Moore's work. Instead, she provides a footnote to James Kugel who, beginning in the early 1980s, has promoted a variation of the atomism thesis.¹⁰⁴

In his now famous "Two Introductions to Midrash," Kugel lays out a version of atomism that continues to be influential in rabbinic scholarship. However, Kugel does not base his assumptions on those of Moore. Instead, he provide a footnote to Yitzhak Heinemann's influential 1949 study, *Methods of Aggadah*, in which Heinemann notes the midrashic notion of the "independence of parts of speech" (העצמאות חלקי הדיבור).¹⁰⁵ For Heinemann, as for Moore, because the rabbis often focused on small parts of the biblical text—single phrases, words, and

¹⁰² Bakhos, *Family of Abraham*, 49 (emphasis original).

¹⁰³ Moore, *Judaism*, 1.248.

¹⁰⁴ James L. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 3 (1983), 131-55; reprinted in Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick, eds., *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 77-104. For Bakhos's footnote to Kugel, see *Family of Abraham*, 235 n. 109.

¹⁰⁵ Yitzhak Heinemann, *Methods of Aggadah* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1949), 100. Kugel provides a footnote to another section of Heinemann's work ("pp. 57-58") in "Two Introductions," 154, n. 26. However, Kugel does not explicitly attribute his own understanding of rabbinic atomism to Heinemann.

letters—their exegesis can be defined as atomistic.¹⁰⁶ Kugel both echoes and expands the claims of Heinemann—and, indeed, others who identified the rabbis’ atomistic tendencies before him.¹⁰⁷

Kugel argues that the rabbinic atomistic approach came about because ancient Jews could often not remember those broader contexts. Since biblical verses were remembered at some remove from their original context, the midrash follows suit in explicating one verse at a time. In summarizing the rabbis’ verse-centered approach, Kugel claims that although a “gifted memory” could recall a verse’s immediate biblical context,

it was sometimes difficult to recall the larger context of the verse in question—‘Is that what Abraham said... or what Isaac said? ‘Is that in Psalm 145, or Psalm 34?’ Midrash generally seems to be addressing its verse in the same relative isolation in which it is remembered... often without reference to the wider context.¹⁰⁸

According to Kugel, rabbinic literature contains a twofold atomism: (1) midrash neglects the biblical contexts upon which it draws, and (2) as a result of this acontextual handling of

¹⁰⁶ See Heinemann, *Aggadah*, 100-01. At the same time, Heinemann [57-58] notes that midrashic discussions sometimes include larger sections of Scripture.

¹⁰⁷ For other atomistic views of both rabbinic literature that come after Moore but predate Kugel, see, e.g., Fritz Maass, “Von den Ursprüngen der rabbinischen Schriftauslegung,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 52 (1955), 148; Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005 [1956]), 323, 336 n. 3; Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism: Haggadic Studies* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961), 38 (on p. 2 Vermes quotes Moore in his critique of early 20th century scholarship, but never assesses his stance on atomistic exegesis); Addison Wright, *The Literary Genre: Midrash* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1967), 63; Daniel Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975), 75 (Kugel includes a footnote to Patte in “Two Introductions,” 152 n. 9); Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 5; Israel Drazin, *Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary* (New York: Ktav, 1982), 49.

¹⁰⁸ Kugel, “Introductions,” 147.

Scripture, the midrashic compilations themselves attend to single verses, or even “bits” of verses, that are “rather atomistic, and... not part of an overall exegesis at all.”¹⁰⁹

Kugel’s reading of midrash has impacted subsequent studies of rabbinic literature. David Stern, for example, draws on Kugel in his analysis of parables in rabbinic midrash. He states,

The larger literary units that we most comfortably use in reading and interpreting the meaning of literary works—the document as a whole, chapters, even subsections in chapters, or discrete narrative or legal sections in a work like the Bible—do not constitute significant units of meaning for midrash.... [so that] midrashic exegesis tends to be, in James Kugel’s felicitous phrase, “verso-centric”—that is, oriented to interpreting the meaning of verses (or parts of verses) in isolation from their larger contexts *in situ*.¹¹⁰

This comment about midrash’s verse-centric isolationist tendencies presents the rabbinic aversion to scriptural context in stronger terms than those Kugel uses. Bakhos similarly cites Kugel in her assessment of rabbis whose use of Scripture runs counter to reading verses “in situ.”¹¹¹ While he does not cite Kugel directly, Burton Visotzky asserts that although *Genesis Rabbah* “covers the biblical book of Genesis with startling thoroughness [insofar as] virtually every verse in the work is commented upon in *Genesis Rabbah*... [t]he style of midrash is

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 153-54 (emphasis original); cf. Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 84-85; Benjamin D. Sommer, “Concepts of Scriptural Language in Midrash,” in *ibid.*, ed., *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 64-79, esp. 66-69.

¹¹¹ Bakhos [*Abraham*, 235 n. 109] includes a footnote to Kugel’s “Two Introductions” for support of her atomistic reading.

atomistic, that is, it does not afford contextual integrity to the stories.”¹¹² Many others also echo the majority view of atomism after Kugel without explicitly drawing on his work.¹¹³

Kugel does not argue that *all* midrashic discussions revolve around a single verse. Instead, he clarifies that verses usually appear on their own “with the exception of certain patterns.”¹¹⁴ The patterns to which Kugel alludes include biblical descriptions of dreams that appear in passages that he treats as a whole (e.g., Gen 28:10-17; 37:1-9), and the so called קרא פתר pattern, which begins, “Rabbi X interpreted the verse,” and often includes an interpretation of several verses from the same biblical passage in succession.¹¹⁵ He rightly notes that these instances are not strictly atomistic since they include several verses from the same passage in succession. However, he does not mean that each successive verse attends to its original biblical context. Kugel highlights these patterns because they include several verses at a time *in the midrashic discussion*—so that the passage as it appears in the midrash is not atomistic—not

¹¹² Burton L. Visotzky, “The Literature of the Rabbis,” in Burton L. Visotzky and David E. Fishman, eds., *From Mesopotamia to Modernity: 10 Introductions to Jewish History and Literature* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1999), 83; cf. idem., *Reading the Book*, 114-15.

¹¹³ See, e.g., Arnold Goldberg, “The Rabbinic View of Scripture,” in Philip R. Davies and Richard T. White, eds., *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 156; Lieve M. Teugels, “The Twin Sisters of Cain and Abel: A Survey of the Rabbinic Sources,” in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed., *Eve’s Children: The Biblical Stories Retold and Interpreted in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 56 n. 33; Philip S. Alexander, “Rabbinic and Patristic Bible Exegesis as Intertexts: Towards a Theory of Comparative Midrash,” in R. Timothy McLay, ed., *The Temple in Text and Tradition: A Festschrift in Honour of Robert Hayward* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 79-80.

¹¹⁴ Kugel, “Introductions,” 147.

¹¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 152 n. 7; cf. 154 n. 26. For more on the קרא פתר pattern and its relationship to Qumranic literature, see Lou H. Silberman, “Unriddling the Riddle: Structure and Language of 1QP Hab.” *Revue de Qumran* 11 (1961): 323-64; cf. Heinemann, *Aggadah*, 58-59. Two of my three examples from *Genesis Rabbah* in Chapter 5 (*Gen. R.* 68:13 and 93:2) are examples of the קרא פתר pattern.

because knowledge of these verses' biblical contexts is required for understanding that discussion.

Still, Kugel sometimes demonstrates that the rabbis paid attention to a verse's context. For example, he does this in his treatment of *Pesiqta Rabbati* 28, which follows a citation of Psalm 137:1 with a story about the Israelites' exile to Babylon:

“There we sat down, yea we wept...” [Ps 137:1]. Why does it say “*there* we sat down?” This teaches that they had no rest-stop from the time they left the Land of Israel until they reached the Euphrates. They had no rest to sit down because they [the Babylonians] had taken counsel concerning them.... Therefore they pressed them and harried them against their will, as it is said, “On our necks we were pursued...” [Lam. 5:5].¹¹⁶

The passage opens as an interpretation of Ps 137:1, but Kugel notes that the assertion that Israel had “no rest-stop” between Israel and Babylon actually relates to “Lam. 5:5, only partially cited by the midrashist.... ‘On our necks we were pursued, *exhausted, we were given no rest.*’”¹¹⁷ In this instance, the exegesis is contingent upon the entirety of Lam 5:5, which the writer had memorized but did not cite in full, rather than the bits of the verse included in the midrash. However, because this example does not extend past the single verse of Lam 5:5, Kugel still claims, “early biblical exegesis is relentlessly verse-centered.”¹¹⁸

While this verse-centeredness may be an appropriate way to categorize *Pesiqta*'s use of Lam 5:5, it does not fully describe the exegesis in Kugel's example from *Genesis Rabbah*. To illustrate the atomistic nature of midrash, Kugel offers an excerpt from *Gen. R. 53:5*, which contains several opinions about the meaning(s) of Gen 21:1: “The Lord remembered Sarah as he

¹¹⁶ James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 180 (emphasis original).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 181 (emphasis original); cf. 249.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 254-55.

had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had spoken.”¹¹⁹ Various rabbis comment on the meaning of the specific phrases of this verse:

R. Judah expounded, “‘The Lord remembered Sarah’ in order to give her a son; ‘and the Lord did to Sarah as he had spoken’ [that is, he fulfilled his promise] to bless her with milk.” R. Nehemiah said to him, “Had she already been informed about milk [previously in the biblical narrative]? This teaches, rather, that God restored to her the days of her youth. R. Abbahu said, “He [God] inspired all people with fear of her, so that they should not call her a barren woman. R. Judan said, “She lacked an ovary, thus the Lord fashioned an ovary for her.”

In light of *Gen. R.* 53:5’s focus on bits of Gen 21:1, Kugel concludes that it proceeds “independent of any larger exegetical context” beyond the single verse.¹²⁰ However, Kugel’s assessment does not quite hold. R. Nehemiah’s disagreement with R. Judah is predicated upon the larger context of Sarah’s story. R. Nehemiah challenges R. Judah’s assertion that Gen 21:1 refers to God fulfilling a promise to bless Sarah with milk by correctly noting that Sarah had not been “informed about milk” before Gen 21:1. Therefore, R. Nehemiah reasons, the verse cannot refer to God blessing Sarah with milk; instead, it shows that God “restored to her the days of her youth,” which has a biblical basis in that “Sarah [was] old, advanced in years” (Gen 18:11)—having already gone through menopause—and God still gave her a son. In order to understand why R. Nehemiah objects to R. Judah’s comment about milk and offers “restoration to youth” as an alternative, one must be familiar with the context of Genesis 18-21.

Kugel also does not attend to the immediately following midrashic comment in *Gen. R.* 53:5, which reveals that the rabbinic writer(s) clearly remembers the verses in their original context, rather than in “suspended animation.”¹²¹ After the various comments about God giving Sarah a child, milk to sustain her child, and an ovary to produce her child, the midrash turns to

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 146.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

comment on the wickedness of Amalek, the righteousness of Sarah, and God's repayments to them both:

R. Adda said, "The Holy One, blessed be he, is a trustee: Amalek deposited bundles of thorns [i.e., wrongdoings], therefore [God] returned to [Amalek] bundles of thorns [i.e., punishments], as it says, 'I remember that which Amalek did to Israel' (1 Sam 15:2). Sarah [on the other hand] laid up with [God] a store of pious acts and good deeds, therefore the Lord returned her [the reward for] them, as it says, 'The Lord remembered Sarah'" (Gen 21:1).

The citations of 1 Sam 15:2 and Gen 21:1 recall the broader contexts of both verses, and neither of them is taken out of their biblical context; to the contrary, the contexts of both are needed for R. Adda to make his point. First Sam 15:2 alludes to "that which Amalek did to Israel," which the prophet Samuel explicates in 1 Sam 15:32-33. Before killing "Agag the king of the Amalekites," Samuel says to him, "As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women" (15:33). Thus, when *Gen. R.* 53:5 notes that God repaid Amalek for his wrongdoing with reference to 1 Sam 15:2, the midrash alludes the fact that the king made women "childless" according to 1 Sam 15:33. Conversely, because of Sarah's righteousness God repaid her with a child: "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son.... Abraham called the name of his son... whom Sarah bore him, Isaac" (Gen 21:1-3). To understand R. Adda's assertion that Amalek and Sarah got what they deserved, one needs to know that the biblical contexts of Gen 21:1 and 1 Sam 15:2 refer to childbearing and childlessness, respectively. In the case of *Gen. R.* 53:5, the rabbis' intertextual reading is dependent upon their reading of biblical verses in light of their biblical contexts.

Rabbinic Contextuality in Jewish Scholarship

Kugel's overarching application of atomism to rabbinic texts has met with some resistance. The majority of the dissenting opinions have come from studies of Midrash

Halakhah—that is, the midrashim attending to legal material in the Tanakh—whereas studies of contextual exegesis in non-legal Midrash Aggadah has been less pronounced. In this section, I highlight studies have attempted to destabilize the consensus on rabbinic atomism.

In his study of halakhic midrash, David Weiss Halivni insists that rabbinic texts are not the sum of atomized parts; rather, they represent the deliberate arrangement of comments that are contingent upon scriptural context. Accordingly, “any meaning ascribed to the verse must cover the full text, including what is said before and what is said after it.”¹²² Among other examples, he highlights the phrase “no text can be deprived of its peshat” in *b. Yev. 11b* (cf. *b. Yev. 24a*; *b. Shab. 63a*).¹²³ To support his argument that halakhah reckons with what is said before and after the cited verse, Halivni cites the Bavli’s discussion of Deut 24:4 concerning a divorced woman: “Her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled.”

The Talmud asks who the “she” is in the phrase, “after that she is defiled” (אִשֶּׁר הִטְמְאָה). R. Yose states that “she” refers to a woman who, in the time between divorcing and rejoining her first husband, married a second husband (the focus of Deut 24); the Sages claim that “she” refers to a woman who has committed adultery and been subjected to the *sotah* ritual described in Numbers 5. To dispel this acontextual reading of Deut 24:4 with reference to Num 5, the Talmud cites the dictum, “no text can be deprived of its peshat,” implying that since the context of the passage in Deut. 24 is a woman rejoining her first husband... the sages may say that it refers to the *sotah* also, but they cannot deprive the phrase of its peshat, of its context, claiming that reference to a woman who rejoined her first husband is excluded from the

¹²² David Weiss Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 10.

¹²³ See *ibid.*, 54-56.

verse.”¹²⁴ While the sages allow an atomistic reading of Deut 24:4 vis-à-vis Num 5, they refuse to deprive Deut 24:4 of its original context; instead, contextual interpretations of the operative phrase take precedence over opinions that are not supported by its original context. Thus Halivni shows that the halakhic rabbis had a “both/and” stance on atomism vs. contextuality.

Halivni makes a case for halakhic midrash being tied to biblical context, but he does not extend the same courtesy to aggadic (non-legal) midrash. He writes,

Legal comments in general are closer and more tightly bound to the text, more grounded than in nonlegal midrash. . . . Authorial intention will always play a more significant role in legal texts than in nonlegal texts. . . . Midrash Halakha’s cues overwhelmingly come from within the [biblical] text. . . . The halakhist submits to the text; the aggadist plays with it, as it were. The aggadist cooperates with the text (actively); the halakhist listens to the text (often passively).¹²⁵

While Halivni does not include Kugel’s contributions in his study of midrash, his comments on midrash aggadah cohere with Kugel’s insofar as they describe an interpretation that is unconcerned with biblical context. Halivni’s contextual assessment of midrash halakhah is welcomed, but I will argue that the aggadic texts I cite from *Genesis Rabbah* are just as “tightly bound to the text” as is midrash halakhah.

In his studies of *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishamel* and *Sifre Numbers*, Azzan Yadin, like Halivni, argues that much of midrash halakhah is dependent on the original context of the Tanakh. Yadin points to what he calls “hermeneutic markedness” in halakhic midrash, which begins by identifying a specific scriptural starting point, such as irregular words, curious

¹²⁴ Ibid., 55.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 159; cf. Israel Frankel, *Peshat (Plain Exegesis) in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature* (Toronto: La Salle Press, 1956), 71.

repetitions, anomalous spellings, and redundancies.¹²⁶ Thus, the exegesis begins rather atomistically. However, these “biblical lexemes that justify midrashic intervention” are the impetus of legal commentary, and the rabbis utilize—and are exegetically constrained by—other appearances of the pertinent words, spellings, and repetitions in Scripture to resolve their chosen hermeneutic markers.¹²⁷ Yadin states that this kind of scriptural exegesis is incompatible with the prevailing contention that the rabbis interpret words “independently of the context” and concludes that hermeneutic markedness “requires distinctions and delimitations, whereas... a disregard for context suggest[s] that there are no limitations on... the type of interpretations offered.”¹²⁸

Yadin is right to note that the rabbis must know the context of disparate verses in order to pull various words and sentences together that are hermeneutically marked in the same way. However, this is not the same kind of metaleptic contextuality that I will assign to *Genesis Rabbah*. Yadin still points to single words and sentences (similarly marked though they may be); the rabbinic interpretations of these words may be restrained by their knowledge of the Tanakh’s context, but one does not need to make recourse to the immediate contexts of those words in order to fully understand the midrashic discussion.

As an example of hermeneutic markedness, Yadin cites the juxtaposition of Exod 21:2 and Deut 15:12 in *Mekhilta Neziqin* 1 to show that texts in which the rabbis find redundancies

¹²⁶ See Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 48-50.

¹²⁷ Azzan Yadin-Israel, *Scripture and Tradition: Rabbi Akiva and the Triumph of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 11.

¹²⁸ Yadin, *Logos*, 61.

are hermeneutically marked for such juxtaposition.¹²⁹ Exod 21:2 begins, “When you acquire a Hebrew slave (עֶבֶד עִבְרִי).” The midrash asks if the phrase עֶבֶד עִבְרִי might be read not as “a Hebrew slave,” but as a construct: “the slave of a Hebrew,” which could include a Gentile slave. As one answer to this question, the midrash brings Deut 15:12a into the discussion: “If your brother, the Hebrew [man] (הָעִבְרִי) or the Hebrew [woman] (הָעִבְרִיָּה), is sold to you....” Since the grammar of Deut 15:12 is unambiguous—“Hebrew” is clearly an adjective—the rabbis use it to inform the grammar of Exod 21:2 so that the Exodus verse reads adjectivally as “Hebrew slave” rather than “slave of a Hebrew.” According to Yadin, Deut 15:12 is used to inform Exod 21:2 because of the apparent redundancy in Deut 15:12, where “your brother” is immediately followed by “the Hebrew.” Since the rabbis already take “your brother” to refer to a “Hebrew,” the use of עֶבֶרִי is redundant, which gives the rabbis the hermeneutical warrant to apply the term in Deut 15:12 to its equivalent in Exod 21:2. Had the rabbis not deemed עֶבֶרִי redundant, but rather understood it as essential for understanding Deut 15:12, they would not have used it with reference to Exod 21:2. As Yadin summarizes,

The word *‘ivri* occurs... more than a dozen times in the Pentateuch; could an interpreter not find a nominal *‘ivri*, use it as a basis for analogy, and arrive at the opposite conclusion? Is the choice of analogue arbitrary? No, replies the Mekhilta, because Scripture hermeneutically marks Deuteronomy 15:2, “freeing up” *‘ivri* and purposely making it a legitimate analogue for Exodus 21:2.... This freedom allows it to serve as the basis of the analogy... with Exodus 21:2.... The word that appears in different verses cannot be used for analogy at will, and even repeated words within a verse... are inadmissible if they are critical for understanding to basic sense of their “home” verse.¹³⁰

Yadin sees a very careful verse selection processes in halakhic midrash that requires the utmost attention to the broader context of the Tanakh. However, this extremely intricate knowledge of each verse does not constitute the same kind of metaleptic contextuality that I am

¹²⁹ See *ibid.*, 59-60.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

proposing for the rabbinic use of Scripture. In Yadin's example, the rabbis engage in a word association that requires an almost photographic recollection of two verses and, presumably, all the other verses that contain עברי in the Tanakh. But, again, associating words within single verses is not the same thing as contextual analysis or metalepsis; the midrashic discussion does not require the immediate *context* of the biblical citations in order to make sense. Instead, in the above example, all relevant verses are cited.

Yadin's work on hermeneutic markedness leads him to challenge Moore's comment that rabbinic exegesis is atomistic because it takes "detached utterances and makes use of analogy of expression, often by purely verbal association."¹³¹ Yadin shows that what Moore sees as detached utterances linked by mere verbal association are actually hermeneutically attached to one another. In other words, according to Yadin, midrashic exegesis makes use of verbal association but not, *pace* Moore, "purely" verbal association. Instead, the context, construction, and syntax of the verses in which words appear is important for explaining why the rabbis cite the verses they do. Yadin correctly notes that Moore's conception of atomism lacks attention to the intricacies of rabbinic exegesis. However, his example of analogy between Exod 21:2 and Deut 15:12 is still more concerned with the grammar of individual verses than those verse's wider biblical contexts.

In arguing against Moore, Yadin critically engages the foundational assessment of rabbinic exegesis that continues to underlie much Christian scholarship. Yadin rightly notes with reference to Moore's comments, "Some seventy years later, these words are still cited without qualification, and the thesis roundly endorsed."¹³² He is certainly correct, as a survey of recent

¹³¹ Ibid., 61, citing Moore, *Judaism*, 1.248.

¹³² Yadin, *Logos*, 61.

New Testament scholarship on scriptural hermeneutics shows.¹³³ Curiously, though, the only work that Yadin explicitly offers as an example of modern scholars endorsing Moore's view is Instone-Brewer's *Techniques and Assumptions*, which is wholly dedicated to arguing *against* Moore's theory of rabbinic atomism.¹³⁴ In fact, the very first words of Instone-Brewer's study consist of Moore's famous quote on atomism, which he follows by saying, "Sixty years later most scholars still agree with [Moore's] assessment, and the consequences are profound.... The results of the present study show that the predecessors of the rabbis before 70 CE did not interpret Scripture out of context."¹³⁵ Thus, Yadin argues against a Christian scholar of rabbinic literature who explicitly agrees with him.

In his *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah*, Alexander Samely recognizes the Mishnah's tendency to use parts of verses as allusions to scriptural support in legal discussions, and thus provides support for the rabbis' metaleptic readings of Scripture. As an example, he notes the use of Gen 34:25 as a proof for when a child should be bathed after circumcision according to *m. Shab.* 9:3: "How [do we know] that one bathes a child on the third day [after circumcision] that falls [even] on the Sabbath? Because it is said, 'And it came to pass on the third day when they were in pain' (Gen 34:25). While there is no mention of circumcision in Gen 34:25, the Mishnah assumes knowledge of the reference to every male of Shechem being

¹³³ See, e.g., Bartholomew, *Hermeneutics*, 181-82; G. Hansen, *Abraham*, 204; Longenecker, *Studies in Hermeneutics*, 36-37; idem., *Biblical Exegesis*, 21; Charles A. Kimball, *Jesus' Exposition of the Old Testament in Luke's Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 60 n. 40; Brian S. Rosner, *Paul, Scripture and Ethics: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 5.

¹³⁴ See Yadin, *Scripture as Logos*, 189 n. 32. More recently, Timothy Mackie has made the same mistake, apparently following Yadin, whom he cites immediately after he cites Instone-Brewer. See Timothy P. Mackie, *Expanding Ezekiel: The Hermeneutics of Scribal Addition in the Ancient Text Witnesses of the Book of Ezekiel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 68 n. 65.

¹³⁵ Instone-Brewer, *Techniques*, 1.

“circumcised” in the preceding verse (Gen 34:24). Without prior knowledge of the information surrounding Gen 34:25, the relevance of the verse to a discussion about circumcision is not at all apparent, but the broader biblical context supports the mishnaic conclusion.

Samely notes that such examples consist of legal decisions and their supporting Scriptures that are “linked by cohesive signals or narrative connectedness beyond the [biblical] clause... [which] show[s] that the ‘atomistic’... approach, while prominent, is very far from being universal in Mishnaic hermeneutics.”¹³⁶ This attention to verses beyond what is cited will be crucial in my own reading of rabbinic exegesis in *Genesis Rabbah*. Although Samely does not use the term, he highlights rabbinic metalepsis—the tendency to push the reader to the biblical content beyond the cited verse. While his metaleptic reading of the Mishnah challenges the kind of atomism that Kugel has popularized, Samely does not include any of Kugel’s works in the

¹³⁶ Alexander Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 41. Also with reference to contextual use of Scripture in the Mishnah, Aharon Shemesh has shown that lists in the Torah influenced rabbinic lists in the Mishnah. For instance, the list of acts that lead to unintentional murders in *m. Mak. 2:1* is based on the list in Num 35:16-21. In this case, post-biblical legal commentaries build on scriptural blueprints. The halakhic rulings do not explicitly cite the verses that inform them, but early Jewish interpreters followed (and reworked) biblical precedents. See Aharon Shemesh, “Biblical Exegesis and Interpretations from Qumran to the Rabbis,” in Matthias Henze, ed., *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 484-88; cf. idem., “4Q251: *Midrash Mishpatim*,” *DSD* 12 (2005): 280-302; idem., “The Scriptural Background of the Penal Code in The Rule of the Community and Damascus Document,” *DSD* 15 (2008): 191-224; idem., “Scriptural Interpretation in the Damascus Document and their Parallels in Rabbinic Midrash,” in Joseph M. Baumgarten, Esther G. Chazon, and Avital Pinnick, eds., *The Damascus Document: A Centennial of Discovery. Proceedings of the Third International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 4-8 February 1998*. *STDJ* 34 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 161-75.

bibliography of *Rabbinic Interpretation*.¹³⁷ Still, Samely makes an important point regarding the metaleptic care for context in rabbinic literature.

While the majority of challenges to atomistic readings of rabbinic texts concern halakhic midrash, some have nuanced the overgeneralization of atomism using aggadic material. In his analysis of *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael* (a majority halakhic midrash), Daniel Boyarin presents instances from aggadic passages that strike a balance between concern for scriptural context and acontextual innovation. He states that the rabbis took a “position between... ‘freely’ using the pre-existing linguistic material and quoting it with reference to its ‘original’ context.”¹³⁸ As an example of this middle ground, Boyarin cites an excerpt from *Mekh. Bes.* 5:15-35, which places several biblical verses into the context of a rabbinic parable that is meant to elucidate the meaning of Exod 14:9: “And the angel of God, going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them. And the pillar of cloud moved from before them and went behind them.”

Based on Exod 14:9, R. Judah expounds a parable about a king [God] who protects his son [Israel] while the two are on a journey.

To what is this matter similar? To a king who was going on the way, and his son went before him. Robbers came to kidnap him from the front [of the king], but [the king] took [his son] from the front and placed him behind him. A wolf came behind him [so] he took [his son] from behind and placed him in front. [With] robbers in front and the wolf behind, he took him and placed him in his arms, for it says, “I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them on my arms” (Hos 11:3). The son began to suffer; [the king] took him on his shoulders, for it is said, “In the desert, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you” (Deut 1:31a). The son began to suffer from the sun; [the king] spread his cloak on him, for it is said, “He has spread

¹³⁷ Samely does, however, make passing reference to Kugel’s “Two Introductions” along with a single reference to “the ‘atomistic’ approach of Midrash.” See Alexander Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 76.

¹³⁸ Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 24-25. Similarly, Boyarin [ibid., 39] states, “The heterogeneity—the multivocality of the biblical text itself, its hiatuses and gaps, creatively but not open-endedly filled in by the midrash—allows it to generate its meanings—its *original* meanings—in ever new social and cultural situations” (emphasis original).

a cloud as a curtain” (Ps 105:39). He became hungry; [the king] fed him, for it is said, “Behold, I send bread like rain from heaven” (Exod 16:4). He became thirsty; [the king] gave him drink, for it is said, “He brought streams out of the rock” (Ps 78:16).

On Boyarin’s reading of this passage, the parable “understand[s] the verses through their interaction with the [parabolic] frame,” so that *Mekhilta* reflects “completely new readings [of Scripture that are]... yet already existent in the Torah.”¹³⁹

While Boyarin is right to note the parable’s indebtedness to the Tanakh, he swings the exegetical pendulum too far toward the direction of midrashic innovation when he claims that R. Judah offers a “completely new reading” of these biblical verses. To the contrary, R. Judah’s parable is a fairly unoriginal repackaging of what the Tanakh already explicates—namely, that Israel is God’s son. This basic scriptural point becomes clear from the original contexts of R. Judah’s cited verses. For example, the midrash first cites Hos 11:3 because it provides support for the king [God] taking his son [Israel] in his arms: “I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them on my arms.” This proof-text appears near the start of a chapter that begins, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son” (Hos 11:1). Thus, R. Judah’s parable is not a completely new reading, since it reflects what the Bible already states plainly: R. Judah refers to Hos 11:3 precisely because Hosea makes a reference to Israel as God’s “son” two verses beforehand.

The second and third citations in the parable also contain references to Israel as God’s son. While the second citation presents only the first half of Deut 1:31 to argue that the king carried his son on his shoulders—“In the desert, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you”—the next words of the verse, which are left unstated, are “as a man carries his son.” Likewise, the third citation is of Ps 105:39, which shows that the king spread his cloak on his son:

¹³⁹ Ibid., 30.

“He has spread a cloud as a curtain.” This verse is applicable to the rabbi’s parable about a son because it appears in a psalm that begins by addressing the “sons of Jacob, his chosen ones” (105:6). In likening the people of Israel to a “son,” R. Judah’s parable rehearses what is already said in Deut 1:31 and Ps 105:39. The final two parabolic citations of Exod 16:4 and Ps 78:16 do not reinforce the father-son relationship as explicitly as the first three citations. However, by beginning with three “son” texts from the Tanakh, R. Judah can tie in these last two verses about Israel into the son motif, even though their original contexts do not contain filial language.

Boyarin finds that “the placing of a verse into a new context with a different meaning is emblematic of midrash”¹⁴⁰—indeed, midrash is not above taking a verse from its original context and repurposing it—but, as my analysis of his example shows, an atomistic view of rabbinic exegesis is not always warranted. Boyarin agrees with Kugel that midrash is the exegesis of individual verses, rather than larger passages; he calls Kugel’s assumption a “virtual commonplace,”¹⁴¹ which influences his definition of midrash as “radical intertextual reading of the canon, in which potentially every part refers to and is interpretable by every other part.”¹⁴² However, this is not the case with Boyarin’s example of R. Judah’s parable, whose interpretation, at least in three out of five quotations, is predicated upon the “parts” of the biblical texts that mention Israel as God’s “son,” as opposed to parts taken from elsewhere in the biblical canon. Nevertheless, for Boyarin, midrash is still a method of exegesis focused more on the “bits” of Scripture than their wider context.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴² Ibid., 16.

Aaron Koller has recently challenged the generalization of atomism in his study of the Esther midrashim. However, Koller only argues that the writers of these aggadic texts are aware of the wider biblical storylines, not that they utilize the immediate contexts of their cited verses. Still, his brand of contextuality does add nuance to the conversation on atomism. Koller writes,

Rabbis did not consistently read atomistically, and in fact often are seen to be reading and commenting on larger literary units. In our case, much of the rabbinic attention will be directed to the broad themes of Esther as a whole. This is, of course, not to exclude atomistic readings, which certainly exist in abundance, but it is to focus our attention on the fact that the Rabbis were attuned to broader issues, as well.¹⁴³

While Koller does not point to Kugel explicitly, his assertion that the Esther midrashim attend to “larger literary units” echoes Kugel’s contrary assertion that the rabbis do not think in “larger units” of Scripture,¹⁴⁴ as well as Stern’s comment, with reference to Kugel, that “larger literary units... do not constitute significant units of meaning for midrash.”¹⁴⁵

To show the rabbinic concern for larger literary units, such as whole chapters and books of the Bible, Koller notes that the rabbis read Esther in light of Daniel.¹⁴⁶ For example, in order to explain why Israel deserved the punishment of Haman (a question that the book of Esther never answers), the rabbis interpret the feast in Daniel 1 in light of the feast in Esther 1. Because Daniel resolved not to defile himself by eating the king’s food (Dan 1:8), some aggadic texts assume that other Jews must not have refused the food during Ahasuerus’s banquet (described in

¹⁴³ Aaron Koller, *Esther in Ancient Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 170-71.

¹⁴⁴ Kugel, *Potiphar’s House*, 255.

¹⁴⁵ Stern, *Parables*, 153.

¹⁴⁶ See Koller, *Esther*, 191-98.

Est 1:1-9), which led to divine punishment.¹⁴⁷ Here, Koller shows that the rabbis read complete passages in light of others and were concerned with overarching themes and questions, not just the grammatical details of single sentences. More, knowledge of Daniel is required to understand the rabbinic belief that the Jews in Persia were being punished because they ate unkosher food, which shows that not only were the rabbis aware of the entire biblical narrative, they employed it to support their interpretations of Scripture. While Koller's critique of the overgeneralization of atomism is welcomed, his brand of contextuality does not entail looking at the immediate context of a verse to glean a fuller understanding of the midrashic discussion—that is, he does not purport that the rabbis who wrote commentaries on Esther engage in metalepsis. Instead, Koller argues that the rabbis who commented on Esther and Daniel knew the basic storylines of both books.

Conclusion

The debate continues among scholars about how the New Testament and rabbinic writers used Scripture. The atomistic thesis is still alive and well, but dissenting voices are increasingly challenging the consensus. Still, there remains a tendency in NT scholarship to make a distinction between contextual NT exegesis and later rabbinic atomism. My study of both New Testament and rabbinic texts will show this to be a false bifurcation. A metaleptic approach to *Genesis Rabbah* will demonstrate the inadequacy of atomistic generalizations in rabbinic scholarship, and a similar metaleptic analysis of Matthew will bridge the perceived gap between NT and rabbinic exegesis.

¹⁴⁷ Koller identifies this rabbinic conclusion in texts dating from roughly 600 CE and onwards, including *Pan. Aher.* 26a; *b. Meg.* 11a-12a; *Midr. A.G.* 5a, 16b; *Est. R.* 7.

Because my project is not a detailed analysis of every Matthean and midrashic scriptural quotation, I do not claim that all of the biblical exegesis in Gospel and Midrash is to be understood contextually. Rather, I propose that each citation should be assessed on its own terms, and that we should avoid sweeping presuppositions about either an overarching atomistic or contextual approach that dictates all of early Jewish and Christian exegesis. In her study of Matthew, Novakovic proposes, “we should not automatically assume that the wider context is in view. The reader must assess each text on its own, rather than simply presume the presence or absence of contextual considerations.”¹⁴⁸ It is equally important that scholars not automatically assume that the wider context is not in view, since, in each instance of scriptural citation I will present in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, Scripture’s original context plays a major role.

¹⁴⁸ Lidjia Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead According to Scripture: The Role of Israel’s Scripture in the Early Christian Interpretations of Jesus’ Resurrection* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 62.

III. COMMEMORATIVE SYMBOLS, COMPARATIVE METHOD, AND NARRATIVE PATTERNING

Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* both draw on Scripture in order to create symbols in their own narratives. Symbols are sites of information that encapsulate and carry messages for those who adopt them. The willingness of groups to commemorate these symbols ensures that the information they convey remains relevant to, and useful for, the collective. Both Gospel and Midrash are commemorative narratives that incorporate a particular (biblical) past into an account that speaks to the present. They do this through a literary device called narrative patterning, in which the authors take Israel's sacred history and reframe it to fit the needs, hopes, and ideals of the readership. Understanding the process of commemoration, the functionality of symbols within commemorative narratives, and the technique of narrative patterning will provide the theoretical foundation for reading the figures in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* as symbols of biblical Israel.

This chapter proceeds in three main parts. First, I introduce the concept of “commemoration” (remembering together) as a phenomenon within collective memory. In acts of commemoration, groups mark specific occasions, histories, rituals, and stories; such commemorations are facilitated by the production of “commemorative narratives” that provide a storyline for a group's past and highlight patterns in that group's history. As Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are accounts of the past that employ narrative patterning, they are both ancient examples of commemorative narratives. I then show how symbols function as loci of meaning with commemorative narratives, and serve to encapsulate the ideals, values, and beliefs of the collective. I define two types of symbols: “mimetic,” which provides the collective with an exemplar, and “declarative,” which makes an historical or ideological claim about the group.

Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* present their respective characters as mimetic and declarative symbols in order to form and reinforce collective identity.

Second, I offer a comparative method that will allow me to evaluate the relationship between Matthew and the Targums (in chapter 6) and also comment on the theological similarities and dissimilarities between Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* (in chapters 7 and 8). My method focuses on the importance of differences and detailed description in the comparative project. The elements of difference and description will help to avoid issues of what Samuel Sandmel calls “parallelomania.” The term refers to the overdoing of similarities without attention to the particulars, and then using supposed similarities to posit the direction of dependence between the materials under evaluation.¹⁴⁹ To begin, William Paden’s conception of “world-building” is useful for understanding the difference between “forms” shared between two religions or cultures, and the varying “contents” within those forms. Identifying like forms provides the entryway into comparison, but the contents of the forms provide the comparativist with the data to make sense of each world.

Jonathan Z. Smith’s comments on analogical vs. genealogical comparisons add further specificity to Paden’s comparative framework, and also eschew the question of dependence against which Sandmel warned. Whereas genealogical comparison attempts to describe the historical process of diffusion, the goal of analogical comparison is to description two entities as being both similar in some ways, and different in other ways. This multi-faceted approach to comparison allows both variables to remain independent of one another while also providing information that allows for new findings. As Bruce Chilton echoes Smith’s method in his own approach comparing the New Testament and the Targums, I will end my comments on

¹⁴⁹ See Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” 1-13.

comparative method with my own application of NT-targumic comparison via Mt 4:6 and the Targum to Psalm 91. This example will offer a model for comparison between Matthew and the Targums to Isaiah and Jeremiah in chapter 6.

Third, I define “narrative patterning” as the creation of stories and characters that purposefully recall precedent narratives. Showing how narrative patterns are constructed will provide the literary details for identifying the historical patterns in the Matthean and rabbinic commemorative narratives. I show how narrative patterns are built through citations of, and allusions to, precedent texts, as well as a through a literary device called “metalepsis,” which attends to the original context of the citation in order to identify narrative patterns beyond what is explicitly in the dependent text. Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* use metalepsis in order to build narrative patterns into which they insert their respective commemorative symbols.

Commemorative Narratives and Symbols

In this section, I explain the concepts of commemoration within collective memory, commemorative narratives, and symbols as sites of commemoration within those narratives. The authors of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* create narratives that draw on a shared past established in Israel’s Scriptures; they then use that past to highlight perceived patterns between Israel’s sacred history and their own experiences. Yitzhak Baer’s comments regarding the rabbis also hold for Matthew: “For the creators of the Midrash, the only true history has been set down once and for all in the Holy Scriptures. The Scriptures are the master pattern of all later history; what has happened once must happen over and over again in ever-widening circles.”¹⁵⁰

Commemorative narratives and the symbols therein are the mechanisms through which the

¹⁵⁰ Baer, *Galut*, 11.

authors of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* respond to the master pattern of sacred history that they find in Israel's Scriptures, and frame that pattern in ways that they deem meaningful.

As commemoration is a phenomenon within collective memory, a few preliminary words on collective memory are in order. Collective memory refers to the ways in which groups both remember the past and reconstruct it in order to address present concerns.¹⁵¹ Individuals or groups able to produce information (elites, teachers, artists, political parties, academies, religious congregations, etc.) compile accounts that they consider important to their historical/cultural heritage.¹⁵² Therefore, the "memories" that reach the broader collective are not properly dependent on recollections of the past, but rather on versions of the past that are represented in various media, including (but not limited to) written and oral narratives, rituals, and institutional productions such as museum exhibitions and educational curricula.¹⁵³ These forms of media are the avenues by which collective memory becomes part of a fixed "store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity."¹⁵⁴

The interaction between collective memory and the groups whose identities it helps to form is known as commemoration ("remembering together").¹⁵⁵ In commemoration, communities focus on specific events in their history and remember them together in order to

¹⁵¹ See Maurice Halbwachs, *La Topographie Légendaire des Évagiles* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 7; Barry Schwartz, "Social Change and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington," *ASR* 56 (1991), 222.

¹⁵² See Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*. Translated by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper and Row, 1980 [1950]), 48.

¹⁵³ See Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 9; Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6.

¹⁵⁴ Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *NGC* 65 (1995), 130.

¹⁵⁵ See Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 9-12.

solidify concepts and ideologies associated with those events. Each commemorative act reminds the collective of its shared beliefs and common goals, and thereby it strengthens the identities of those who participate in commemoration.¹⁵⁶ As Barry Schwartz notes, “By marking events believed to be most deserving of remembrance, commemoration becomes society’s moral memory. Commemoration makes society conscious of itself as it affirms its members’ mutual affinity and identity.”¹⁵⁷ For example, American citizens commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 every Fourth of July, a holiday that recalls a collective “memory” of a defining historical event and promotes the values of democracy and freedom. A similar phenomenon occurs when students in American classrooms recite the Pledge of Allegiance or listen to the story of Paul Revere’s “Midnight Ride,” or read histories of the Revolutionary War. Each of these is an act of commemoration that both dictates collective identity and renews it; remembering together creates a common catalog of important figures and events upon which the commemorators cultivate their collective character and shared ideals. More, each new iteration of commemoration influences the group so that neither memories nor their commemorations are ever static.

Building on the notion of commemoration, Yael Zerubavel identifies a “commemorative narrative” as “a story about a particular past that... provides a moral message for the group members.”¹⁵⁸ Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are commemorative narratives that draw upon the shared narrative of Israel’s Scriptures, which constitute what Zerubavel calls a “master commemorative narrative”—that is, “a basic ‘story line’ that is culturally constructed and

¹⁵⁶ See Schwartz, “Social Context of Commemoration,” 376-77.

¹⁵⁷ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*, 10.

¹⁵⁸ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 6.

provides the group members with a general notion of their shared past.”¹⁵⁹ As the biblical text contains recapitulations of people and events—for example, in the stories of Abraham and Isaac in Gen 12, 20, 26)¹⁶⁰—Israel’s Scriptures are an example a “master commemorative narrative [that] indicates the recurrence of historical patterns in the group’s experience.”¹⁶¹ Insofar as Matthew and the rabbis’ own commemorative narratives also highlight historical patterns, they mirror the literary form of the (master) biblical narrative. The authors do this, in part, to validate their commemorative narratives as coming from the same theological and cultural milieu as the master commemorative narrative. The authors’ respective stories shape the ways in which their audiences remember the past and contextualize the present.

Matthew contains an example of commemoration in Jesus’ application of Isaiah (part of the master commemorative narrative) to the Pharisees and scribes: “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me’” (Mt 15:7-8; cf. Isa 29:13 LXX). In its original context, Isaiah addresses wayward Israelites in the 8th century BCE, but Matthew directs the quotation at the scribes and Pharisees in the first century CE. The Gospel writer identifies a perceived historical pattern of hypocrisy among certain people in Israel and uses Isaiah to align the events of Jesus’ day with the Israel’s scriptural past. This repetition of sacred history allows Matthew’s readers to make sense of the present through the lens of the past. As Chris Keith puts it, “In terms of the early Christian context... authors graft the story of Jesus and the early church into the master commemorative narrative of the Hebrew

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ See pp. 3-4.

¹⁶¹ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 7.

Scriptures, and thus claim the Jewish identity represented by those texts as their own.”¹⁶²

Matthew’s readers commemorate the Isaian past and then apply it to their own time.

Genesis Rabbah also highlights historical patterns in its commemorative narrative. For example, the rabbis follow the biblical references to four Gentile kingdoms (cf. Gen 14:1; Dan 7:1-23) and interpret several passages of Scripture with reference to the four kingdoms of Babylon, Media, Greece, and Rome. In the description of four Gentile kingdoms (Elam, Goim, Shinar, and Ellasar) in Gen 14:9, the rabbis find a prediction of the kingdoms that would emerge later in Israel’s history, including the emergence of Rome in their own day:

Just as [Israel’s history] began with the encounter with four kingdoms, so it will conclude with the encounter with the four kingdoms: “Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goim, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar, four kings against five” (Gen 14:9). Thus, [Israel’s history] will conclude with the encounter with the four kingdoms: the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of Media, the kingdom of Greece, and the kingdom of Edom [i.e., Rome]. (*Gen. R.* 42:2)

Gen. R. 42:2 identifies a pattern shared by Genesis and later Jewish history. By citing the earlier kingdoms in Gen 14:9, the rabbis establish a precedent for kingdoms that would interact with Israel later—some appearing in Israel’s Scriptures (Babylon, Media, and Greece), and the last postdating it (Rome). As Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi notes, “For the rabbis, the Bible was not only a repository of past history, but a revealed pattern of the whole of history, and they had learned their scriptures well.”¹⁶³ Edom (a.k.a. Rome) constitutes the fourth (and final) iteration of

¹⁶² Chris Keith, “A Performance of the Text: The Adulteress’s Entrance into John’s Gospel,” in Anthony Le Donne and Tom Thatcher, eds., *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 49-72, here 68. Technically, the master commemorative narrative for the NT writers is, more often, the Septuagint than the Hebrew Scriptures.

¹⁶³ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 21. The rabbis maintain a cyclical pattern of time and history that appear first in the Tanakh. While cycles recur in Scripture (e.g., the Judges cycle), time/history also continues to move teleologically towards a future period—“the end/latter days” (הַיָּמִים הָאַחֵרִים; e.g., Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Isa 2:2). History moves forward in a cyclical motion. The

the foreign kingdoms, which shows that, in *Genesis Rabbah*, the rabbis interpret events in Scripture as blueprints for their own experiences. The rabbis commemorate the four kingdoms in Genesis when they comment on the text, and then relate the text to the Israel of their own time.

Symbols often appear in commemorative narratives as receptacles of meaning that instill a sense of identity and embody shared aspirations. Scholars have defined “symbol” in several ways.¹⁶⁴ For my purposes, Clifford Geertz’s understanding of symbols provides a sufficiently broad framework for situating the symbols I will treat in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*.

According to Geertz, a symbol is “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception... tangible formulations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or

narrative patterns found within Scripture and Midrash reflect a patterned, recurrent conception of history. For a nuanced study of the interplay between cyclical and teleological notions of time in ancient Hebrew thought, see Marc Zvi Brettler, “Cyclical and Teleological Time in the Hebrew Bible,” in Ralph M. Rosen, ed., *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 111-28; cf. Andrew Chester, *Future Hope and Present Reality, Volume I: Eschatology and Transformation in the Hebrew Bible* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 31-38.

¹⁶⁴ See, e.g., Raymond Firth, *Symbols: Public and Private* (George Allen & Unwin, 1973), 54-91; Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 130-62; Pascal Boyer, “Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism,” in *ibid.*, ed., *Cognitive Aspects of Religious Symbolism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4-47; Michael E. Geisler, “What are National Symbols—And What Do They Do To Us?” in Michael E. Geisler, ed., *National Symbols, Fractured Identities* (Middlebury: Middlebury College Press, 2005), xiii-xlii.

beliefs.”¹⁶⁵ Like commemorative narratives themselves, the symbols within them are nodes of information that convey messages to the collective.¹⁶⁶

Insofar as a symbol can carry meaning that defines a collective, a symbol is what Pierre Nora calls a “site of memory” (*lieu de mémoire*), which is “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community.”¹⁶⁷ According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire* emerge when societies “maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills,” all of which highlight the “commemorative vigilance” of collective memory.¹⁶⁸ Each of Nora’s examples has symbolic value that is activated through commemoration: a wedding anniversary is symbolic of the marital relationship; a birthday celebration is symbolic of all the years a person has lived; a eulogy encapsulates the life of one who has passed away; and to notarize a bill of sale symbolically authenticates a purchase. Thus, there is a reciprocal relationship between the commemoration and the symbol: symbols represent avenues for commemoration, and commemoration marks the symbols as being valid expressions of collective commitments.

¹⁶⁵ Geertz, *Interpretation*, 91; cf. Jan Assmann, “Form as a Mnemonic Device: Cultural Texts and Cultural Memory,” in Richard A. Horsley, Jonathan A. Draper, and John Miles Foley, eds., *Performing the Gospel: Orality, Memory, and Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 68.

¹⁶⁶ See Karen A. Cerulo, *Identity Designs: The Sights and Sounds of a Nation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 4.

¹⁶⁷ Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Volume 1: Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii. Indeed, the third volume of *Realms of Memory* is dedicated to symbols. See Pierre Nora, ed., *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past, Volume 3: Symbols* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

¹⁶⁸ Idem., “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24, here 12.

For Nora, sites of memory emerge as vestiges for a society that has lost touch with much of its history:

These *lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it. They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world—producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past.¹⁶⁹

I do not claim that the writers of Matthew or *Genesis Rabbah* valued the new over the ancient or the future over the past—these writers certainly lived in a milieu in which ritual and ritualization remained important. Thus, not all of Nora’s conception of *lieux de mémoire* applies to my sources. I only wish to highlight the fact that the ancient narratives under discussion also created sites of memory in ways similar to how Nora describes them.

The “Last Supper” provides a complex example of commemorative symbolism in the New Testament (cf. Mt 26:26-29; Mk 14:22-25; Lk 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26). All the versions of the Last Supper state that the bread and the wine at the meal represent Jesus’ body and blood, respectively. Paul and Luke both state that this meal is to be eaten “in remembrance” of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19). Thus, each time Christians read these commemorative narratives and/or enact the commemoration described in them (i.e., the eating of bread and drinking of wine with reference to Christ) they “remember” Jesus’ death together. As Paul says to his Corinthian church, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). The bread and wine are symbols within a commemorative narrative of the Gospels (and 1 Corinthians), and these symbols also establish a ritual of Christian Eucharist that exists outside the textual narrative. When worshipers perform this ritual commemoration in

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. (emphasis original).

churches, which is based on their readings of commemorative narratives, their collective Christian identity is doubly reinforced.

Genesis Rabbah's narrative also contains commemorative symbolism in its description of Israel's remembrance of the Sabbath. *Gen R.* 11:8 depicts a personified Sabbath speaking to God, and God explain to the Sabbath her relationship with Israel:

Sabbath (שבת) said before the Holy One, blessed be he, saying, "To everyone is a partner (בן זוג), but to me there is no partner." The Holy One, blessed be he, said to her, "Your partner is the assembly of Israel (כנסת ישראל)." And when Israel stood before Mount Sinai, [God] said to them, "Remember (זכרו) what I said to Sabbath, that the assembly of Israel is your partner, [thus] "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy" (Exod 20:8).

This passage describes a call to remembrance within the text itself, which its readers are to live out each time that they observe the Sabbath. The commemorative narrative reiterates the moral message of the master commemorative narrative to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy" (Exod 20:8). Thus, when the readers of *Genesis Rabbah* apply the moral message of the commemorative narrative to their rest on the Sabbath, their collective Jewish identity is doubly reinforced. The Sabbath is personified so that the rabbis can present it as a symbol that defines the collective destiny and identity of Israel. Although the Last Supper is not at all the same religious observance as the Sabbath, the symbols that Gospel and Midrash employ in describing these commemorative events are similar in that "they impose obligations on those for whom they function as central symbols."¹⁷⁰

Commemorative symbols have the capacity to become both "mimetic" and "declarative." Mimetic symbols encapsulate behaviors or ideals that others should imitate; declarative symbols make a declaration about group identity and a shared past. A prime example of both a declarative and mimetic symbol in American history is Abraham Lincoln. In the face of Confederate

¹⁷⁰ Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 21.

secession, Lincoln became a symbol of national unity; he was a declarative symbol of a unified past that gave the American people an ideal to uphold in the midst of the violence and uncertainty of the Civil War. In light of Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, coupled with his assassination, the president also became a mimetic symbol whose example urges other Americans to pursue freedoms and equal rights for all people, even if it means self-sacrifice. Clinton Rossiter summarizes how Lincoln functions as a declarative symbol of American power, as well as a mimetic symbol whose example future presidents must follow:

Lincoln is the supreme myth, the richest symbol in the American experience. He is... the martyred Christ of democracy's passion play. And who, then, can measure the strength that is given to President because he holds Lincoln's office, lives in Lincoln's house, and walks in Lincoln's way? The final greatness of the Presidency lies in the truth that it is not just an office of incredible power but a breeding ground of indestructible myth.¹⁷¹

As the example of Lincoln shows, among the most dynamic symbols are individuals from the past who take on the role of representative heroes and heroines. When groups commemorate these figures—collectively remembering their experiences, words, successes, and/or failures—they form them into symbols for the group and uphold them as exemplars.¹⁷²

Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* create both mimetic and declarative symbols out of the figures they describe in their commemorative narratives. While I have already discussed (and will continue to discuss) Jesus as a symbol, the figure of Peter also functions symbolically for Matthew's readers. Peter is a mimetic symbol that illustrates the faith that Matthew's assembly should maintain, but he is also a declarative symbol that declares the power and indestructibility

¹⁷¹ Clinton Rossiter, *The American Presidency* [2nd ed.] (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1960), 18.

¹⁷² See Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 77; Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (New York: Free Press, 1987); idem., "Memory as a Cultural System: Abraham Lincoln in World War II," *ASR* 61 (1996): 908-27; Barbara J. Mitnick, ed., *George Washington: American Symbol* (New York: Hudson Hills, 1999).

of the Jesus movement. Peter is the first to declare Jesus to be “the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16), and Jesus blesses him, saying, “on this rock I will build my assembly” (16:18). As the foundational member of the Jesus movement, “Peter serves as a kind of eponymous ancestor for the Matthean community... a role model and hero of that community.”¹⁷³ In being named “Peter” (rock) and being given “the keys to the kingdom of heaven” (16:19), this first disciple becomes a declarative symbol of the stability upon which the assembly stands in its identification of Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God. Yet, Peter also serves as a mimetic exemplar who, in the case of his exclamation of Jesus’ Messiahship, Matthew’s readers and/or hearers are called to emulate.

Although Peter understands Jesus’ identity, he also falls short as a disciple in several ways. Immediately after blessing Peter, Jesus makes his first passion prediction. Peter denies that his Messiah will die, and Jesus responds by equating him with Satan for saying so (16:18-20). Peter’s misunderstanding of Jesus’ messianic role is not his first misstep. Earlier in the narrative, Peter had followed Jesus’ command to step out of a boat and stand with him on the water; when his fear caused him to sink, Jesus rebuked him for having “little faith” (ὀλιγόπιστε) (14:29-41). As a well-intentioned “rock” that also sinks, Peter is an example of both the zeal to emulate Jesus and the difficulty of doing so.¹⁷⁴ Near the end of the Gospel, Peter claims that he will never deny Jesus (26:35), but he will deny him three times (26:75). In this final failure, the rock upon which Jesus builds his assembly becomes a negative example for an audience familiar with Jesus’ warning: “whoever denies me before human beings, I will also deny before my Father who is in

¹⁷³ Alan F. Segal, “Matthew’s Jewish Voice,” in David L. Balch, ed., *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 9.

¹⁷⁴ See Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, and John Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 83; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 567-70.

heaven” (10:33). Though Peter’s denial and subsequent weeping is the last the Gospel reader hears of him explicitly (27:69-75), Matthew notes that “the eleven disciples” (28:16; minus Judas) meet Jesus in Galilee after his resurrection. Jesus tells even those among the disciples who “doubted” (28:17), “I am with you always” (28:20). Peter is thus reconciled to the risen Jesus.

In light of Peter’s denial as it appears in Mark’s Gospel (see Mk 14:29-31, 66-72), Frederick Tappenden asserts that early Christian memory “commemorates an apostle who, despite his good intentions, succumbs to the pressures of desertion,” and insofar as his “reputation as one who denied Christ becomes a kind of social space for conversing about what it means to remain faithful to Christ amidst trials,” Peter stands as a “cultural symbol” of the “every-person” in early Christianity.¹⁷⁵ Tappenden’s understanding of Peter as a symbol bears out in Jerome’s *Commentary on Matthew*, which asserts that Peter is example of faith and repentance. On Peter’s initial declaration of Jesus’ Messiahship, Jerome writes, “Representing (*ex persona*) all the apostles, Peter professes: ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ [Mt 16:16].... For the apostle’s testimony concerning himself, Jesus repays in turn.... A true confession received its reward: ‘Blessed are you, Simon bar Jona’” (3.16.16-17).¹⁷⁶ On the one hand, for Jerome, Peter is a representative of all who declare the truth of Jesus’ messianic identity. On the other hand, speaking of Peter’s commendable claim that he will never fall away and Jesus’ prediction of Peter’s impending denials (Mt 26:31-34), Jerome discourages his

¹⁷⁵ Frederick S. Tappenden, “On the Difficulty of Molding a Rock: The Negotiation of Peter’s Reputation in Early Christian Memory,” in Tom Thatcher, ed., *Memory and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity: A Conversation with Barry Schwartz* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 212.

¹⁷⁶ All translations of Jerome come from Thomas P. Scheck, trans., *Commentary on Matthew* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), here 194.

readers from emulating Peter in his denial, but he also upholds him as an example of a penitent follower:

Peter made the promise [to remain steadfast] out of the ardor of his faith, but the Savior, as God, knew the future. Note also that Peter denies at night... but after the cock crowed and the approaching light is declared, as the darkness diminishes, he converts and weeps bitterly, washing away the filth of his denial with tears.... For just as those who get drunk get drunk at night, so also those who suffer a scandal in the night also endure it in the darkness. But as for us, let us say: "Night has passed and the day has approached" [Rom 13:12]. (4.26.34, 31)¹⁷⁷

Jerome stresses the ardor of Peter's faith but this does not preclude his capacity to turn from Christ. Although followers of Jesus should avoid the darkness of denial and live in the light of day (i.e., as faithful Christians), just as Peter repented as the dawn approached, repentance is open to the wayward Christian. Although Christians should avoid activities that lead to drunkenness and other "scandals in the night," they also have the opportunity to repent of those acts. Thus, Peter serves as a mimetic symbol for Christian repentance.

Individual figures also serve as mimetic symbols in *Genesis Rabbah*. Abraham, for example, functions as a mimetic symbol of trust in the face of instability. According to a saying of R. Joshua ben Levi (3rd century CE),

In this world (בעולם הזה), [God] has given wanderings to those who fear him, but in the coming future (לעתיד לבא), "He will be ever mindful [of his covenant]" (Ps 109:5). For what is written of Abraham? "I will bless you and make your name great" (Gen 12:2). As soon as he set out [for Canaan], famine assailed him, but he did not protest nor grumble against [God, even though] "there was a famine in the land" (Gen 12:10). (*Gen R.* 40:2)

As someone who continued to follow God's commands even though he immediately encounters famine in the land of divine promise, *Genesis Rabbah* presents Abraham as a mimetic symbol that provides an example of continued trust in God despite hardship and uncertainty. The patriarch is not only a symbol in the midst of collective difficulties, but also a symbolic precedent for Jews receiving divine deliverance: "When you see the powers fighting each other,

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 299.

look for the feet of the King Messiah. The proof is that in the days of Abraham, because these powers fought against each other, greatness came to Abraham” (*Gen. R. 42:4*). *Genesis Rabbah* uses Abraham to convey a message to Jews in the rabbinic period, insofar as the patriarch had similar experiences as the rabbis experience under Rome. Abraham is not only a mimetic symbol that dictates group behavior but also a “declarative” symbol that makes a statement about group identity. The Abrahamic symbol reinforces the view that those who trace their lineage to him share a past, which reinforces rabbinic collective identity as God’s people.

Thus, both the Gospel and the Midrash are commemorative narratives that draw upon the master commemorative narrative of Israel’s Scriptures in order to convey a message for their readers that roots them in a shared biblical past. The ancient authors highlight patterns in the group’s experiences in order to mimic the narrative approach of Israel’s Scriptures, thereby validating their own commemorative narratives. Matthew and the rabbis use personified symbols (Jesus, Peter, Sabbath, Abraham) as sites of commemoration and information for the collective. Such symbols are both mimetic and declarative, and they communicate messages about right conduct, observance, relationship, and identity. These points about how Matthew and rabbis construct their narratives and their symbols will be foundational for my readings of Jesus, Adam, and the patriarchs as symbols of biblical Israel.

Comparative Method: Preventing Parallelomania

In my comparison of various texts in the following chapters (Tanakh, New Testament, Targum, and Midrash) that span two religious traditions (Judaism and Christianity), my goal is not to make a claim for some common “essence” between them or to make claims about the historical occasion for how these texts came to reflect similar concepts. Rather, I seek to explain both text and tradition on its own terms and then to utilize comparison to make some

constructive, mutually illuminating analysis. Therefore, I propose a comparative method that (1) eschews questions of dependence and derivation, (2) gives due attention to the broader literary and theological contexts of the texts being compared, and (3) gives equal weight to similarities and differences, since difference can often tell us more about the respective texts than can similarities.

As background to my comparative method, I begin with Samuel Sandmel's discussion of what calls "parallelomania," which is the scholarly tendency both to overdo supposed similarities between two texts (in Sandmel's case, texts of early Judaism and Christianity) and then to assume some dependent relationship between the two. Sandmel's critique of parallelomania is still timely, and his appeal for detailed descriptions of the texts being compared informs my approach to the comparative enterprise. I then highlight William Paden's theory of "world building" or "world formation." Paden conceives of the comparative study of religions as describing separate "worlds" that may be similar in form, but that can differ widely in content. This idea allows for the comparativist to draw initial parallels between two religious traditions or concepts, but then also demands that the differences are described on their own terms so as not to flatten the dynamics of the respective worlds. Paden's theory undergirds my detailed study of the concepts and contexts that make up Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah's* respective exegetical assumptions and theological worldviews.

To Paden's framework, I add Jonathan Z. Smith's approach to describing conceptual and linguistic analogies between texts: for Smith, an "analogical" approach does not require positing "genealogical" derivation and dependence. An analogical approach is also able to attend to differences that genealogical comparison necessarily obscures. Finally, I note Bruce Chilton's assertion that analogical comparison is the key to comparison between the New Testament and

the Targums. As my own project contains elements of NT-targumic comparison, I close this section with a comparative example between Matthew 4 and the Targum to Psalms 91. This comparison will show that worlds of Matthew and the Aramaic Psalm are analogical in form—they understand the original psalm in similar ways—but the particular content of those worlds (the specifics of the texts themselves) is different enough to disqualify a genealogical relationship.

In his 1961 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address, Samuel Sandmel cautioned against assuming any influence of post-biblical Jewish literature on the New Testament.¹⁷⁸ He coined the term “parallelomania” to highlight the “extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction.”¹⁷⁹ He stresses that similar content found in two texts does not show that one depends on, or derives from, the other. He does not discourage scholars from finding parallels (in fact, he encourages them), but he cautions against putting undue emphasis on similarities and unfounded claims regarding which text constitutes the “original” source from which the other is derived.¹⁸⁰ More, Sandmel urges comparativists to respect the broader contexts of the texts under examination and stresses the place of difference in the act of comparison. He states, “Detailed study is the

¹⁷⁸ See Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” esp. 8-11.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 1. In his treatment of the comparative project between Targum and New Testament, Martin McNamara summarizes Sandmel’s views regarding parallels: “The points made by Sandmel were well taken when first made, and are still timely. They do not, however, take from the need of pursuing parallels between a Jewish writing and a New Testament text... seeking an explanation for the parallels, without in any way implying direct influence and without denying due differences between the two bodies of literature.” Martin McNamara, “Targums and New Testament, A Way Forward? Targums, Tel-like Character, a Continuum,” in *idem.*, *Targum and New Testament: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 523.

criterion [of the comparative project], and the detailed study ought to respect the context and not be limited to juxtaposing mere excerpts. Two passages may sound the same in splendid isolation from their context, but when seen in context reflect difference rather than similarity.”¹⁸¹

Though Sandmel does not cite any specific textual examples of parallelomania, two passages whose comparison might lead one to parallelomania are the similar lists of disciples in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*:

These are the names of the twelve apostles [of Jesus]: Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, Jacob the son of Zebedee and John his brother, Phillip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, Jacob the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judah Iscariot. (Mt 10:2-4)

These are the seven disciples [of Rabbi Aqiva]: R. Meir, Judah, R. Jose and R. Simon, and R. Eleazar the son of Shamua, and R. John the shoemaker, and R. Eliezar the son of Jacob. Others say: R. Judah, R. Nehemiah, R. Meir, R. Jose, R. Simon the son of Yohai, R. Hanina the son of Hakhinai, and R. John the shoemaker. (*Gen. R.* 61:3)

Both texts introduce disciples' names in similarly constructed lists, share some of the same names (e.g., John, Jacob, Simon, Judah), and even include the professions of the two disciples (Matthew “the tax collector” and John “the shoemaker”). Thus parallels certainly exist between these two texts. However, there is no need to assume that the list in *Genesis Rabbah* depends upon the list in Matthew. Rather, it is well known that rabbis of the early centuries CE raised up disciples (cf. *m. Avot* 1:1), and it is not surprising that two Jewish teachers of roughly the same period should have gathered students.

Along with these similarities, differences also exist between the passages. In the context of *Gen. R.* 61:3, Aqiva raises up his seven disciples because twelve thousand of his previous disciples died after they were unwilling to impart Torah to one another. In response to the deaths of his previous students, Aqiva's seven disciples “arose and filled the whole of the Land of Israel

¹⁸¹ Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” 2.

with Torah.” While Jesus also urges his disciples go among the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6), his disciples do not spread knowledge of Torah, but rather heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons (10:8). According to Matthew, Jesus teaches Torah (cf. 5:1-18), not his disciples. Yet, after Jesus’ resurrection, he will tell his disciples to teach the Gentiles everything that he has taught them, including Torah (28:19). Thus, while the few immediate parallels between Mt 10:2-4 and *Gen. R.* 61:3 invite an initial comparison, the differences are such that one could never claim the two had a shared derivation, let alone be able to track any dependent relationship between the two.

In his concept of “world formation” or “world building,” William Paden offers a helpful way to account for similarity and difference in the comparative project without overly generalizing the relationship between the comparables. For Paden, communities form “worlds” that are populated with socio-cultural and religious particulars, including (but not limited to) collective identities, thought-systems, and ritual environments.¹⁸² Although these worlds are analogous in form, they differ in content. As an example, Paden notes the proclivity of cultures to establish festivals or rites associated with agricultural, seasonal, and/or chronological renewal, which he calls “a recurring type of observance with endless cultural contents.”¹⁸³ These comments cohere conceptually with the ways that Matthew and the rabbis create commemorative narratives that highlight the recurrence of historical events. The overarching “worlds” of renewal constitute the *forms* of observance, which may be outwardly similar from an agricultural

¹⁸² See William E. Paden, *New Patterns for Comparative Religion: Passages to an Evolutionary Perspective* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 96; cf. idem., “World,” in Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., *Guide to the Study of Religion* (London: Cassell, 2000), 334-50. For a formulation of religion as “world construction” before Paden, see Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), esp. 3-28.

¹⁸³ Paden, *Patterns*, 97.

perspective, but the *contents* of the observances might contain any number of disparate behaviors, rituals, deities, dances, or customs.

It is the duty of the comparativist to maintain the difference between the analogous forms and the diverse content. The comparison of world formations encourages what Paden calls a “bilateral comparativism” that travels in both directions of similarity and difference.¹⁸⁴ After identifying two or more analogous world constructions, the comparativist attempts, through the comparative act, to improve the understanding of particularities in relation to the initial generalization. Maintaining space within the discursive universe that these worlds inhabit will check the tendency to favor any particular world; both worlds exist in their own orbit, as it were, and the goal of the comparative enterprise is to allow both to remain on their own orbital course—that is, to avoid making sweeping oversimplifications about the “sameness” of either the worlds themselves, or their specific contents.

Paden likens worlds to languages: every culture has language of some kind (whether vocal or otherwise), and in that respect, analogies can be identified between languages; however, that two people speak their own languages does not mean that a speaker of one language will understand another. As with languages, there are a plurality of worlds whose contents must be understood before viable comparisons can be made.¹⁸⁵ Comparison, then, allows for mutual illumination of analogous, yet different, aspects of religious experience. As Paden puts it, “Comparative work makes the world-specific nature of religious existence intelligible. It shows how normal it is that a religious world configures and experiences the universe through its own

¹⁸⁴ William E. Paden, “Elements of a New Comparativism,” in Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 185.

¹⁸⁵ See William E. Paden, *Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 51-53.

focal symbols.”¹⁸⁶ In my comparison between Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, I will show that both texts constitute religious worlds populated by different focal symbols, though both texts use their symbols in similar ways. Thus, similarities will establish analogies between worlds (the NT and rabbinic “forms”), and the differences within those worlds (the NT and rabbinic “contents”) mutually illuminate further aspects and corollaries of both worlds.

Jonathan Z. Smith offers a way to avoid the kind of uncritical parallel hunting against which Sandmel warned, as well as to account for difference in comparison. He writes, “the options [for comparison] are expressed as the choice between ‘analogy’ and ‘genealogy’” with genealogy “establishing direction relations (borrowing and dependency)” and analogy identifying “apparent similarities [as] ‘parallelisms of more or less equal religious experiences.’”¹⁸⁷ To return to my earlier example of Jesus’ and Aqiva’s disciples, the fact that both teachers raised up students is an analogy of more or less equal religious experience, while positing that *Genesis Rabbah* borrowed the story of Aqiva’s disciples from Matthew would constitute genealogical comparison.

Analogy does not claim to track derivation or direction of events as a matter of historical fact; rather, it seeks to describe two entities that the scholar deems to be related in some ways, but not in others. For Smith, comparison requires “a methodological manipulation of difference, a playing across the ‘gap’ in the service of some useful end.”¹⁸⁸ It is up to the scholar making the

¹⁸⁶ William E. Paden, “Elements of New Comparativism,” *MTSR* 8 (1996): 5-14, here 12.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 47, 49.

¹⁸⁸ Jonathan Z. Smith, “In Comparison a Magic Dwells,” in *ibid.*, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), 35; cf. *idem.*, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 14.

comparison to determine what such a “useful end” might be, which means that it is also the responsibility of scholars to state their intellectual purpose in their comparisons.

In order to illustrate his analogical comparative method, Smith draws on “resemblance theory,” which seeks to describe fully the relationship(s) between entities. According to resemblance theory, “x resembles y” is an incomplete statement, since it does not account for any variations. Resemblance theory seeks to establish a “multi-term statement of analogy and difference capable of being properly expressed in the formulation such as: ‘x resembles y more than z with respect to...;’ or, ‘x resembles y more than w resembles z with respect to...’.”¹⁸⁹ Smith’s analogical approach goes beyond questions of dependence and historical origins (i.e., genealogical comparison) and instead encourages multiple levels of description in order to make sense of selected data and to understand the variables under investigation more fully.¹⁹⁰

To use an example from my target texts, both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* contain the “world” of Gehenna, and both texts describe it as a fiery place of post-mortem judgment or punishment for the wicked. *Gen. R.* 10:9 states that since the sixth day of creation, “Gehenna (גיהנום) has been burning for the wicked,” and Mt 5:22 notes that “whoever says, ‘You fool,’ will be liable to the Gehenna (γέεννα) of fire.” Yet, so many rabbinic views exist about Gehenna, even within the single corpus of *Genesis Rabbah*, that only the most irresponsible comparativist would stop at the similarities between these references to Gehenna and claim that one text is dependent on the other. Indeed, the differences are more pronounced than the similarities. For example, according to one rabbinic opinion, Gehenna will only last for one day (cf. *Gen. R.* 6:6; 26:6), but Matthew speaks of an “eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41).

¹⁸⁹ Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 51 (emphasis original).

¹⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, 52.

According to Smith, the comparativist would need to account for these sorts of differences in order to make a more substantive claim about the theology, sociology, or anthropology of Matthew and the rabbis than claiming that one idea is dependent upon the other.

While Smith affirms that similarity is the foundation upon which we can postulate perceived differences, he emphasizes the usefulness of difference over similarity. He notes that “difference” is a relative term that interacts with “sameness.” Difference “is an active term—ultimately a verbal form, *differe*, ‘to carry apart’—suggesting the separating out of what, from another vantage point, might be seen as the ‘same.’”¹⁹¹ Smith also underscores the distinction between relative and absolute difference,¹⁹² since the latter would constitute “uniqueness,” and uniqueness renders any comparison impossible.¹⁹³ There must be sufficient reason for an entity or text to invite comparison, and if one does not find *some* perceived similarity, then there is no reason to assume comparative worth. If, for example, Gehenna were not both places of post-mortem judgment in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, then there would be no reason to begin a comparative process between the two in the first place. While differences are important, for those differences to say anything constructive, they must be assessed in relation to similarities. As Robert Segal notes, scholars discover differences “exactly by seeking similarities, for differences begin where similarities end.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Jonathan Z. Smith, “Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other,” in *ibid.*, *Relating Religion: Essays in the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 241-42 (emphasis original).

¹⁹² See Jonathan Z. Smith, “What a Difference a Difference Makes,” in Jacob Neusner and E. S. Frerichs, eds., *To See Ourselves as Others See Us* (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1985), 3-48, esp. 15.

¹⁹³ See Smith, *Drudgery*, 36-46.

¹⁹⁴ Robert A. Segal, “Response to Peter Ochs’ ‘Comparative Religious Traditions,’” *JAAR* 74 (2006), 131.

Bruce Chilton offers an analogical approach to comparison between the NT and Targumim that attends to both similarity and difference. Chilton echoes Smith in his claim that the Targums’ “greatest use for the student of the New Testament lies in their provision, not of antecedents, but analogies.”¹⁹⁵ As I will compare Matthew with the Targums in chapter 5, I will conclude my comments on comparison with an example from Mt 4:6 and the Targum to Psalm 91 (c. 4th century CE).¹⁹⁶ While the Hebrew text of Psalm 91 asserts that those who God protects will not need to fear darkness or agricultural destruction, the Aramaic version is replete with references to demons of various kinds:

<p style="text-align: center;">Psalm 91:5-6, 10-11a MT</p> <p>You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday... no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For [God] will command his angels concerning you.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Psalms Targum 91:5-6, 10-11a</p> <p>You will not be afraid of the terror of the demons (מַזִּיקֵי) that go about in the night, nor of the arrow of the angel of death that he shoots in the daytime. Nor of the death that goes about in the darkness, nor of the company of demons (שִׂידֵי) that destroy at noon... No evil shall befall you, and no plague or demons (מַזִּיקֵי) shall come near your tent, for [God] will command his angels concerning you.</p>
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Matthew’s use of Ps 91:11-12 in Mt 4:6 has affinities with the targumic references to demons insofar as the evangelist puts the psalm on the lips of “the devil” (ὁ διάβολος; 4:5; 11), also called “Satan” (Σατανᾶ; 4:10). The devil takes Jesus to the highest point of the Temple and tells him, “If you are the Son of God... throw yourself down. For it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike

¹⁹⁵ Bruce Chilton, “Reference to the Targumim in the Exegesis of the New Testament,” in Eugene H. Lovering, ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* 34 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 80; cf. Idem., *Targumic Approaches to the Gospels: Essays in the Mutual Definition of Judaism and Christianity* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America), 1987; Idem., “From Aramaic Paraphrase to Greek Testament,” in Craig A. Evans, ed., *From Prophecy to Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 23-43.

¹⁹⁶ See David M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 2.

your foot against a stone' (Ps 91:11-12).” The fact that Gospel has the devil cite Psalm 91 not only shows that its writer understands the psalm similarly to the targumist—i.e., as a text associated with demonic forces—but also that Matthew recalls the verses prior to those quoted, which state that “you shall not be afraid” of said demons (cf. TgPs 91:5-6): Matthew has Satan recite a psalm that, in its targumic translation, explicitly takes authority away from him so that there is no reason for Matthew’s Jesus, or Matthew’s readers, to be afraid of the devil.

However, where the similarities between Matthew and the Targum end, differences begin: (1) the Targum references multiple demons, whereas Matthew has a single devil; (2) Matthew cites words (v. 12) of the psalm that do not contain reference to demons in the Targum; (3) the evangelist applies this verse to Jesus, “Son of God,” but the Targum has no reference to any kind of messianic or divine figure. While a comparison that stopped at initial similarities might posit a genealogical relationship between these texts, the differences point to an analogical relationship. More, based on the fact that Psalm 91 was also used as an apotropaic prayer both before Matthew’s first-century text (cf. Ps 90:5-6 LXX; 11Q11) and after the 4th century Targum (*b. Seb.* 15b; *Midr. Teh.* 91:3), it is clear that the demonic association with Psalm 91 comes from a common Jewish tradition in antiquity. Yet, knowledge of the Targum does shed light on Matthew that the evangelist does not make explicit, namely that Satan in Matthew’s Gospel cites the very text that Jewish readers would have know would drive him away. Indeed, a knowledge of contemporary Jewish literature is useful for understanding Matthew’s use of Scripture in Mt 4:6, and I will make the same argument via my comparison with the Gospel and the Targum in chapter 6.

Narrative Patterning: Citation, Allusion, and Metalepsis

The previous chapter surveyed scholarly understandings of New Testament and rabbinic exegesis as atomistic as well as voices favoring a more contextual approach. Challenging atomism as a generalizing theory, this section provides a framework of narrative patterning for reading both rabbinic and New Testament texts in light of the biblical contexts of their citations. Following a definition and detailed example of “narrative patterning,” I turn to the three literary methods that Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* employ to establish these patterns within their respective commemorative narratives: citation (both explicit and implicit), allusion, and metalepsis. Examples of citation, allusion, and metalepsis in Gospel and Midrash, with an emphasis on metalepsis, will provide a way for identifying narrative patterns in the New Testament and rabbinic texts treated in the chapters to follow.

Narrative patterning incorporates language, themes, and/or events from one text into another text; in so doing, it “compels the reader to interpret single incidents in the light of others to which they are closely related.”¹⁹⁷ The strength and complexity of a narrative pattern is dependent upon the amount of components from the precedent text (text A)—including citations (explicit or implicit) and significant terms or themes—incorporated into the dependent text (text B). Scholars have used various literary methods analogous to narrative patterning to describe this process of incorporating precedent texts into dependent texts, including intertextuality,¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ John Marincola, *Greek Historians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 69.

¹⁹⁸ In its most general sense, “intertextuality simply refers to the interconnections among texts.” Patricia K. Tull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” in Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes, eds., *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to the Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 165. Julia Kristeva coined the term “intertextuality” (*intertextualité*) in response to the prevailing structuralist approach that saw a text as a hermetic entity that should be analyzed independently from other texts or outside

mimesis,¹⁹⁹ and typology.²⁰⁰ I find “narrative patterning” the most helpful rubric because the terminology most closely parallels the idea of commemorative “narratives” that highlight

influences. She made the poststructuralist claim that the production of a text is based on its relation to other texts so that a new text finds its meaning(s) in dialogue, rather than in isolation. For Kristeva’s treatment(s) of intertextuality, see Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in Toril Moi, ed., *The Kristeva Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), esp. 36; idem., “Revolution in Poetic Language,” in *Kristeva Reader*, esp. 111; idem., “Semiotics: A Critical Science and/or a Critique of Science,” in *Kristeva Reader*, esp. 87; idem., *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), esp. 69. For biblical studies that cite and engage Kristeva, see e.g., Hull, “Rhetorical Criticism and Intertextuality,” 156-80; Gary A. Phillips, “Poststructural Intertextuality,” in B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise, eds., *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 106-27; Katherine Dell and Will Kynes, eds., *Reading Job Intertextually* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013); Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy A. Huizenga, eds., *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009); Leroy A. *The New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Kenneth D. Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God’s People Intertextually* (London: T&T Clark, 2005); Stefan Alkier, “From Text to Intertext – Intertextuality as a Paradigm for Reading Matthew,” *HTS* 61 (2005): 1-18; idem., “Intertextuality Based on Categorical Semiotics,” in Oropeza and Moyise, eds., *Exploring Intertextuality*, 128-50; Luz Ulrich, “Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew,” *HTR* 97 (2004): 119-37; Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 6-10; Danna Nolan Fewell, ed., *Reading Between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Sipke Draisma, ed., *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen: Kok, 1989).

¹⁹⁹ Mimesis (μίμησις), or its Latin equivalent, *imitatio*, is a device found in ancient Greek and Roman literature in which writers modeled their writing on previous, well-known narratives such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In his studies of mimesis in the New Testament and Second Temple literature, Dennis MacDonald argues that early Christians engaged in “literary imitation” of classical Greek epics. The majority of his findings highlight parallels in narrative structure, sequence, character, and theme, along with the use of similar terminology between the two corpuses. See Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), esp. 1-7; idem., *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), esp. 1-14; idem., *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts. The New Testament and Greek Literature, Volume I* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), esp. 3-19; idem., “Mimesis,” in Oropeza and Moyise, eds., *Exploring Intertextuality*, 93-105.

²⁰⁰ Typology is analogous to narrative patterning insofar as it seeks to identify how certain figures and events are patterned on previous figures and events. For the uses of typology related

“patterns” in the life of the group: commemorative narratives are formed by building narrative patterns upon which collective memory is based.²⁰¹

Regarding the literary mechanisms that contribute to the construction of narrative patterns, I propose three related categories “explicit citation,” “implicit citation,” and

to biblical sources, see G. W. H. Lampe, “The Reasonableness of Typology,” in G. W. H. Lampe and K. J. Woollcombe, *Essays on Typology* (London: W. and J. Mackay, 1957); K. J. Woollcombe, “The Biblical Origins and Patristic Development of Typology,” in *Essays*, esp. 40; M. D. Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964), 180-81; Edwin J. Wood, “Isaac Typology in the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 14 (1968): 583-89; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971), esp. 38; Bruce T. Dahlberg, “Typological Use of Jeremiah 1:4-19 in Matthew 16:13-23,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975): 73-80; David Daube, “Typology in Josephus,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 31 (1980): 18-36; Joseph P. Cahill, “Hermeneutical Implications of Typology,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44 (1982): 266-81; Victor J. Eldridge, “Typology – the Key to Understanding Matthew’s Formula Quotations,” *Colloquium* 15 (1982): 43-51; Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* [trans., Donald H. Madvig] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982); Joel Rosenberg, “Bible: A. Biblical Narrative,” in Barry W. Holtz, *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classical Jewish Texts* (New York: Summit, 1984), 51; Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 352-60; George Wesley Buchanan, *Typology and the Gospel* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Frances Young, “Typology,” in Stanley E. Porter, Paul Joyce, and David E. Orton, eds., *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 29-50; Marc Zvi Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 48-61; Kent Sparks, “Gospel as Conquest: Mosaic Typology in Matthew 28:16-20,” *Catholic Bible Quarterly* 68 (2006): 651-63; James M. Hamilton, “The Virgin Will Conceive’: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18-23,” in Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland, eds., *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 228-47; Benjamin J. Ribbens, “Typology of Types: Typology in Dialogue,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 5 (2011): 81-95; Daniel M. Gurtner, “‘Fasting’ and ‘Forty Nights’: The Matthean Temptation Narrative (4:1-11) and Moses Typology,” in Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, eds., *‘What Does the Scripture Say?’ Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 1-11; Richard Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology in the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012); Jonathan Kaplan, *My Perfect One: Typology and Early Rabbinic Interpretation of Song of Songs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

²⁰¹ See my comments on pp. 82-84 and Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 7.

“allusion.”²⁰² An explicit citation includes an introductory statement such as, “as it is said/as it is written” (שנאמר/דכתיב; ῥηθὲν/γέγραπται), or a reference to a specific biblical book or prophet. Both Gospel and Midrash consistently employ direct quotations. According to Mt 1:22-23, Jesus’ conception and birth fulfilled what the Lord had spoken “by the prophet, saying (διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος), ‘Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’” (cf. Isa 7:14 LXX). Similarly, according to *Gen. R.* 44:17, when Gen 15:12 says that “darkness fell” upon Abraham, the text “alludes to Babylon, as it is written (דכתיב), ‘Fallen, fallen, is Babylon’ (Isa 21:9).”

An implicit citation incorporates an antecedent text without explicitly demarcating it as such. Though implicit citations lack the formal introduction that characterizes an explicit quotation, their language substantially mirrors that of an identifiable precedent text.²⁰³ For example, when, in Mt 5:5, Jesus says that the “meek... shall inherit that land (οἱ πραεῖς... κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν),” Matthew provides an implicit citation of Ps 36:11a LXX: “But the meek shall inherit the land (οἱ δὲ πραεῖς κληρονομήσουσι γῆν).” Matthew’s Jesus does not introduce the citation, but the parallel phrasing clearly points to Ps 36:11. The more words in close proximity that the two texts share (i.e., words that comprise a phrase or sentence as opposed to single terms), the stronger the case for an implicit citation.

²⁰² My terminology is a slight variation on Andrew Glicksman’s terminology of “direct quotation,” “implicit citation,” and “general allusion.” I have chosen to make my changes because to call the first form of citation “direct” implies that the implicit citation is somehow “indirect.” Instead, both explicit and implicit citations are direct citations—they differ in whether they are introduced ahead of time or not. I removed “general” from Glicksman’s third reference because the allusions I will posit are specific. See “Andrew T. Glicksman, ‘“Set Your Desire on My Words’: Authoritative Traditions in the Wisdom of Solomon,” in Isaac Kalimi, Tobias Nicklas, Géza G. Xeravits, eds., *Scriptural Authority in Early Judaism and Ancient Christianity* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2013), 174.

²⁰³ See Sean A. Adams, “Reframing Scripture: A Fresh Look at Baruch’s So-Called ‘Citations,’” in Kalimi, et al., eds., *Scriptural Authority*, 65.

Single words can also refer to precedent texts, but, for the most part, it is difficult to show that isolated words are cited from a specific precedent text. Therefore, I refer to words that cannot be shown to be part of an antecedent phrase as “allusions.” The likelihood that a single word functions as an allusion to a precedent text depends upon the frequency with which the word appears in the dependent text, and the degree to which the word is used in similar contexts in both texts. For example, Mt 5:48—“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν)” —may allude to Lev 19:2 LXX: “You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy (ἅγιοι ἔσεσθε ὅτι ἅγιος ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν).” Although these verses share only two words, the words appear in similar contexts of exhortations to emulate divine attributes, and therefore Mt 5:48 constitutes a probable Matthean allusion to Lev 19:2 LXX.

Another method for narrative pattern formation is “metalepsis.” Richard Hays defines metalepsis as “a device that requires the reader to interpret a citation... by recalling aspects of the original context that are not explicitly quoted.”²⁰⁴ To discern a metalepsis, readers imagine an

²⁰⁴ Richard B. Hays, “Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul: Abstract,” in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 43; cf. idem., *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 20-23. Hays adopts the term from John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1981. For those who utilize Hollander’s formulation of metalepsis in literary studies, see Daniel Fischlin, *In Small Proportions: A Poetics of the English Ayre 1596-1622* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 169-190; Matthew Gibson, *Yeats, Coleridge and the Romantic Sage* (London: Macmillan, 2000), 88-89; Madhavi Menon, *Wanton Words: Rhetoric and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 85-86; Harold Bloom, “Whitman’s Image of Voice: To the Tally of My Soul,” in *ibid.*, *The American Renaissance* (New York: Chelsea House, 2004), 141. For those who follow Hays (and Hollander) in biblical studies, see Bruce Norman Fisk, *Do You Not Remember? Scripture, Story, and Exegesis in the Rewritten Bible of Pseudo-Philo* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 69; Kenneth Duncan Litwak, *Echoes of Scripture in Luke-Acts: Telling the History of God’s People Intertextually* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 52; Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 22-23; Ruth Sheridan, “The Testimony

ellipsis at the end of the citation; the reader fills in the ellipsis with material from the precedent text.²⁰⁵ Metalepsis engages readers in constructing narrative patterns—the writer incorporates words and phrases from the precedent text, and readers return to the broader context of the precedent text to make further connections between both texts. As Matthew Scott puts it, with its “structural reliance on the unsaid... metalepsis is formally contingent upon readerly activity, responding to (perceived) signals in a text left by a (constructed) author.”²⁰⁶ The author may have intended that readers would recall the context of the precedent text, but recourse to authorial intent is not necessary for metalepsis to produce meaning.

Explicit and implicit citation, allusion, and metalepsis all appear in the service of narrative patterning in Mt 2:15-20. The passage begins with an explicit citation of Hos 11:1b in the context of Jesus returning from Egypt after the death of Herod: “This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’ (ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου)” (Mt 2:15). While the Septuagint renders Hos 11:1b, “Out of Egypt I have called his children” (ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετεέκαλεσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ), Matthew’s Greek mirrors the Hebrew wording in describing one son called out of Egypt (ויממצרם קראתי לבני). Matthew thus supplies a distinct Greek rendering of the Hebrew.

Matthew’s explicit citation of Hos 11:1 also produces an example of metalepsis. The first part of Hos 11:1, which Matthew does not cite, states, “When Israel was a child, I loved him” (MT: וַאֲהַבְהוּ וְיִשְׂרָאֵל נַעַר לַיהוָה/LXX: διότι νήπιος Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐγὼ ἠγάπησα αὐτὸν). In its original

of Two Witnesses: John 8:17,” in Alicia D. Myers and Bruce G. Schuchard, *Abiding Words: The Use of Scripture in the Gospel of John* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 167; Jeannine K. Brown, “Metalepsis,” in Oropeza and Moyise, eds., *Exploring Intertextuality*, 29-41.

²⁰⁵ For metalepsis as ellipsis, see Hollander, *Figure of Echo*, 115.

²⁰⁶ Matthew Scott, *The Hermeneutics of Christological Psalmody in Paul: An Intertextual Inquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 6.

context, Hos 11:1 refers to Israel as God’s “son,” whereas Matthew applies the verse to Jesus. By omitting the first half of Hos 11:1, which refers to Israel, Matthew metaleptically points to a narrative pattern between Jesus and Israel: just as Israel was called out of Egypt as God’s son, so Jesus, God’s son, is called out of Egypt. Readers lacking knowledge of Hos 11:1 in its original context would miss this metaleptic connection between Israel and Jesus. For Matthew, Hos 11:1 speaks to the experiences of both Israel and Jesus, so that there is an “analogical correspondence” between the two.²⁰⁷ The Gospel writer uses metalepsis to establish a close relationship between Jesus and Israel; Jesus both recapitulates Israel’s history and becomes an individual representative of Israel as a whole.²⁰⁸

The rest of Mt 2:16-20 includes an allusion and an implicit citation that pattern the events of Jesus’ infancy on the life of Moses. Mt 2:19 states that when “Herod died” (τελευτήσαντος... τοῦ Ἡρώδου), an angel of the Lord (ἄγγελος κυρίου) appeared to Joseph in Egypt and told him to return to Israel. The reference in Mt 2:19 to Herod’s death (τελευτάω) followed by a description of an angelic visitation is likely an allusion to Exod 2:23 and 3:2 LXX.²⁰⁹ Speaking of Pharaoh who attempted to slaughter the Hebrew infants (see Exod 1:16-22), the antecedent text states,

²⁰⁷ Tracy L. Howard, “The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: An Alternative Solution,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (1986): 314-28, esp. 320-22. Similarly, others describe the relationship between Hos 11:1 and Mt 2:15 as “typological correspondence.” See Richard B. Hays, “The Gospel of Matthew: Reconfigured Torah,” *HTS* 61 (2005): 174; Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* [WBC] (Dallas: Word, 1993), 36; cf. Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 45-47; A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible: A Book of Basic Principles for Understanding the Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 253.

²⁰⁸ See George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 218; Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 215; Kynes, *Christology*, 20; Kennedy, *Recapitulation*, 143-47.

²⁰⁹ See W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew* [3 Volumes] (London: T&T Clark, 1988-1997), 1.271.

“the king died” (ἔτελεύτησεν ὁ βασιλεύς). After the king’s death, God hears the cries of the enslaved Hebrews (2:23-24) and sends an “angel of the Lord” (ἄγγελος κυρίου) to Moses (3:2). The likelihood of an allusion in Mt 2:19 to Exod 2:23 and 3:2 is strengthened by the notice that an angel appears to Moses soon after Pharaoh dies (see Exod 3:2)—the exact thing that happens to Joseph after Herod’s death. Moreover, just as Exod 2:23 calls Pharaoh a “king,” Matthew refers to Herod as a king several times leading up to 2:19 (cf. 2:1, 3, 9).

Matthew follows this allusion to Exod 2:23 and 3:2 with an implicit citation of God’s words to Moses in Exod 4:19 LXX; the words in Mt 2:20 echo the angel’s command to Joseph:

Exod 4:19 LXX “Go back to Egypt, for all those seeking your life have died (τεθνήκασιν γὰρ πάντες οἱ ζητοῦντές σου τὴν ψυχὴν).”

Mt 2:20 “Go to the land of Israel, for those seeking the child’s life have died (τεθνήκασιν γὰρ οἱ ζητοῦντες τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου).”

While Matthew omits “all” (πάντες), and replaces “your life” (σου τὴν ψυχὴν) with “the child’s life” (ψυχὴν τοῦ παιδίου), six words from Exod 4:19 LXX appear in the verse. This implicit citation continues the pattern between Moses and Jesus: both their lives were sought by evil “kings” who eventually die.

Finally, metalepsis reveals another possible Matthean allusion to Exodus three verses after 4:19 LXX, when Moses is to tell Pharaoh, “Thus says the Lord: Israel is my firstborn son (υἱός)” (Exod 4:21 LXX). This reference to Israel as God’s son parallels Matthew’s explicit citation of Hos 11:1 with reference to Jesus, the “son of God (θεοῦ υἱός)” (Mt 14:33 cf. Mt 4:3, 6; 8:29). When Matthew’s citations and allusions in 2:15-20 are read with ellipses—that is, metaleptically—a narrative pattern of events emerges that is shared between God’s sons, Israel and Jesus.

Genesis Rabbah also builds narrative patterns by coupling scriptural citations with metalepsis. *Gen. R.* 53:10 follows an implicit citation (lacking an introductory statement) with an explicit citation that functions metaleptically. First, the midrash partially cites Esther 2:18a: “The king made a great feast for all his officials and servants (המלך משתה גדול לכל שריו ועבדיו וייעש).” The implicit citation is then followed by an introduced citation of Deut 30:9: “Rabbi Judah ben Masparta said, ‘The king made a great feast’ (וייעש המלך משתה גדול) [implicit citation of Est 2:18]: the great One of the world was there, as it is written (דכתוב), ‘For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good’” (Deut 30:9 [explicit citation]). Rabbi Judah implicitly cites a four-word phrase from Esther 2:18. Then, to prove that God was present at the feast recorded in Esther, R. Judah gives an explicit, but partial, citation of Deut 30:9; the whole verse reads, “For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as he rejoiced over your ancestors.” In implicitly citing Est 2:18, R. Judah sees a fulfillment of the divine promise in Deut 30:9: through the “great feast” made for Esther, the heavenly King is again rejoicing over his people, just as he rejoiced over Esther’s ancestors according to Deut 30:9. While the midrash only cites the first half of Deut 30:9, knowledge of the entire verse is needed in order fully to understand the logic of the proof-text. This is another example of rabbinic exegesis that undercuts the notion that the rabbis viewed Scripture atomistically; in light of metalepsis, the explicit citation of Deut 30:9 establishes a narrative pattern between Esther and the Israelites in Deuteronomy.

Other instances of metalepsis in *Genesis Rabbah* recall larger passages of Scripture beyond the single verse; these instances also challenge Kugel’s assertion that midrash is “relentlessly verse-centered.”²¹⁰ For example, *Gen. R.* 5:7 discusses God’s command in Gen 1:9, which reads, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place (אל מקום אחד).” The

²¹⁰ Kugel, *Potiphar’s House*, 254.

rabbis ask how, if waters covered the whole earth, God could gather them all into one place. After implicitly citing Gen 1:9, the rabbis explicitly cite Num 20:10a for support that God, indeed, was able to gather all the waters into that little space. The midrash reads, “Now the world was full of water everywhere, yet you say, ‘into one place’ (אל מקום אחד) [implicit citation of Gen 1:9]? In truth, we learn that the little held the much. Likewise (וידכוותה), ‘Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock’” (Num 20:10a [explicit citation]). Solely based on these citations, the midrash uses the first half of Num 20:10 to argue that if Moses and Aaron could gather together the entire assembly of Israel before the rock (i.e., to one place), then God could similarly assemble all the world’s waters into one place. However, the stronger support for God’s creative activities appears in the narrative in Numbers that surrounds the cited verse:

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Take the staff and assemble the congregation, yourself, and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give a drink to the congregation and their cattle.” Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, along with their livestock. (Num 20:7-11)

In citing a small portion of Numbers 20:10, the midrash alludes to the verse’s broader context, where another instance of the deity assigning waters to one place (the rock) appears. Through metalepsis, *Gen. R.* 5:7 refers to the waters coming from a single rock—not a place where waters naturally appear—to demonstrate God’s ability to gather all the waters during creation. Thus, the rabbis propose a *qal v’homar* argument (an argument from the lesser to the greater): if God can make water flow out of a single rock, surely God can collect the waters together in a single place at the creation. The exegesis may *seem* atomistic at first glance, but the actual focus of the discussion is to be found beyond the border of the verse that is explicitly

cited. Thus, narrative patterning—including explicit and implicit citations, allusions, and metalepsis—is the hermeneutical process by which the rabbis and Matthew will associate individuals with biblical Israel.

Conclusion

As an aspect of collective memory, commemoration denotes the ways in which groups remember certain events, people, institutions, and observances. When commemoration occurs, it helps to form and reinforce collective identity. Communities often establish commemorative narratives in which they store information about the group that highlights recurring patterns in that group's history. Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are two such commemorative narratives, which use symbols as vehicles of meaning that concretize larger theological or ideological concepts, such as ritual observance, repentance, hope, and stability. These narratives employ both mimetic and declarative symbols that inform the group about how it should act and make a statement about a group's shared history or status.

I have described a comparative method that seeks to avoid what Samuel Sandmel called “parallelomania,” or the tendency of scholars to overdo supposed similarities between two text and then posit a dependent relationship between them. In response to parallelomania, Sandmel proposes both attention to difference and close description. William Paden's notion of world-building provides a theoretical approach for achieve Sandmel's twin ends. Paden understands the comparative project as being between religious “worlds” that all societies construct. While these worlds may be similar in form, their contents are different. Thus, while initial similarities open opportunities for comparison, the description of differences therein is what allows for deeper understanding of both worlds. Paden's bilateral approach to comparison seeks to allow both worlds to exist on their own terms, while also mutually informing one another. Jonathan Z.

Smith's conception of analogical vs. genealogical comparison is also helpful. While genealogical comparison seeks to establish dependence and diffusion, analogical approaches are interested in describing two more or less similar religious experiences, and then explicating their differences. Bruce Chilton's attention to analogies in comparing the NT and Targums offers a precedent for the analogical comparisons that I will make between Israel's Scriptures, Matthew, the Targums, and *Genesis Rabbah* in the following chapters.

The writers of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* build their respective symbols through narrative patterning, which occurs via citations, allusions, and metaleptic readings of Scripture—that is, alluding to the context of a cited verse beyond what is written. While the Matthean and rabbinic approaches to Scripture are similar, we must be attentive to difference in comparing the two. Both texts are products of different, but related, religious worlds with disparate content. In order to compare the two responsibly (and in order for the comparative project to be productive) we must attend to detailed description of each before comparison occurs, as well as focus on difference before stressing similarities.

The theoretical foundations in this chapter, particularly with regard to narrative patterning, metaleptic readings of Scripture, and notions of personified symbols, will inform my critique of the scholarly views of Israel “in exile” in the following chapter. The notion that Matthew's Israel is “in exile” comes from certain readings of the Matthean citations' original contexts. However, I will pay close attention to these contexts in order to argue that Matthew's citations do not show that Jesus or his people are in exile.

IV. CHALLENGING “ONGOING EXILE” IN MATTHEW AND RABBINIC LITERATURE

In the previous chapter, I showed that Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are commemorative narratives that build narrative patterns by metaleptically referring to Israel’s Scriptures. In the present chapter, I examine Matthew’s metaleptic use of Scripture—particularly in the Matthean fulfillment citations (Mt 1:23-4:15)—that attends to the original contexts of explicit citations. Based on the context of the fulfillment citations, Matthew scholars have argued that the evangelist understood the people of Israel, even those in the Land, to be living in an ongoing exile. Contrary to recent scholarship that holds this view of ongoing exile, my analysis will show that the first four chapters of the Gospel do not have Israel in exile. Instead, Matthew’s biblical citations build a narrative pattern between a landed biblical Israel and Matthew’s Israel in the Land. The master narrative that Matthew commemorates (Israel’s Scriptures) describes a people who await divine deliverance from oppressors *within their Land*, not a return from outside of it. Matthew presents Jesus recapitulating the salvific activities of both God and David, who saved Israel from attacks against the Land in the biblical period. The difference in Matthew’s own commemorative narrative is that instead of saving his people from military powers, Jesus “will save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21).

Beginning in the late 1960s, scholars began to propose that Jews of the Second Temple period and the early centuries CE—including the New Testament writers—understood themselves to be in a state of ongoing “exile” both inside and outside of the Land of Israel.²¹¹

²¹¹ See Odil H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten. Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967); Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century B.C.* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968); Michal Knibb, “The Exile in the Literature of the Intertestamental Period,” *HeyJ* 17 (1976): 253-72; Donald E. Gowan, “The Exile in Jewish Apocalyptic,” in Arthur L. Merrill and

Since Jews living within the borders of Israel were not displaced from the Land, scholars variously define “exile” in the Land to include existential problems, such as bondage to foreign rulers, lack of forgiveness, lack of a Davidic kingdom, a deficient human-divine relationship, and/or God’s absence from the people/Land.

According to my reading of Matthew’s Vineyard Parable and Passion Narrative in the following chapter (chapter 6), Jesus enters into exile on behalf of his people. More specifically, Jesus’ passion recapitulates the biblical captivity and exile to Babylon, and it is by going into his own “exile” to a Roman cross that Jesus saves the rest of the people from their sins. Yet, if these people are already living in exile, then the time for saving has already passed, which makes Jesus’ sacrifice redundant—one more person entering exile hardly helps those already in exile. Due, in part, to this inconsistency, I do not understand Matthew’s Israel as living in exile. More importantly though, the evidence that recent scholars have used to argue that the Matthew’s people are in exile—particularly from Matthew 1-4—does not support their claims.²¹²

This chapter proceeds in five parts. First, I show that the definition of “exile” (גולה, גלות/ἀποικεσία, μετοικεσία) in Israel’s Scriptures is limited to expulsion from one’s land and/or continued existence in the land to which one has been expelled. Thus, there is no biblical antecedent for Matthew understanding “exile” as anything other than physical expulsion from the

Thomas W. Overholt, eds., *Scripture in History and Theology: Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam* (Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1977); Wright, *New Testament*, esp. 268-72; Idem., *Jesus*, esp. 126-27, 203-04; Reid, “New Exodus,” in Longman and Reid, *Warrior*, 91-118; Craig A. Evans, “Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel,” in Newman, ed., *Restoration*, 77-100; Carolyn J. Sharp, “The Trope of ‘Exile’ and the Displacement of Old Testament Theology,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32 (2004): 153-69; Bradley Gregory, “The Postexilic Exile in Third Isaiah: Isaiah 61:1-3 in Light of Second Temple Hermeneutics,” *JBL* 126 (2007): 475-96; Jill Middlemas, *The Templeless Age: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the “Exile”* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Mbuvi, *Temple*; Halvorson-Taylor, *Enduring Exile*; Eubank, *Wages*, esp. 109-32; Piotrowski, *New David*.

²¹² See, esp., Eubank, *Wages*; Piotrowski, *New David*.

Land. Second, I summarize the “ongoing exile” theme in New Testament scholarship, particularly as conceived by N. T. Wright, and then offer a criticism of Wright’s view that the people and/or the God of Israel are in exile according to Matthew. Third, I treat Matthew’s genealogy and the fulfillment citations in the first four chapters (1:23; 2:15, 18; 2:23; 3:3; 4:15) to argue against the idea of ongoing exile in Matthean passages where scholars adduce it.

Fourth, because some rabbinic scholars have proposed a similar idea that the rabbis referred to subjugation within the Land as “exile” (גלות), I address the question of in-Land “exile” in rabbinic literature. I argue that, like Matthew (and the Tanakh), the rabbis define exile as expulsion, rather than subjugation in the Land. While rabbinic literature states that those who live outside of the Land are in “exile”—that is, Diaspora—the people who live in the Land of Israel are not in exile. Finally, I analyze *Genesis Rabbah* to show that the rabbis who compiled it (in the Land) drew on the pieces of the master commemorative narrative that they applied to their struggle within the Land under Rome, not exile from the Land.

The Definition of Exile in Israel’s Scriptures

The Hebrew term גולה (exile) comes from the root גלה: “to remove.”²¹³ When the term is applied to the people of Israel, it appears in contexts that describe removal from their homeland to a foreign land. For example, 2 Kgs 17:23: “The Lord removed (הסיר) Israel from before his face... so Israel was exiled (ויגל) from their own land to Assyria until this day.”²¹⁴ Once in Jeremiah (Jer 1:3) and twice in Amos (5:5; 6:7), the context does not explicate “removal,” but because elsewhere in both books גלה explicitly denotes removal from the Land (Jer 57:27; Amos

²¹³ *BDB*, 164-65.

²¹⁴ See 2 Kgs 24:14-16; 25:21; Isa 5:13; 49:21; Jer 24:5; 28:4-6; 29:1, 4, 16, 20, 22, 31; 40:1; 52:27, 31; Ezek 12:3; Amos 7:11, 17; Mic 1:16; Lam 1:3; cf. 2 Sam 15:19; Isa 20:4; Jer 46:19; 48:7, 11; 49:3; Amos 1:5-6 for the same meaning applied to other people.

7:11, 17), it is probable that it means the same in these more ambiguous instances. In Judges 18:30, גלות הארץ could mean “the captivity of the land” or “the sacking of the land,” but “the exile of the land” is also a viable option (particularly because in all other instances this is the most likely meaning). On rare occasions, the term can also refer to continued existence in the land to which people have been expelled. For example, Ezek 40:1 describes the prophet living in Babylon “in the twenty-fifth year of our exile (לגלותנו)... after the city [of Jerusalem] was struck down.”²¹⁵

The Septuagint translates the Hebrew גולה with ἀποικεσία (from ἀποικίζειν: to send away; settle; migrate; colonize)²¹⁶ or the synonym μεταικεσία, both of which describe geographical relocation and/or resettlement in a foreign land every time they are used in the LXX. Second Kings 24:16 states that Nebuchadnezzar “exiled (ἀπώκισεν) Jechoiachin to Babylon” and, of others in Israel, that “he exiled [them] (ἀποικεσίαν) from Jerusalem to Babylon.”²¹⁷ Similarly, 1 Chron 5:22 notes that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh “lived in their place until the exile (τῆς μεταικεσίας),” which denotes a physical expulsion from the land in which they formerly resided.²¹⁸ Thus, in Israel’s Scriptures, the terms for “exile” (גולה, גלות/ἀποικεσία, μεταικεσία) can be fairly narrowly defined as either removal from point A to point B, or continued existence at point B.

N. T. Wright and Ongoing Exile

²¹⁵ Cf. Ezek 1:2; 33:21; Obad 1:20.

²¹⁶ LSJ, 200.

²¹⁷ Cf. LXX Ezra 1:11; 2:1; 4:1; 9:4; 10:6-8, 16; Neh 7:6; Jer 13:19; 30:19; 31:7; 35:4, 6; 36:1; 36:4, 22, 31; 37:3, 18; 39:44; 40:7, 11; 47:1.

²¹⁸ Cf. LXX Jgs 18:30; 2 Kgs 24:16; Obad 1:20; Nah 3:10; Lam 1:7; Ezek 12:11.

The thesis that Second Temple and late first-century Jewish texts reflect the idea of ongoing exile first appeared in the late 1960s with Odil Steck and Peter Ackroyd, but N. T. Wright's contribution to the discussion in the 1990s has been the major catalyst for continued debate and development of the topic.²¹⁹ By broadening the biblical definition of exile as "expulsion" to include unfulfilled prophecies and bondage to Gentile rulers, Wright claims that first-century Jews, even those living in the Land of Israel, believed themselves to be in a state of ongoing exile. He argues that at the time the Gospels were written, Jews believed that "Israel's exile was still in progress. Although [Israel] had come back from Babylon, the glorious message of the prophets remained unfulfilled. Israel still remained in the thrall to foreigners; worse, Israel's god had not returned to Zion."²²⁰

Along with these understandings of exile as unfulfilled promises, foreign rule, and divine absence, Wright also presents exile as a metaphor for sin, and the return from exile as the forgiveness of sins: "*Forgiveness of sins* 'is another way of saying 'return from exile.'²²¹ Wright's broadest definition is "end of exile" as "shorthand" for the "Jewish expectation that

²¹⁹ For the first scholarship on "ongoing exile" see Steck, *Israel*; Ackroyd, *Exile*. For Wright's contributions, see Wright, *New Testament*, 268-72, 299-301; idem., *Victory*, esp. 126-27, 203-04. For extended studies after Wright, see, e.g., Evans, "Continuing Exile"; Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006); Brandt Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

²²⁰ Wright, *New Testament*, 268-69.

²²¹ Wright, *Jesus*, 268. Those who affirm Wright's basic equation of sin/forgiveness with exile/return have categorized it as an oversimplification. See Eubank, *Wages*, 112 n. 9; Fuller, *Restoration*, 49 n. 129.

Israel's god would once again act *within her history*.”²²² For Wright, Jesus restores divine activity within history. Thus, Wright moves away from the definition of exile in Israel's Scriptures in favor of various alternative definitions.

I count five definitions of “exile” in Wright's work: (1) unfulfilled divine promises, (2) sin and/or lack of forgiveness, (3) divine absence, (4) foreign control, and (5) divine inaction in history. In this section, I challenge the validity of Wright's five definitions. According to Matthew's master commemorative narrative (Israel's Scriptures), none of Wright's alternative definitions of exile holds. Wright's claim that Matthew's Gospel is “the story of exile” misrepresents the claims of the storyteller.²²³

Wright's first definition of exile is any as-yet unfulfilled prophetic promises. He states, “the real return from exile had not yet occurred... [judging by] the still-unfinished story of the creator, the covenant people, and the world.”²²⁴ For Wright, because some of the prophecies that were meant to follow the return from exile in Babylon did not come to fruition—e.g., the glory of the Lord filling the Temple (1 Kgs 8:10-11; Ezek 43:1-7) and the visible return of the Lord to Zion (Isa 52:8)—this must mean that the exile is still ongoing.²²⁵ Yet, I see no lack of fulfillment in these texts. First, the argument that the glory of the Lord filling the Temple in Ezekiel 43 did not occur because the later prophets do not mention it is an argument from silence. Second, the

²²² Wright, *Jesus*, xviii (emphasis original). For similar definitions of exile as a metaphor for other concerns, cf. idem., “Theology, History and Jesus: A Response to Maurice Casey and Clive Marsh,” *JSNT* 69 (1998): 105-12, esp. 111; idem., “In Grateful Dialogue: A Response,” in Newman, ed., *Jesus and the Restoration*, 244-77, esp. 258-61; idem., *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2005), 139-40.

²²³ Wright, *New Testament*, 385.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

²²⁵ For Wright's references to 1 Kgs 8:10-11, Ezek 43 and Isa 52:8 as examples of unfulfilled promises, see Wright, *New Testament*, 269.

visible return of the Lord to Zion (Isa 52:8), which Wright claims was left unfulfilled, is presented *as having already occurred* in Isaiah: “For eye to eye they see the return of the Lord to Zion (בְּשׁוֹב יְהוָה צִיּוֹן)... for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem (כִּי־נַחַם יְהוָה עַמּוֹ גָּאֹל יְרוּשָׁלַם)” (Isa 52:8-9).

Second, Wright argues that because Israel’s sins have not been forgiven, their exile is not over.²²⁶ He claims, “Exile will be undone when sin is forgiven.”²²⁷ Wright sees in the Prophets a two-step process: Israel’s sins are forgiven and then Israel returns from exile. Thus, insofar as Jesus is sent to “save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21) by shedding his “blood of the covenant... for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:23), the cross accomplishes step one (forgiveness), which enacts step two (the end of exile). There is no question that some of the texts Wright cites, particularly from Deutero-Isaiah, reflect this progression from forgiveness to return. For instance, Isa 40:2 states, “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received double from the Lord’s hand for all of her sins” (cf. Isa 43:25-44:3; 52:13-53:12).²²⁸ However, in the majority of his biblical examples, it is not that sins are forgiven first, then exile ends, but the opposite: exile ends, and then sins are forgiven. Wright cites Ezek 36:24-26 to show that return from exile is contingent upon forgiveness of sins, but the text actually puts the return before forgiveness.²²⁹ God declares to the exiles in Babylon,

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and I

²²⁶ See Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., 273.

²²⁸ For Wright’s citation of passages from Deutero-Isaiah, see *Jesus*, 270.

²²⁹ Wright, *New Testament*, 273; idem., *Jesus*, 269.

will put a new spirit in you; I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

According to Wright, because God tells the people that they will return to the Land, this must mean that God has forgiven their sin. He states, “If Israel’s god was to deliver his people from exile, it could only be because he had somehow dealt with the problem which had caused her to go there in the first place, namely her sin.”²³⁰ Elsewhere, he asserts, “‘*Forgiveness of sins*’ is another way of saying ‘return from exile.’”²³¹ Wright misses the fact that return from exile occurs *before* forgiveness of sins; God brings the people back to their Land and *then* cleanses them of their sin.

This two-stage process is confirmed in the verses that follow Wright’s citation of Ezek 36:24-26, which state that Israel is made clean only once they dwell in the Land: “And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to *walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land* that I gave to your ancestors, and you shall be my people and I will be your God. *And I will deliver you from all your uncleanness*” (Ezek 36:27-29a).²³² Ezekiel’s language echoes that of the Torah, for which “walking in God’s statutes” and “obeying God’s rules” are how the Israelites “dwell securely in the Land” (Lev 25:18). Conversely, refusal to fulfill God’s “rules” and “statutes” results in Israel being “vomited out” of the Land (Lev 18:26). Thus, Ezekiel’s description of the people observing God’s statutes and rules necessitates their being in the Land—it is there that God will deliver Israel from all its uncleanness (i.e., forgive Israel’s sins).

The “return—forgiveness” progression appears again in Ezek 37:21-23:

²³⁰ Wright, *New Testament*, 272.

²³¹ Idem., *Jesus*, 268 (emphasis original).

²³² My emphasis.

Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and will bring them back to their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel.... They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from their waywardness into which they have fallen, and will cleanse them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

While Wright cites this passage to show that the notion that forgiveness of sins effects the return from exile “could hardly be clearer,” the text has Israel coming back from exile and then being cleansed.²³³

The same “return—forgiveness” progression appears in other prophetic texts that Wright cites as evidence of the opposite (i.e., forgiveness followed by return). He offers two passages from Jeremiah, in which God states,

I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.... This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law in them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will one teach his neighbor and his brother, saying “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jer 31:31-33)

I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. *I will restore the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.* (Jer 33:6-8)²³⁴

Although this is my own translation, I have added emphasis to the same words that Wright italicizes in his own work.²³⁵ My emphasis is to show that *first* Israel is restored and rebuilt and *then* Israel’s sins are forgiven. Apparently, Wright emphasizes the same text because he thinks it

²³³ Wright, *Jesus*, 270.

²³⁴ Although this is my own translation, I have added emphasis to the same words that Wright italicizes in his own work (see Wright, *Jesus*, 269). My emphasis is to show that *first* Israel is restored and rebuilt and *then* Israel’s sins are forgiven. Apparently, Wright emphasizes the same text because he thinks it shows the opposite.

²³⁵ See *ibid.*, 269.

shows the opposite progression. Based on these passages, Wright argues, “Since covenant renewal means the reversal of exile, and since exile was the punishment for sin, covenant renewal/return from exile *means* that Israel’s sins have been forgiven – and vice versa.”²³⁶

However, Wright’s conclusions about the Jeremiah passages do not reflect what they say. In the first passage, God makes a new covenant with Israel and puts the Torah within them; *then* God forgives their iniquity. In the second passage, God rebuilds Israel “as they were at first,” and *then* cleanses them of their sins. Wright incorrectly states that return from exile means that Israel’s sins “have been” forgiven; the texts state that return from exile means that Israel’s sins *will be* forgiven. Wright’s “and vice versa” obviates the chronological process. Just as return from exile does not “mean” forgiven sins, forgiveness does not “mean” return from exile. Exile ends, *then* sin is forgiven. “Return” and “forgiveness” are not two different ways of saying the same thing, but rather two distinct steps: the people of Israel must come back from exile if they are to be cleansed. To apply this Prophetic logic to the Gospel of Matthew, in order for Jesus to “save his people from their sins” (Mt 1:21), those people must be living in their Land.

Indeed, Wright unnecessarily jumps to defining “sin” in the Land as “exile.” I see no reason to do this because, according to the biblical narrative, people sin in the Land and are exiled from it as a result of that sin: “The Lord could no longer carry your evil deeds and the abominations that you committed. Therefore your Land has become a desolation and a waste and a curse, without inhabitant” (Jer 44:22). As Luke Timothy Johnson points out, Wright’s “discussion of the forgiveness of sins... might just barely be brought within the theme of ‘return from exile,’ but it is neither a necessary part of that theme, nor explicable only in terms of that

²³⁶ Ibid., 269 (emphasis original).

theme.”²³⁷ Also, because sin is a phenomenon that occurs *in the Land* and *results* in exile—sin being the cause and exile the effect—it is not appropriate to equate sin with exile.

Wright next defines exile as God’s absence from Israel. He claims, “Israel’s god had not returned to Zion.”²³⁸ But this is does not hold for Matthew since God is present in the Temple. Jesus tells the Pharisees, “Whoever swears by the Temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it” (Mt 23:21-22). Jesus thus confirms that God already dwells in the Jerusalem Temple.²³⁹ The reference to heaven as God’s throne alludes to Isa 66:1: “Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool” (cf. Mt 5:34-35; Acts 7:49). Even as God sits in heaven, God’s feet rest on earth. More, since Jesus’ descriptions of God in the Temple and in heaven parallel one another, Matthew clarifies that just as surely as God dwells in heaven (cf. 5:16, 34-35, 45, 48, 6:9; 12:50; 18:19), God also dwells in the Temple.

The fourth definition Wright offers is exile as foreign control of those in the Land. As Wright puts it, “This could not be clearer: Israel has returned to the land, but is still in the ‘exile’ of slavery, under the oppression of foreign overlords.”²⁴⁰ However, lack of autonomy is fully comprehensible independent of exile, since Israel does not need to be separated from their Land (or “feel” separated from their Land) in order to suffer under foreign rule (e.g., Jgs 13:1; 14:4).

²³⁷ Luke Timothy Johnson, “A Historiographical Response to Wright’s Jesus,” in Newman, ed., *Jesus and the Restoration*, 212.

²³⁸ Wright, *New Testament*, 269.

²³⁹ Cf. Maurice Casey, “Where Wright is Wrong: A Critical Review of N. T. Wright’s *Jesus and the Victory of God*,” *JSNT* 69 (1998): 95-103, esp. 99.

²⁴⁰ Wright, *New Testament*, 269.

The Tanakh describes slavery under foreigners while Israel is in the Land, and in these descriptions, it offers no hint that the people are somehow in “exile” (cf. Ezra 9:8-9; Neh 9:36).

Finally, Wright sees “exile” as a lack of divine activity, and claims that, in Matthew’s day, Jews hoped that “Israel’s god would once again act *within her history*.”²⁴¹ With application to the Gospel, the argument goes: (1) Matthew begins with a definition of “exile” as divine inaction and (2) presents Jesus acting within Israel history, thus (3) Matthew believes that Israel was in exile before Jesus. However, this reading of Matthew assumes what it is trying to prove—namely, that Matthew equates exile with a lack of divine action. This is something of an unfair argument because, apart from the genealogy, Matthew does not comment on pre-Jesus history. Yes, Matthew’s Jesus acts within history, but we have no evidence that Matthew thought God *was not* acting beforehand. In fact, as Matthew has Jews returning to Israel under Zerubbabel (1:12-13), the evangelist alludes to God’s work in the return. More, Matthew’s Jesus states that God actively “feeds” (τρέφει) the birds of the air (6:26), so for birds to be alive at the time of Jesus, God must have been active in history before Jesus’ arrival. The notion that Matthew would believe that God had been inactive from 586 BCE to the first century CE requires a complete dismissal of the entire post-exilic strand of literature in Israel’s Scriptures. Since Matthew quotes from the post-exilic material (e.g., Zec 9:9 at Mt 21:5), we have no reason to think that Matthew’s God has been inactive since the Babylonian exile.

Following Wright, other scholars have offered variations on Matthew’s supposed ongoing exile motif. Nathan Eubank builds on Wright’s thesis by arguing that Matthew’s Jesus is “the one who will bring about the end of ‘exile’ by paying the debt of sin.”²⁴² While, as I will

²⁴¹ Idem., *Jesus*, xviii (emphasis original).

²⁴² Eubank, *Wages*, 109. For his use of Wright’s work on exile, see *ibid.*, 112.

confirm in the next chapter, Matthew does depict Israel as in debt to sin and does depict Jesus as saving his people by paying off their debt, Eubank (like Wright) overstates his case by requiring the people to be “in exile” for Jesus to save them. The biblical narrative gives no reason to assume that people “in sin” are people “in exile.” More recently, Nicholas Piotrowski has agreed with Wright and Eubank that Matthew’s Israel is in exile, but he defines “exile... *as Israel without a Davidic king.*”²⁴³ For Piotrowski, Matthew presents Jesus as a new David who will reestablish Davidic rule in Israel, and thereby end Israel’s “exile.” Piotrowski is certainly correct that Matthew’s Jesus restores Davidic kingship to Israel, but Matthew does not equate exile with a lack of Davidic rule. As “son of David” (Mt 1:1), Matthew’s Jesus comes to assume the Davidic throne, but the people do not need to be “in exile” for Jesus to do that.

Indeed, I see no reason to describe the situation we find in Matthew as “exile.” Israel’s Scriptures do not affirm any of Wright’s alternative definitions, and the ongoing sin and foreign presence with which Matthew’s Israel lives are explicable without recourse to “exile.” Indeed, based on Wright’s assertions, the jump to “exile” is a completely unnecessary addition to the story of Matthew’s Gospel. However, since Wright’s work on the topic of exile, both Eubank and Piotrowski have analyzed Matthew’s opening four chapters to argue that they describe Israel in exile. In the following sections on Matthew’s genealogy (1:1-17) and fulfillment citations (1:23-4:15) I challenge these arguments for ongoing exile as well.

Matthew’s Genealogy (Mt 1:1-17)

²⁴³ Nicholas G. Piotrowski, “‘After the Deportation’: Observations in Matthew’s Apocalyptic Genealogy,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25 (2015): 189-203, here 198.

Several scholars deduce a reference to ongoing exile in Matthew's genealogy (Mt 1:1-17).²⁴⁴ As Piotrowski makes the most recent and thorough case, I will summarize his points and then offer an alternative reading that highlights Jesus' own upcoming exile (his being handed over to the Romans and dying on the cross), rather than the nation's ongoing exile.

Piotrowski gives two main reasons to infer Matthew's ongoing exile from Mt 1:1-17. First, he sees a chiasmic structure in the genealogy, which begins: "Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1b). The genealogy then proceeds in three sections: the first lists the names from Abraham to David (1:2-6a) and thus begins a chiasmic response to the "Jesus-David-Abraham" sequence. This sequence prepares the reader for what should be a final list of names from David to Jesus, which would complete the chiasm: "Jesus-David-Abraham" followed by "Abraham-David-Jesus." However, Matthew interrupts this chiasmic structure by listing names not from David to Jesus, but from David to "the Babylonian exile" (τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος) (1:6b-11), and the Babylonian exile to Jesus (1:12-16). That Matthew interrupts an otherwise neat chiasm with "the Babylonian exile" becomes clear when one reads 1:1's "Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham" alongside 1:17, which references the generations "from Abraham to David... from David to the Babylon exile and from the Babylonian exile to the Christ." This intrusion of τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος into the otherwise balanced chiasmic genealogy, so the

²⁴⁴ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.180, 187-88; Wright, *New Testament*, 385-386; Evans, "Continuing Exile," 99-100; idem., *Matthew*, 37; France, *Matthew*, 29-30; Kennedy, *Recapitulation*, 76-79; 93-100, 108; Hood, *Messiah*, 83-86, 155-56, 159-62; Eubank, *Wages*, 110; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* [NAC] (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 53; Donald J. Versepunt, "The Davidic Messiah and Matthew's Jewish Christianity," in Eugene H. Lovering, Jr., ed., *Society of Biblical Literature 1995 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 107-08; Mervyn Eloff, "Exile, Resotation and Matthew's Genealogy of Jesus Ο Χριστος," *Neot* 38 (2004): 75-87.

argument goes, suggests that Jesus' birth responds to the problem of ongoing exile. Specifically, Jesus will bring the as-yet-incomplete Babylonian exile to an end.²⁴⁵

In tandem with the exilic intrusion into the genealogy, Piotrowski highlights Mt 1:12, which states, “And after the Babylonian exile: Jechoniah begat Shealtiel, and Shealtiel begat Zerubbavel.” The accusative construction of μετὰ... τὴν μετοικεσίαν Βαβυλῶνος (“after the Babylonian exile”) is followed immediately by the reference to Shealtiel's birth (in Babylon). Piotrowski correctly notes that “after the Babylonian exile” introduces the period just after the physical deportation to Babylon—the expulsion from point A to point B—rather than the period after Israel's return from 70 years in exile.²⁴⁶ Since 1:12 only refers to the time after the actual deportation, and since Matthew never explicitly mentions a “return” from the exilic captivity into which Shealtiel is born, Piotrowski argues that Matthew sees Israel in an ongoing exile until the advent of Jesus. Moreover, because the deportation to Babylon meant the historical cessation of Davidic kingship, the exile “has not come to a satisfying conclusion insofar as the Davidic throne remains vacant.... With Jesus Christ, therefore, the end of exile is now in view insofar as he is the rightful Davidic heir, the one who will finally reverse the theologically tragic μετοικεσία.”²⁴⁷

Piotrowski is correct that Mt 1:12 refers to the period after the deportation, and that Matthew does not mention “the return from Babylon” explicitly. However, he downplays the role of Zerubbavel, whom Matthew mentions in 1:12-13—the figure who would repair the

²⁴⁵ See Piotrowski, “Deportation,” 193-94; cf. Evans, “Jesus,” 99; Wright, *New Testament*, 386; Eubank, *Wages*, 110.

²⁴⁶ See Piotrowski, “Deportation,” 196.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 196, 198.

Davidic line that was broken in exile.²⁴⁸ Zerubbavel was the governor of Judah who led Israel back to the Land and rebuilt the Temple (cf. Ezra 2:1-2; 3:2-8; 4:2-3; 5:2; Neh 7:7; 12:1; Hag 1:12-14; Zec 4:6-10). Piotrowski correctly notes that Zerubbavel’s governance is by no means a restoration of the Davidic *kingdom*,²⁴⁹ but Zerubbavel *is* the means by which God repairs the Davidic *line* that was broken during the reign of his grandfather, Jechoniah. According to Jer 22:24, even if Jechoniah, called Coniah, “were a signet ring” (חֲתָמִים/ἀποσφράγισμα) on God’s right hand he would be torn off. Haggai, however, has God telling Zerubbavel, “I will... make you like a signet ring (חֲתָמִים/σφραγίδα), for I have chosen you” (Hag 2:23). Therefore, God reinstates Zerubbavel as the Davidic heir to take over from the rejected Jechoniah.²⁵⁰ Zerubbavel is not a king, and his sons do not succeed him, but without him Jesus could never be called “son of David” because Zerubbavel repairs the broken Davidic line of which Jesus is a part. According to Piotrowski’s definition of μετακεία as the expulsion from Israel to Babylon, it is Zerubbavel, not Jesus, who “reverse[s] the theologically tragic μετακεία.”²⁵¹ The exiles return to the Land with Zerubbavel, which makes it possible for Jesus to be “born in Bethlehem of Judea” (2:1) as a “son of David” (1:1).

²⁴⁸ For Piotrowski’s treatment of Zerubbavel, see *ibid.*, 197.

²⁴⁹ See *Ibid.*, 197.

²⁵⁰ Jewish tradition also notes the connection between God tearing the signet ring from Coniah in Jer 22:24 and replacing it for Zerubbavel in Hag 2:23. *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* claims God did because Coniah repented: “Great is the power of repentance, which led God to set aside an oath even though it [also] led [God] to set aside a decree. What is the proof that a man’s repentance led [God] the oath he made in the verse: ‘As I live, says the Lord, although Coniah son of Jehoiakim were the signet ring on my right hand, I would pluck you off’ (Jer 22:24)? The proof is in the verse in which Scripture says, ‘In that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, Zerubbavel... and make you like a signet ring’ (Hag 2:23)” (*PRK* 24:11).

²⁵¹ Piotrowski, *New David*, 198.

Matthew establishes at the outset of the genealogy that Jesus is “son of David, son of Abraham” (1:1b). Jesus’ filial relationship with David and Abraham should therefore be read vis-à-vis the intrusion of the μετοικεσία Βαβυλῶνος, which appears alongside Abraham and David in Mt 1:17: “Abraham to David... David to the Babylon exile and from the Babylonian exile (μετοικεσία Βαβυλῶνος) to the Christ.” As Jesus is a “son” of Abraham and David, then 1:17 also presents him as a “son” of the Babylonian exile; the intrusion of μετοικεσία foreshadows that fact that Jesus will have as close a relationship with “exile” as he does with Abraham and David. Rather than claiming that Jesus’ birth puts an end to an ongoing national exile, Matthew alludes to the fact that Jesus will undergo his own personal exile in his death, which the Gospel will underscore in the many references to Israel’s exilic captivity to Babylon in the Passion Narrative.²⁵²

Finally, too much focus on Mt 1:17 is problematic because it is only the brief summary of the genealogical details that come before it. Read as a whole, the genealogy traces a series of peaks and troughs in Israel’s history: Abraham to David (inception to peak), David to exile (peak to nadir), and exile to Christ (nadir to pinnacle).²⁵³ The names between “exile” and “Christ” mark the passage of time that leads to the zenith of Jesus’ arrival; prior to Christ, Israel began to climb from the low-point of exile so that Jesus represents another David-like summit in Israel’s history. Jesus is the capstone of an Israel that has already been moving in the right direction, and such movement would necessitate being dislodged from exile. I agree with Piotrowski and others that the Babylonian exile meant the loss of the Davidic kingdom, and that Matthew presents

²⁵² See chapter 6.

²⁵³ Cf. Piotrowski, “Deportation,” 198; Kennedy, *Recapitulation*, 97.

Jesus as the rightful Davidic heir who will restore Davidic kingship.²⁵⁴ However, to equate a vacant Davidic throne with exile, as Piotrowski does, is unwarranted, since the lost Davidic kingdom is an effect of exile, not exile itself. As Matthew's use of μετοικεσία shows, the Gospel defines exile as the physical expulsion to Babylon (a one-time event that is long over by Jesus' day), and Matthew is also aware that first-century Israel lacks a Davidic kingdom. As much as the absence of a Davidic king may accentuate the problem of a people in captivity to sin within their Land, there is no need to conflate this problem of sin with a supposed ongoing "exile."

Matthew's Scriptural Citations in 1:23-4:16

Matthew cites Israel's Scriptures seven times with reference to events of Jesus' early life (cf. 1:23; 2:6, 15, 18, 23; 3:3; 4:15-16). Recently, scholars have paid close attention to the biblical contexts of these quotations to argue that the First Gospel presents Jesus as the one who puts an end to ongoing exile. According to Eubank, the "opening chapters of Matthew show that the end of Israel's exile is at hand with the advent of Jesus.... All the quotations come from passages that deal with the coming restoration of the Davidic monarchy or the end of exile."²⁵⁵ Piotrowski's monograph on the Davidic and exilic motifs in Matthew's fulfillment citations expands upon Eubank's claims.²⁵⁶

²⁵⁴ With Piotrowski, see Kennedy, *Recapitulation*, 97-100; Hood, *Messiah*, 85; Merrill Kitchen, "Another Exile: 'Jesus and His Brothers' in the Gospel of Matthew," *ABR* 59 (2011): 1-12, esp. 3-4.

²⁵⁵ Eubank, *Wages*, 110-11 cf. 132.

²⁵⁶ Piotrowski [*New David*, 18] states, "Those who have focused on the quotations [in Mt 1:23-4:16] have overlooked... their OT contexts insofar as those contexts are consistently Davidic and/or exilic." To this statement he appends a footnote [n. 80], which reads, "Recently Eubank has made the passing comment, 'This is either an extraordinarily remarkable seven-fold coincidence, or a deliberate attempt to evoke, not only the words explicitly cited, but the oracles and narratives of which they are a part' (*Wages*, 111)." Eubank's is not a "passing comment." He

Despite such scholarly claims that the citations in Mt 1:23-4:16 demonstrate that Israel remains in exile, a metaleptic reading shows the majority of these citations do not allude to an exiled people. Rather, in narrating Jesus' early life in tandem with Scripture, Matthew creates a narrative pattern between biblical Israel in the Land, and Jesus' people in the Land. Twice (Mt 2:15, 18) Matthew's citations describe the biblical exiles, but these citations parallel Jesus' own "exile" when Joseph takes him into, and out of, Egypt. While Matthew explicates that Jesus will save his people from their sins (1:21), the Gospel provides no evidence that he will save his people from their exile. As Piotrowski shows convincingly, Matthew's Jesus is to assume David's royal role: therefore, he must save his people from their sin *in the Land* because David saved his people from foreign invaders *in the Land*—David did not save his people from exile. The difference between Israel's Scripture and Matthew is that David saved from military threats, while Jesus "will save his people from their sins" (1:21).

Mt 1:23: Jesus as Immanuel

The sequence of Matthew's fulfillment citations begins with Isa 7:14b: "Behold, the young woman/virgin (MT: עלֵמָה/LXX: παρθένος) shall bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew cites this verse with reference to Jesus' birth: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive a bear a son, and his name shall be called Immanuel (which means, 'God is with us')'" (1:22-23). The original context of Isa 7:14 describes the defense of Israel from outside forces, not the return of an exiled people. The promised birth of a son in Isa 7:14 is a sign to the "house of David" (7:13) in response to King Ahaz's fear that both Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel are about to attack

asserts that Matthew takes the fulfillment citations from "passages that deal with the coming restoration of the Davidic monarchy or the end of exile" (110-11) and dedicates nine pages to arguing his case (111-20).

Jerusalem. At the beginning of the chapter, Isaiah states that the kings of Syria and Israel “came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it,” but could not prevail against it. When the house of David hears that “Syria has rested upon Ephraim, [Ahaz’s] heart, and the heart of his people, shook as the trees of the forest shake in the wind” (Isa 7:1-2). Isaiah tells Ahaz not to fear because God will not allow Syria and Ephraim to destroy Judah (7:7-9). The child, Immanuel, will be the sign of deliverance: “For before the boy [Immanuel] knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted” (7:15).

Based on Isaiah’s references to the “house of David” (7:2, 13), Matthew’s citation of Isa 7:14 makes Jesus’ birth the fulfillment of a divine sign to the entire people, not just Ahaz.²⁵⁷ However, Isaiah says nothing about exile or return because, at this point, no one in Israel has been exiled. To the contrary, Remaliah, the king of Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) is threatening to attack Ahaz, the king of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). Both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms currently have functioning kings, which means neither kingdom is in exile. It is only after Assyria comes to Judah’s aid against Ephraim that Tiglath-pileser III exiles some of the people in the Northern Kingdom c. 732 BCE (cf. 2 Kgs 15:29; 1 Chron 5:26).

Although Piotrowski is aware that Isa 7:14 alludes to Judah’s protection from northern invasion (as opposed to the coming end of exile), he still reads Mt 1:23 as pointing to the end of Israel’s first-century exile. He states that in its original context “the Immanuel prophecy was fulfilled as David’s house was preserved and spared from exile,” but that Mt 1:23 “is fulfilled as

²⁵⁷ See Eubank, *Wages*, 114; Piotrowski, *New David*, 44 cf. Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 87; Rikki E. Watts, “Immanuel: Virgin Birth Proof Text or Programmatic Warning of Things to Come (Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23)?” in Craig A. Evans, ed., *From Prophecy to Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 92-113; James M. Hamilton, Jr., “The Virgin Will Conceive’: Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18-23,” in Nolland, ed., *Rock*, 228-47; Maria Theresia Ploner, *Die Schriften Israels als Auslegungshorizont der Jesusgeschichte: eine narrative und intertextuelle Analyse von Mt 1-2* (Stuttgart: Bibelwerk, 2011), 266-67.

David's house is re-established after exile."²⁵⁸ Yet, since Isa 7:14 predicts the preservation of Israel from exile (which is fulfilled in the defeat of the threatening Syrian and Israelite kings), then Mt 1:23 should also point to preservation from exile, rather than an ingathering after exile. In Matthew, as in Isaiah, Israel is spared from exile, not living in it. Matthew claims that just as Immanuel was a sign of deliverance from foreign aggression against the Land in Isaiah's day, so too will Jesus' birth effect salvation from the sin that affects the people in the Land.²⁵⁹ Jesus' advent marks the coming salvation from sin, not in the time of Syria and Ephraim, but during the reign of the Roman Empire.²⁶⁰

Thus, a metaleptic reading of Mt 1:23 shows that the broader context of Isa 7:14 describes a people in their Land—Matthew's narrative pattern between Israel and Jesus shows the Mary's son will also be born in the Land among a landed people. Drawing on the master commemorative narrative, Matthew commemorates the birth of Immanuel to a young woman who lives in a threatened Land. However, the biblical and Matthean worlds are not exactly the same, since Isaiah's master narrative has the people of Judah under threat from enemies (both foreign and domestic) whereas Matthew has sin looming over Jesus' people (1:21).

Mt 2:6: Jesus as David

According to Mt 2:6, when Herod asks the chief priests and scribes where the Messiah would be born (2:4), they answer, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet:

²⁵⁸ Piotrowski, *New David*, 54.

²⁵⁹ See Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* [NCBC] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 47; Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 34-35; Nolland, *Matthew*, 101; Keener, *Matthew*, 87.

²⁶⁰ See Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 2001), 85; idem., "Evoking Isaiah," 508-13.

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the Land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel’ (2:5-6). Mt 2:6 contains quotations of both Mic 5:1 (LXX 5:2) and 2 Sam 5:2 (// 1 Chron 11:2). Both citations come from contexts that describe either a David-like figure (Micah) or David (2 Samuel) defending the Land of Israel from foreign aggressors. The first half of Mt 2:6 draws on Mic 5:1, which, in context, describes the birth of a David-like ruler from Bethlehem who will save Israel from an Assyrian siege against the Land:

Now muster your troops, daughter of troops; siege is laid against us (על־ינוּ שָׁם מִצִּיּוֹר/συναρχήν ἔταξεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς); with a rod they strike the judge of Israel. But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you will come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel.... Therefore, he shall give them [up, over (?)] (יָחַם/δώσει αὐτούς) until the time when she who is in labor has given birth, then a remainder of his brothers will return to the children of Israel (עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיָחַם/οἱ ἐπίλοιποι τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιτρέψουσιν ἐπὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραήλ). (Mic 4:14-5:2)

In light of Micah 5:2, Piotrowski concludes, “The ‘remainder of his brothers’ who ‘will return’... are the exiles who will come and rejoin [the Lord’s] people.”²⁶¹ Similarly, Eubank reads Mic 4:14-5:2 as referring to a Davidic messiah who “will bring about an end of exile when the messiah’s ‘brothers return to the sons of Israel.’”²⁶² However, the context of the quote argues against the picture of Israelites returning from exile abroad: the passage depicts the coming ruler responding to a siege *within the Land*. Mic 5:4-5 makes the attack upon the people within the Land explicit: “When the Assyrian comes into our land and treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him seven shepherds and eight princes.... And he shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he comes into our land and treads within our borders.” Thus, the “remainder” of the brothers who will “return to the children of Israel” in Mic 5:1 should be understood as a remnant

²⁶¹ Piotrowski, *New David*, 81.

²⁶² Eubank, *Wages*, 115.

of Israelites left alive after conflict in the Land, not returning from exile in a foreign land.²⁶³

Rather than describing geographical movement, “return” (שׁוּב) in Mic 5:1 refers to restoration of the relationship between God and the people; the Davidic figure’s brothers will reunite in faith to God once the ruler from Bethlehem defends the Land from the Assyrians.²⁶⁴

The reference to one who “will shepherd my people Israel” (ποιηανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ) in the second half of Mt 2:6 is a citation of 2 Sam 5:2 (cf. 1 Chron 11:2).²⁶⁵ In its original context, 2 Sam 5:2 refers to David’s anointing as the new king when “all the tribes of Israel” tell him, “The Lord said to you, ‘You shall be a shepherd of my people Israel (ποιηανεῖς τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ).’” Mt 2:6 is a nearly verbatim reproduction of 2 Sam 5:2 LXX, which describes David being anointed at Hebron (5:1)—that is, in the Land.²⁶⁶

In light of this non-exilic citation, Eubank states that Matthew uses the citation to allude to “David’s enthronement,” rather than the end of exile.²⁶⁷ According to Eubank’s argument, this allusion to David but not exile is unproblematic, since Eubank claims that the fulfillment citations either refer to “the Davidic monarchy or the end of exile.”²⁶⁸ Piotrowski argues that Matthew, in fact, does not allude to 2 Sam 5:2, but rather to Mic 5:3b, which contains a reference

²⁶³ Cf. Delbert R. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah* [Hermenia] (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 66.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Bruce K. Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 281-82.

²⁶⁵ See Soares Prabhu, *Quotations*, 261-62; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 29; Nolland, *Matthew*, 114-15; Luz, *Matthew*, 1.113.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Gundry, *Use*, 91-93; Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1.38-39; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.243; Harrington, *Matthew*, 43; Soares Prabhu, *Quotations*, 266; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 29; Kennedy, *Recapitulation*, 119.

²⁶⁷ Eubank, *Wages*, 171.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 111, 132, 200.

to “Israel” and the Davidic figure being called to “shepherd his flock (ποιμανεῖ τὸ ποῖμνιον αὐτοῦ).” More, he claims that the reference to “my people” (τὸν λαόν μου) in Mt 2:6 is taken from Matthew’s own use of “people” (λαόν) in 1:21, not from 2 Sam 5:2.²⁶⁹ Thus, Piotrowski concludes, “There is no need to appeal to texts outside of Micah”²⁷⁰ and that “nothing is lost by not considering 2 Sam 5:2.”²⁷¹ To be sure, nothing is lost by neglecting 2 Sam 5:2 if one already assumes that the purpose of Mt 2:6 is to highlight an ongoing exile. However, if one does consult 2 Sam 5:2 and its broader context, it contradicts the idea that Matthew’s Israel is in exile.

The surrounding context of 2 Sam 5:2 mirrors that of Micah 5, in that it describes David defending the Land from foreign aggressors—this time, from the Philistines who have breached Israel’s borders:

When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over Israel, all the Philistines went up to search for David. But David heard of it and went down to the stronghold. Now the Philistines had come a spread out in the Valley of Rephaim.... And David came to Baal-perazim and defeated them there. And he said, “The Lord has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting flood.” Therefore the name of that place is called Baal-perazim. And the Philistines left their idols there and David and his men carried them away. (2 Sam 5:17-18, 20-21 cf. 5:22-25)

Just as the contexts of Matthew’s references to Isa 7:14 and Mic 5:1 have nothing to do with exile, so too the context of 2 Sam 5:2 has nothing to do either with exile or with return from it. Second Samuel 5 describes the time, many years before the Babylonian exile, when David defeated the Philistines *within the Land*. As David saved his people in the Land from invasion, the salvation that Jesus offers is for people living in the Land of Israel. When Matthew

²⁶⁹ See Piotrowski, *New David*, 73.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 74 n. 62. For scholarly support, Piotrowski notes that Craig Keener follows this reading. However, while Keener [*Matthew*, 103 n. 87] does claim that Matthew’s “‘shepherd’ statement” alludes to Micah 5, he also adds, “The weaving in of a clause from the Davidic 2 Sam 5:2 is also significant.”

repurposes the citations from Micah 5 and 2 Samuel 5 in the context of the Gospel narrative, it is no longer the Assyrians or Philistines who threaten Israel, but Herod (with help from the “chief priests and scribes of the people”) who threatens Jesus’ life (cf. Mt 2:13). For Matthew, corrupt Jewish leadership is just as threatening as the Gentile armies described in Israel’s Scriptures, but the threat is to Israel in the Land, not Israel in exile.

According to Micah and 2 Samuel, sin is the underlying cause of the foreign aggressors from whom the people of Israel are saved. Before describing the siege against Israel from which the Bethlehemite ruler will save his people, Micah states, “All this is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel” (Mic 1:5 cf. 1:13). The prophet’s job is “to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (3:8). This sin, then, leads to the siege against Israel (4:14). Similarly, Matthew pictures a landed Israel in “sin” (1:21); as it is the job of Micah’s Davidic figure to save his people from the effects of sin in the Land (Gentile aggression), so it is Jesus’ mission to save his people from their sins in the Land.

The connection between sin and salvation within the Land also appears in the context of 2 Sam 5, thereby strengthening the notion that Matthew wishes to draw a parallel between the problems of in-Land sin, rather than ongoing exile. After David is anointed at Hebron, God allows the Philistines (whom David eventually defeats in 2 Sam 5) to enter the Land of Israel and to defeat Israel’s armies. God allows this to happen because King Saul sinned by ignoring the divine command to destroy the Amalekites:

Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now then, please forgive my sin and return with me so that I may bow before the Lord.” But Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” (1 Sam 15:24-26)

Saul's sin leads to God's silence regarding the Philistine invasion (1 Sam 28:3-6); the attack ends with Israel being routed at Gilboa (1 Sam 31:1). When David becomes king, he defeats the Philistines who had gotten a foothold in the Land thanks to Saul's sin. Thus, in saving Israel from the Philistines, David also saves the people from the effects of Saul's sin. In citing Mic 5:1 and 2 Sam 5:2, Matthew shows that Jesus will likewise save his people from their sins.

Yet the way that David and Matthew's Jesus accomplish salvation is vastly different; rather than staging a military attack against Roman armies, as David does against the Philistines, Jesus submits to Roman soldiers' attacks against him (Mt 27:27-31). Thus, the messages of the commemorative narratives eventually diverge: Matthew commemorates David's defeat of the Philistines in Mt 2:6, but then presents Jesus not as a successful warrior (like David), but as someone who is, at least initially, himself defeated. Jesus therefore becomes a mimetic symbol of self-denial and the willingness to suffer—as Matthew's Jesus states, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (16:24).

Mt 2:15: Jesus' Exile and Exodus

Unlike the First Gospel's quotations treated thus far, the contexts of Matthew's next citation—of Hos 11:1 (in Mt 2:15)—refers to exile. However, Matthew does not cite Hos 11:1 in order to argue that Israel is in ongoing exile; rather, the Gospel draws on this particular exilic text because Jesus himself is in "exile"—or, more precisely, taking refuge in a foreign land—at *this point in the Gospel narrative*. In order to escape Herod, Joseph takes Mary and Jesus to Egypt (2:13). After Herod dies, the family comes back to the Land of Israel; Matthew says this fulfills "that which was spoken by the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called my son'" (2:15). Matthew cites the latter half of Hos 11:1: "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." In its original context, Hos 11:1 refers to Israel's exodus from Egypt. Matthew's use of

Hos 11:1 shows that just as God called his “son” Israel out of Egypt via the exodus, God also calls his “son” Jesus out of Egypt.

Although Hosea 11 begins by recalling when Israel came out of Egyptian slavery, the chapter goes on to describe the Northern Kingdom’s exile to Assyria in 722 BCE. The text parallels the Northern Kingdom’s vassalage to Assyria with Israel’s bondage in Egypt: “Ephraim dwelt in Egypt (κατώκησεν Ἐπράιμ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ), and the Assyrian, he was his king.” (Hos 11:5 LXX).²⁷² However, the declaration in Hos 11:11a that Ephraim will one day fly “as a bird out of Egypt and as a dove out of the land of the Assyrians” is God’s “promise of resettlement” to Israel.²⁷³ Thus, Hosea 11 describes a *threefold* journey out of Egypt (11:1), back to “Egypt” (i.e., Assyria; 11:5), and then back “out of Egypt” when God resettles the ten lost tribes in the Land (11:11). When Matthew’s Jesus comes out of Egypt as an infant, it parallels the nation’s exodus from Egypt in its own infancy—the first “return” that will precede another exile and return. Those who read the entirety of Hosea 11 know that, according to the prophet, there are still another exile (Hos 11:5) and return (11:11) to go. Thus, when readers bring Hosea 11 into conversation with Matthew, they realize that Jesus will enter exile again at some point in the Gospel; Matthew will have Jesus recapitulate the Northern Kingdom’s exile (Hos 11:5) *and* their ultimate return (11:11). As I will show in chapter 6, Jesus’ second exile comes via his passion and crucifixion, and he returns once again at his resurrection.

Piotrowski also sees the return-exile-return progression in Hosea 11, but he does not apply this progression to Jesus. While Piotrowski grants that Matthew’s citation of Hos 11:1

²⁷² Cf. Francis I. Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [ABC] (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 592.

²⁷³ James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea—Jonah* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 162.

applies to Jesus, he argues that the second return (Hos 11:11) refers to the entire people coming out of their first-century exile: “Hos 11:1 functions in Matt 2:15... as *preparation* for the *coming* restoration from exile.”²⁷⁴ However, this claim requires Piotrowski to shift from Matthew’s focus on Jesus via Hos 11:1 to all of Matthew’s Israel as the focus of Hos 11:11 (this shift also bypasses the second exile in Hos 11:5). It makes much more sense to see Jesus as the continuous focus of the return-exile-return progression in Hosea 11, and therefore to anticipate his forthcoming crucifixion and resurrection. At any rate, a metaleptic reading of Mt 2:15 does not show that Matthew’s Israel is in ongoing exile.

Mt 2:18: Children in Exile

Soon after citing Hos 11:1, Matthew states that Herod’s slaughter of the children in Bethlehem “fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted because they are not’” (Mt 2:18). Matthew quotes Jer 31:15 LXX, the wider context of which explicitly mentions Israel’s return from Babylonian exile: “Thus says the Lord: ‘Keep your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work,’ declares the Lord. ‘They shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future,’ declares the Lord, ‘and your children shall come back to their own land’” (Jer 31:16). While Jeremiah alludes to the exiles, the recipient of God’s words is Rachel, who is crying in Ramah—i.e., from within the Land of Israel. The citation of Jer 31:15 in Mt 2:18 alludes to the notion that just as Rachel wept for the exiles, she weeps again for the children that Herod kills in Israel.

Matthew equates the exiles of Jer 31:15-16 not with Jesus, but with the children whom Herod slaughtered; in the Matthean context Rachel weeps for the many children who have been

²⁷⁴ Piotrowski, *New David*, 140 (emphasis original).

killed rather than the one child who has escaped. Piotrowski reads Matthew’s parallel between the exiles and the children as pointing to ongoing exile in the Land. He focuses on the point that Jeremiah’s Rachel weeps for the exiles “because they are not” (ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν). Piotrowski argues that Matthew’s children

“are not” while actually *in the land* [which] means that the conditions by which [the exiles] “are not” in Jer 31:15...—exile—persists *in the land*. In Jer 31:15 “they are not” because they have been deported. In Matt 2:18 “they are not” because they are dead. The intertextual conversation, then, results in the identification of the children’s death as the condition of exile.²⁷⁵

The children Herod kills are, to use a biblical phrase, “cut off from the land of the living” (Jer 11:19; Isa 53:8); they have gone into “exile” in their deaths. Yet, if Matthew’s dead children are the “exiles” of Jer 31:15, then anyone who is not dead is not in exile—those who remain in the land of the living, Israel, are not exiled. According to Matthew, the children go into exile, but the rest of Israel’s inhabitants are not in exile.

Mt 2:23: Jesus as the Branch

Mt 2:23 reads, “And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled: ‘that he would be called a Nazarene’” (Mt 2:23). While this citation does not cohere precisely with any known biblical text, Matthew may be alluding to Isa 11:1 by means of a wordplay between Ναζωραῖος (Nazarene) and נֹצֵר (branch): “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (נֹצֵר) from his roots will bear fruit” (Isa 11:1).²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 143 (emphasis original).

²⁷⁶ Piotrowski [*New David*, 153-60] attends to all the possible referents for Ναζωραῖος and makes a strong case for its allusion to the branch of Isa 11:1; cf. Eubank, *Wages*, 111; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.277-79; Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 208; Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 40; Harrington, *Matthew*, 46; Nolland, *Matthew*, 129-31; Evans, *Matthew*, 64-65; Keener, *Matthew*,

Before the description of the branch in 11:1, Isa 10:20-23 MT describes the remnant of Israel that survives the Assyrian destruction of its Land; it is this destruction that will cause them to repent:

In that day the remnant of Israel and those who have escaped of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck him, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God (יְשׁוּב שְׂאֵר יַעֲקֹב אֱלֹהֵי גְבוּרָה שְׂאֵר). For though your people Israel are like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in the midst of the whole Land.

Isaiah describes a remnant that will “return” (שׁוּב). Although Piotrowski reads Isa 10:20-23 as a reference to the “end of exile,”²⁷⁷ the “return” in this context emphasizes a spiritual return to God rather than a geographical return to the Land.²⁷⁸ The survivors of Assyria’s destructive attack against Israel return in repentance “to the mighty God,” rather than to the Land of Israel; the surviving remnant never left the Land in the first place.²⁷⁹ While some among the ten northern tribes were exiled, the focus of this text is not on the exiles but on those who survived the Assyrian siege and who respond to their survival by “return[ing] to the mighty God.” As

114; Patte, *Matthew*, 39; M. Eugene Boring, “The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in Leander E. Keck, *et al.*, eds., *The New Interpreter’s Bible, Vol. VIII: New Testament Articles, Matthew, Mark* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 147; Soares Prabhu [*Quotations*, 203-07] sees Isa 11:1 working in concert with several other scriptural allusions, most particularly Jgs 13:5; *pace* Luz [*Matthew*, 1.123] who dismisses the possibility that Matthew alludes to Isa 11:1, since the wordplay only works in Hebrew, not Greek, and Matthew would not have inserted a wordplay that a Greek-speaking audience would have missed. The problem with Luz’s claim is that Matthew has already provided a similar Hebrew wordplay in Mt 1:21: “You will call his name Jesus [Ἰησοῦς = יֵשׁוּעַ] because he will save [σώζω = יִשׁוּעַ] his people from their sins.” Matthew is comfortable with employing Hebrew etymology regardless of whether a Greek speaker would understand the references.

²⁷⁷ Piotrowski, *New David*, 163.

²⁷⁸ See Delio DelRio, *Paul and the Synagogue: Romans and the Isaiah Targum* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 33 n. 30.

²⁷⁹ See Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 94-95.

Walter Brueggemann notes, “This return is not primarily geographical homecoming from exile, but it is a willing, unreserved reengagement with the sovereignty of [the Lord]. The promise of the prophet is that the remnant will become genuinely responsive people of [the Lord], not tempted or seduced by alternative securities or alternative loyalties.”²⁸⁰

What follows in Isa 10 continues to describe people in the Land of Israel, rather than in exile. Isa 10:24-27 details Assyrian aggression against Jerusalem and the coming divine wrath against Israel’s enemies:

Therefore, thus says the Lord God of hosts: “My people, who dwell in Zion, do not be afraid of the Assyrians when they strike with the rod and lift up their staff against you as the Egyptians did. For in a very short time my fury will come to an end and my anger will be directed to their destruction. And the Lord of hosts will wield a whip against them, as when he struck Midian at the rock of Oreb. And his staff will be over the sea, and he will lift it as he did in Egypt. And in that day his burden will depart from your shoulder and his yoke from your neck.” (Isa 10:24-27)

It is immediately after this passage that Isaiah states, “There shall come forth a root from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit” (Isa 11:1). Piotrowski claims that this branch (who, according to Matthew, prefigures Jesus) rises “from the shame of... the nation’s exile.”²⁸¹ However, the above passage does not describe return from exile. Instead, it is directed to “those who dwell in Zion (יֹשְׁבֵי צִיּוֹן / οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν Σιῶν).” After the Assyrians attack Zion and “strike [it] with the rod” (בִּשְׁבֵט יַכְכָּה), a shoot comes from the stump of Jesse who “strikes the land with the rod of his mouth” (וְהִכָּה אֶרֶץ בִּשְׁבֵט פִּי), and who then rules those in the Land with equity (11:1-4).²⁸² The branch of Isa 11:1 emerges from the wreckage of a

²⁸⁰ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* [WBC] (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 95.

²⁸¹ Piotrowski, *New David*, 151.

²⁸² The Greek dispenses with the parallelism between the “rod” of Assyria and the branch in the Hebrew text. While Isa 10:24 LXX states that the Assyrians “will strike you with a rod” (ἐν

destroyed Zion, and he acts in “righteousness” and “faithfulness” (11:5) so that even animals live together in peace and harmony (11:6-8): “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain [i.e., Zion]; for the Land [of Israel] shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (11:9). Isaiah describes a branch in the Land, who emerges from destruction in the Land in order to bring peace to a landed people.

After the branch has achieved peace in the Land, the nations will see what he has done: “In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious” (11:10). Only then will the Lord “extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people... and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth” (11:12; cf. 11:13-16). In light of Matthew, this gathering from the nations corresponds to the period after Jesus’ resurrection when the “gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (24:13), which would include both Gentiles and Diaspora Jews. As Jesus says to “make disciples of all the nations” (28:19), the Great Commission will “gather” those of the nations (Jews and Gentiles) to Jesus in a metaphorical way, but Matthew says nothing of a physical gathering to the Land of Israel. Whatever Matthew’s post-commission schema (which the evangelist does not explicate), the Gospel writer’s use of Isa 11:1 does not refer to Jesus gathering an exiled people in his lifetime—it refers to Jesus appearing in the Land (Nazareth) so that “the Land shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Isa 11:9).

Mt 3:3: Jesus Appears to Zion

ράβδω πατάξει σε), 11:4 LXX says that the branch will “strike the land with the word of his mouth” (πατάξει γῆν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος).

Matthew's quotation of Isa 40:3 at 3:3 introduces John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus (see Mt 3:1-17). Mt 3:1-3 reads, "In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea saying, 'Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' This is the one of whom it was spoken through the prophet Isaiah saying, 'A voice crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'" The Isaian text links John's preparatory role before the Jesus' first public appearance with God's appearance to Zion some seven hundred years earlier. In the Matthean context, Isa 40:3 presents the arrival of Jesus in terms of a theophany, but it does not point to either an ongoing exile or a return from exile.

In its original context, Isa 40:3 is part of a message of comfort to Jerusalem as the exile is coming to a close:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and call to her that her term of service is ended, that her iniquity is accepted, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall be made level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isa 40:1-5)

Based on the Isaiah citation and its immediate context, Eubank states in reference to Mt 3:3, "Needless to say, this is yet another biblical quotation dealing with [the] end of exile."²⁸³ The verses immediately preceding Isa 40:1 describe the exile to Babylon (Isa 39:5-8), so Eubank's confidence in the exilic nature of Isa 40:3 is understandable, and others agree with him.²⁸⁴

Despite this agreement, such confidence is misplaced. The recipients of the proclamation in Isa 40:2-3 are not the exiles in Babylon but the city of Jerusalem. As Klaus Baltzer notes, "It

²⁸³ Eubank, *Wages*, 119.

²⁸⁴ Cf. Piotrowski, *New David*, 185; Wright, *New Testament*, 273; idem., *Jesus*, 270; Carter, *Matthew*, 94; Harrington, *Matthew*, 51.

is not the exiles themselves who are meant here... and it is a mistake to relate the following pronouncements to them initially... because it is the city of Jerusalem that is being addressed.”²⁸⁵ Moreover, Isa 40:2 and 9 are the bookends of an inclusio that specifies an address to Jerusalem, not to the Babylonian exiles: “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her.... Go up on a high mountain, Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God’” (40:2a, 9).²⁸⁶ The message is about the arrival of God in Zion, not the return of the exiles from Babylon; the words of Isaiah, and Matthew’s citation of them in 3:3, are for those who dwell in Israel.

The “way of the Lord” (יהוה יִרְדֹּךָ/ὁδὸν κυρίου) by which God will return to Jerusalem in Isa 40:3 becomes the way by which the people return from Babylon later in Isaiah (cf. 42:16; 43:16-19; 49:11-12).²⁸⁷ However, Matthew’s rendition of Isa 40:3 eliminates the original reference to a passageway by which God and the exiles travel through the wilderness. Instead of reiterating, with Isaiah, that “a voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord’” (Isa 40:3), the Gospel writer identifies John as a stationary “voice crying in the wilderness (φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ): ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’” (Mt 3:3). Thus, Matthew focuses on the preparation of the way, rather than where that way should be prepared. In the Gospel, there is no

²⁸⁵ Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40-55*. [trans., Margaret Kohl; Hermeneia] (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 51; cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55 [ABC]* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 181: “There is no mention here of preparing a route for return from exile in Babylon. It is, rather, that a processional way is to be prepared for the return of [God] to his people.” Also see Nolland, *Matthew*, 138.

²⁸⁶ John Goldingay concurs, “Verses 2a and 9 (at the other end of the chiasm) may clarify that ‘my people’ indeed refers to the people centred on Jerusalem.” John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 11.

²⁸⁷ See David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 53; Piotrowski, *New David*, 187.

pathway prepared “in the wilderness,” which “lessens the geographical impact of the passage.”²⁸⁸

The Isaian voice spoke of God moving through the wilderness, but Matthew reconfigures the citation to proclaim Jesus’ meeting with John “in the wilderness of Judea” (Mt 3:1)—that is, within the Land of Israel—so that the “exile is not in view but the time of the Messiah.”²⁸⁹

Matthew casts Jesus in the role of the Lord in Isa 40:3; just as God appeared to the cities of Judah in Isaiah’s day, Matthew’s Jesus appears in the Judean wilderness. When Jesus arrives in the wilderness to be baptized, Matthew is saying “to the cities of Judah: Behold your God” (Isa 40:9). Jesus comes to a people living in the Land of Israel—he does not bring them back from exile.

Mt 4:15-16: Jesus’ Light in Israel

The final fulfillment quotation in Matthew’s first four chapters is of Isa 9:1 (LXX 9:2), and it comes at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry to the people living in Galilee and surrounding regions. Mt 4:13-16 reads,

And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”

According to Matthew, Jesus appears to the people of Zebulun, Naphtali, and Galilee, all of which are places in the Land of Israel—Matthew is not describing Jesus gathering anyone from exile.

²⁸⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.293. While Matthew’s reading differs from the MT, it agrees with Isa 40:3 LXX; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4; Isaiah Targum 40:2; cf. OT Peshitta and Vulgate.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

The context preceding Isa 9:1 (Isaiah 8) describes a time of unrest for the both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. This context shows that, once again, Isaiah discusses problems within the Land, rather than the problem of exile. According to Isa 8:1-10, God will have “the king of Assyria and all his glory” (8:7) come to Ahaz’s aid against the Syrian-Israelite coalition (cf. Isa 7:1-14). Isa 8:1-10 refers to the time of the Syro-Ephraimite war (c. 736-32 BCE) and the concomitant Assyrian annexation of the Northern Kingdom in 734 BCE.²⁹⁰ When Tiglath-pileser III defends Ahaz’s Judah against its northern aggressors, he also exiles some of the people of the Northern Kingdom. According to 2 Kgs 15:29, “In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon... and the Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and he exiled them (נִגְלַח־פִּלְסֵר/ἀπώκλισευ αὐτοῦς) to Assyria” (cf. 1 Chron 5:26). This partial exile of the northern tribes in the mid-730s BCE would be a foretaste of the disaster that would come in the Assyrian destruction of Northern Kingdom just over ten years later (722 BCE). This context is the backdrop for Isaiah’s words to a people who have seen a partial exile of the Northern Kingdom, but who remain in the Land. When Matthew applies Isa 9:1 to Jesus, then, the evangelist shows Jesus coming to landed people, not exiled people.

Isa 8:11-22 goes on to speak of strife in the Land of Israel as a result of God “hiding his face from the house of Jacob” (8:17), even though Isaiah and his children “are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts who dwells on Mount Zion” (8:18). Despite these signs, Isaiah still needs to condemn those who are turning to false prophets rather than God. He states (here the MT),

Bind up the testimony; seal the teaching among my disciples.... When they [those turning to false prophets] say to you, “Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,” should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf

²⁹⁰ See Stuart A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 274-79; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39* [NAC] (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2007), 234.

of the living? [Go] to the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn. They will pass through it [the Land], greatly distressed and hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their king and their God, and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the Land, but behold, distress and darkness; the gloom of anguish. (Isa 8:16, 19-22)

In the midst of this negative picture of people living in darkness and gloom for forsaking their king and God, Isaiah offers hope to those who hold fast to God's word—of these righteous people Isaiah says that soon “there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish” (8:23).

Then, referring back to those who would consult mediums as opposed to those who hold “to the teaching and to the testimony,” Isaiah states, “Now, the former [consulters of mediums] have made light [of] (הקל) the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but the latter [disciples] have made weighty (הכביר) the way of sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations” (Isa 8:23). In other words, the followers of false prophets see the Assyrian annexation of Zebulun and Naphtali as inconsequential, whereas Isaiah's “disciples,” who follow correct teaching, know that God used Assyria to displace the Syrian and Ephraimite kings who threatened Judah. This displacement is significant in that it allows the possibility for the coming Judahite king to reconstitute both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms under his rule. In Isaiah's view, “the defeat of the Syro-Ephraimite coalition opens the way for the Davidic monarchy to reassert its control over the northern kingdom of Israel and thereby to repair a long-standing breach within the twelve tribes.”²⁹¹ Isa 8:23-9:1 addresses Israel at a time when the North had been partially exiled, but its message has nothing to do with the return from exile. To the contrary, the text speaks to those still living in the Land about the possibility of reestablishing a Davidic kingdom that reunites the fractured tribes of Israel.

²⁹¹ Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* [FOTL] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 186.

The Greek version of Isa 9:1 does not follow the Hebrew in that it does not speak about the significance of the Assyrian annexation of Zebulun and Naphtali. Rather, the Septuagint translates the Hebrew as a direct address to those currently living in this region (i.e., in the Land of Israel, that is, the Northern Kingdom): “Act quickly, land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, and the rest [inhabiting] the sea-coast, and [the land] beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles” (Isa 9:1 LXX). The text goes on to comfort the people living in this part of the Land: “O people walking in darkness, behold, a great light; you who dwell in the region [of Zebulun, Naphtali, and Galilee]... a light will shine upon you” (Isa 9:2 LXX). Matthew also uses Isa 9:1 MT [9:2 LXX] to describe the people living in this region: Upon leaving Nazareth, Jesus “went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali so that (ἵνα) what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled” (Mt 4:13-14). For Matthew, Jesus must be in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali with other Jews who live there in order for Isaiah’s prophecy to be fulfilled. Matthew’s Jesus comes to people living in their own Land, not in exile.

Rather than describing “exile” and/or “return,” the fulfillment quotations in Mt 1:23-4:16 allude to problems (i.e., foreign aggression, sinfulness, etc.) for biblical Israel within the Land according to Scripture. In Matthew, the problem of sin plagues Jesus’ people, and Jesus will save his people from that sin. However, before he commissions his disciples to go to “all the nations” after his resurrection (28:19), Jesus does not gather an exiled people, either literally or metaphorically. A close reading of the original contexts of Matthew’s citations show that the narrative patterning Matthew builds is not one of exile or return from exile. Instead, Matthew’s commemorative narrative recalls the problems of sin and foreign threat within the Land for the people of Israel, and then applies that storyline to Jesus and his salvific mission.

Exile in Rabbinic Literature

As with Matthew's use of μετοικεσία, rabbinic literature uses "exile" (גלות) in the biblical sense of expulsion from one's land. Therefore, according to the rabbis, those who are living in the Land of Israel are not properly in "exile." Whereas the Gospel narrative takes place almost exclusively in Israel, rabbinic literature reflects a far greater awareness of Jews living outside the Land. This rabbinic awareness means that some of the people who make up collective Israel are living in what the rabbis call "exile"—that is, Diaspora. However, other Jews, including the rabbis who compiled *Genesis Rabbah*, continue to live in the Land of Israel, and are therefore not in exile.

Just as some scholars claim that Matthew redefines "exile" to include those in the Land, some scholars argue that the rabbis change the biblical definition of "exile"—that is, physical removal from one land to another—to signify estrangement and/or subjugation under foreign rule in the Land of Israel.²⁹² However, "exile" in rabbinic thought does not signify estrangement or subjugation. While those in Diaspora are clearly living in גלות, to call the situation of Jews in the Land "exile" is to misconstrue rabbinic thought.

Arguing that the rabbis in Israel were living in exile, Arnold Eisen states, "Exile... had become co-extensive with the world itself... embracing even the Land of Israel in its

²⁹² See, e.g., Baer, *Galut*, 12-13; Eisen, *Galut*, xvi-xv, 36-41, 51; Milikowsky, "Notions of Exile," in Scott, ed., *Exile*, 265-98; Ben-Sasson, "Galut," in Berenbaum and Skolnik, eds., *EJ*, Vol. 7, 352; Alexander, *Targum*, 32; Levinson, "No Place Like Home," in Dohrmann and Reed, eds., *Jews*, 110. Without claiming that those in the Land of Israel are actually in exile, Jacob Neusner does claim that "exile and return" establishes a pattern through which assertion that "the categories of exile and return... construct[ed] a pattern [that]... became for all time the definitive pattern of meaning. Consequently, whether or not the pattern agreed with their actual circumstances, Jews in diverse settings constructed their worlds in accord with that model... That pattern accordingly was not merely preserved and perpetuated, but itself precipitated and provoked its own replication in each succeeding age." Jacob Neusner, *Self-fulfilling Prophecy: Exile and the Return of Judaism* (Boston: Beacon, 1987), 33; cf. idem., "Exile and Return as the History of Judaism," in Scott, ed., *Exile*, 221-238.

stranglehold [insofar as late antique Jewry was]... surrounded in its own Land by gentile ways.”²⁹³ Eisen conflates “exile” with the problem of being “strangled” and “surrounded” by non-Jews in the Land. The problem with this conflation is that, according to rabbinic literature, being exiled and being surrounded in one’s land are two different things. The Tosefta states that living inside the Land, surrounded as it is by Gentiles, is better than living in exile from the Land: “A person should dwell in the Land of Israel, even in a town with a Gentile majority, and not outside the Land, even in a town that is completely [full] of Israelites” (*t. A.Z.* 4:3). The Tosefta also shows that the rabbis saw those who lived outside the Land as in “exile,” but they did not use the term to describe those living in the Land:

To our brothers: the children of the upper Galilee (גלילא עילאה) and to the children of the lower Galilee (גלילא תחתאה)... to our brothers: the children of the upper South (דרומא עילאה) [of Israel] and to our children of the lower South (דרומא תחתאה)... to our brothers: the children of the exile of Babylon (גלותא דבבל), and the children of the exile of Media (דמדאי גלותא), and of all the other exiles of Israel (גלותא דישראל). (*t. Sanh.* 2:6 cf. *y. Sanh.* 1:2, 18d; *Ma’as Sh.* 5:4, 56c)²⁹⁴

According to this passage, life “in exile” applies to those living outside the Land, but Jews living in the Land (whether in Galilee or “the South”) are not in exile. Based on texts like these, Eisen’s understanding of גלות as a metaphor for Gentile control of the Land does not hold; Jews living in Israel in the rabbinic period are not living “in exile.”

Chaim Milikowsky argues that rabbinic literature redefines גלות to mean “subjugation.” However, his arguments for this position are unconvincing because his textual evidence describes “exile” as expulsion from point A to point B, not subjugation. His main piece of evidence is a well-attested tradition from the Land of Israel, most commonly attributed to the second-century rabbi Simeon b. Yohai, which links all of the “exiles” in Jewish history insofar as

²⁹³ Eisen, *Galut*, 36, 41.

²⁹⁴ The version in the Yerushalmi also includes “the children of the exile of Greece” (גלותא דיין).

the *Shekhinah* (divine presence) accompanied Israel in each instance. First, Milikowsky cites the *editio princeps* of *Sifre Numbers* 84:4:

את מוצא שכל מקום שגלו שכינה עמהם שנאמר הנגלה נגילתי לבית אביך בהיותם במצרים
לבית פרעה גלו לבבל שכינה עמהם שנאמר למענכם שולחתי בבבלה גלו לאדום שכינה עמהם שנאמר
מי זה בא מאדום וכשהם חוזרים שכינה חוזרת עמהם שנאמר ושב ה' אליך את שבותך

One finds that every place to which they [sc. Israel] were exiled, [the] *Shekhinah* was with them, as it says, “Did I not reveal myself to your father’s house while they were in Egypt, in Pharaoh’s house” (1 Sam 2:27). They were exiled to Babylon, [and the] *Shekhinah* was with them, as it says, “For your sake I was sent to Babylon” (Isa 43:14). They were exiled to Edom [i.e., Rome] [and the] *Shekhinah* was with them, as it says, “Who is this who comes from Edom?” (Isa 63:1). And when they return, [the] *Shekhinah* returns with them, as it says, “And the Lord your God will return with your captivity” (Deut 30:3).

This passage connects the exile to Babylon with that of Rome based on shared divine accompaniment.²⁹⁵ After citing 1 Sam 2:27 to show that God appeared to Israel in Egypt, the text *Sif. Num.* 84:4 provides scriptural proofs for God’s continued presence in Babylon and Rome. Initially, Milikowsky admits that this version of the textual tradition appears to conceive of an exile to Rome on par with the geographical exile from Israel to Babylon.²⁹⁶ However, he immediately follows this conclusion by noting the existence of other textual witnesses to this passage in *Sifre Numbers* (as well as in the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds), which he claims undermine the idea that the rabbis see a literal exile to Rome.²⁹⁷

Other versions of this tradition add “exiles” to Media, Greece, and/or Rome; this addition is the occasion for Milikowsky to redefine exile as subjugation. The variants of *Sifre* add another

²⁹⁵ For this phrase, see *y. Sanh.* 1:2, 18d; *Maas. Sh.* 5:4, 56c. The Talmud picks up this phrase from the *Tosefta* (*t. Sanh.* 2:6).

²⁹⁶ See Milikowsky, “Exile,” 268.

²⁹⁷ See *Ibid.* While Milikowsky does not list the variant witness in *Sifre Numbers*, see British Museum MS Add. 16006 and MS Vatican 32; *y. Taan.* 1:1, 64a; *b. Meg.* 29a; cf. *Mekh. Pisha* 14; *Lam. R.* 1:6; *Num. R.* 7:10. Also note *Gen. R.* 86:6: “Wherever the righteous go, the *Shekhinah* goes with them”; cf. *Gen. R.* 86:2 for the *Shekhinah* accompanying Joseph to Egypt.

exile “to Elam”—that is, Media—along with the support of Jer 49:38: “I will set my throne in Elam (ושמתי כסאי בעילם).”²⁹⁸ The longest expansion, which appears in *y. Taan. 1:1 64a*, includes exiles to Egypt, Media, and Greece (along with the original references to Babylon and Rome).²⁹⁹

בכל מקו' שגלו ישר' גלת השכינה עמהן גלו למצרי וגלת השכינה עמהן מה טעמא הנגלה נגילתי לבית אביך בהיותם במצרים לבית פרעה גלו לבבל וגלת השכינה עמהן מה טעמא למענכם שולחתי בבבלה גלו למדי וגלת השכינה עמהן מה טעמא ושמתי כסאי בעילם... גלו ליון וגלת השכינה עמהן מה טעמא ועוררתי בניך ציון על בניך יון גלו לרומי וגלת השכינה עמהן מה טעמא אלי קורא משעיר שומר מה מלילה

In every place where Israel was exiled the *Shekhinah* went into exile with them. They were exiled to Egypt and the *Shekhinah* went into exile with them. What is the [scriptural] basis [for this claim]? “Did I not reveal myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt, in Pharaoh’s house?” (1 Sam 2:27). They were exiled to Babylon and the *Shekhinah* went into exile with them. What is the basis? “For your sake I will send to Babylon” (Isa 43:14). They were exiled to Media and the *Shekhinah* went into exile with them. What is the basis? “I will set my throne in Elam” (Jer 49:38)... They were exiled to Greece and the *Shekhinah* went into exile with them. What is the basis? “I will brandish your sons, Zion, over your sons, Greece” (Zec 9:13). They were exiled to Rome and the *Shekhinah* went into exile with them. What is the basis? “One is calling to me from Seir, ‘Watchman, what of the night?’” (Isa 21:11).

Milikowsky claims that, with the exception of Babylon, these “exiles” did not include forced expulsion from the Land of Israel because the biblical text records no “exile” from Israel to Egypt, Media, or Greece. Because he believes these rabbinic texts to be at odds with historical realities, he concludes,

Israel’s ‘going into exile’ in this passage should not be understood as denoting physical removal from the Land of Israel to Babylon, Media, Greece and Rome, but rather the subordination and vassalage of Israel to these nations. Israel was never exiled from Israel to Media or to Greece, but it was subjugated to these nations.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ On the rabbinic equation of Elam with Media, see Milikowsky, “Exile,” 269-70, esp. 269 n. 10. The Yerushalmi version cited just after this footnote uses Jer 49:38’s reference to “Elam” as a proof for Israel’s exile “to Media” (למדי). For Media as “Elam” explicitly in *Genesis Rabbah*, see *Gen. R. 2:4* and *41:4*.

²⁹⁹ The Yerushalmi dispenses with the codename “Edom” found in *Sifre*, and replaces it with the exile “to Rome” (לרומי).

³⁰⁰ Milikowsky, “Exile,” 272.

While Milikowsky is correct that there was no programmatic exile of Jews to Media-Persia or Greece, there were Jewish exiles under these kingdoms. The Tanakh has Jews living outside the Land of Israel during the reign of the Medio-Persians (e.g., Esther and Daniel), and Joel 4:6 notes that Tyre and Sidon “have sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks (לבני היונים) in order to remove them far from their own border.” Deuterocanonical literature also places Jews in countries other than Israel during the reign of Ptolemies and Selucids (e.g., 2 Macc 1:10). Therefore, there is no reason why rabbinic literature could not refer to these various dispersals of Israel as גלות. For the rabbis, as long as Jews are outside the Land (in what we would call Diaspora) they are in exile. This is clear from the fact that rabbinic literature refers to the head of Jewry in Babylonia as the *Resh Galuta*—the “leader of the exile.” As R. Judah ha-Nasi puts it in *Gen. R.* 33:3, “If R. Huna, the *Resh Galuta* were to come up here [to Israel], I would rise before him, for he is descended from Judah, whereas I am descended from Benjamin.”

While the Romans did not institute an official policy of Jewish expulsion after the war of 66-70 CE, Josephus states that Titus took some seven hundred Jews as prisoners to Rome (*J. W.* 7.96); thus, there was some dispersal (but no mass exile) of Jews from the Land under Rome.³⁰¹ More, the rabbis who remained in the Land attributed an exilic component to the destructive events under Titus. For example, the notion of a Roman exile appears in the Tosefta’s comment on the Mishnah’s assertion that the Babylonian exile was caused by certain sins. Speaking of the

³⁰¹ See Michael Avi-Yonah, *The Jews Under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1984), 25-28; Gary G. Porton, “The Idea of Exile in Early Rabbinic Midrash,” in Scott, ed., *Exile*, 249; E. Mary Smallwood, “The Diaspora in the Roman Period Before CE 70,” in William Horbury, W. D. Davies, and John Sturdy, eds., *The Cambridge History of Judaism. Volume Three: The Early Roman Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 168; Amy-Jill Levine, “Introduction,” in Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., and John Dominic Crossan, eds., *The Historical Jesus in Context* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 23-24.

biblical exile, the Mishnah states, “Exile comes into the world because of those who worship idols, because of fornication, and because of bloodshed (זרה ועל גלוי עריות ועל שפיכת דמים) עבודה (גלות בא לעולם על עובדי עבודה הממון ושונאין איש את רעהו ללמדך שקשה שנאת איש את רעהו לפני המקום ושקלה הכתוב כנגד עבודה זרה וגלוי עריות ושפיכת דמים)” (*m. Avot* 5:9). Based on the mishnaic assessment of the biblical exile(s), the Tosefta claims that the Second Temple was destroyed and the people “went into exile” (גלות) because of greed and mutual hatred:

ירושלם בניין הראשון מפני מה חרבה מפני עבודה זרה וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים שהיה בתוכה אבל באחרונה מכירין אנו בהן שהן עמלין בתורה וזהירין במעשרות מפני מה גלו מפני שאוהבין את הממון ושונאין איש את רעהו ללמדך שקשה שנאת איש את רעהו לפני המקום ושקלה הכתוב כנגד עבודה זרה וגלוי עריות ושפיכת דמים

For what reason was Jerusalem’s first building [i.e., Temple] destroyed? On account of idol worship, fornication, and the bloodshed that was in the midst of it. But [in the case of] the latter [Temple] we know that they labored in the Torah and were strict with tithes. For what reason did *they* go into exile? Because they loved money and each person hated his neighbor. This teaches you that hatred of one person for his neighbor is evil before God and Scripture declares it to be like [i.e., equivalent to] idolatry, fornication, and bloodshed. (*t. Men.* 13:22, emphasis added cf. *y. Yoma* 1:1, 38c; *b. Yoma* 9ab)

According to the Tosefta, Jews in 586 BCE and 70 CE both experienced “exile” (גלות), and since the Babylonian exile means “geographical exile,” then the exile after the destruction of the “latter” Temple should mean the same thing. Although the sins of each generation are different, the sins are comparable in their destructive and exilic capabilities. Insofar as the rabbis could point to both biblical and historical instances of Jewish dispersals to Egypt, Babylon, Media, Greece, and Rome, it is probable that גלות means geographical expulsion in the passage Milikowsky cites, rather than merely “subjugation.”³⁰²

³⁰² Milikowsky leaves open the possibility that גלות as subjugation may not encompass the full scope of the term for the rabbis. He states [“Exile,” 273], “Rather than understanding the four ‘exiles’ as representing unequivocally ‘subjugation,’ it is possible that they are also meant to suggest ‘foreign lands where Israel was dispersed at various times in history.’” This possibility notwithstanding, because, Milikowsky claims [ibid.], Israel was never dispersed to Greece, he deems the definition of גלות as dispersal “extremely improbable.” However, in light of the uses of עבדות as a more appropriate term for “subjugation,” we can safely say that גלות as

From the perspective of the midrash itself, Milikowsky's reading of גלות as subjugation falters for several reasons. First, the midrash begins, "in every place where Israel was exiled (ישר' בכל מקו' שגלו)," and thereby it describes the people in various geographical locations other than Israel. Second, every scriptural citation (apart from the one pertaining to Greece in the Yerushalmi) is either a directional or spatial statement: God appears while Israel is "in Egypt, in Pharaoh's house" (במצרים לבית פרעה); God "sends to Babylon" (שולחתי בבלה); God is enthroned "in Elam [Media]" (בעילם). The sentence referring to Edom-Rome in *Sifre* also denotes geographical movement: "when they return (שובו), the *Shekhinah* returns with them, as it says, 'And the Lord your God will return (ושב) with your return.'" Likewise, the Yerushalmi presents the exiles as those "calling from Seir [i.e., Edom/Rome] (קורא משעיר)," not from within the Land. Clearly, the rabbis conceived of some kind of exile "to Rome" from which there would be a return for both the people of Israel and their God. Thus, Milikowsky is wrong to downplay the geographic elements in these midrashim and limit the idea of "exile" to subjugation.

The most pressing objection to Milikowsky's reading, though, is that the immediately preceding context of the passage from *Sifre* 84 that he cites describes Israel's subjugation in Egypt as עבדות (slavery, bondage, servitude), not גלות (exile):³⁰³ "And thus you find that in all the time that Israel were slaves in Egypt, [the] *Shekhinah* was with them in their enslavement (וכן אתה מוצא כל זמן שישראל משועבדים שכינה עמהם משועדות)." This reference to Israel's slavery in Egypt is presented with the exact same terminology as the statement about Israel's

geographical movement (following the biblical definition), which Milikowsky thinks "possible" is, in fact, probable.

³⁰³ Jastrow defines עבדות as "slavery, servitude; status of a slave." See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (New York: Putnam, 1886-1903), 1035.

exile; not only do both passage begin the same way—“you find that in all (אתה מוצא כל), etc.”—but they are both theological assertions about the fact that, whether in slavery or exile, the “*Shekhinah* was with them” (שכינה עמהם). Therefore, the meaning of גלות in *Sifre* 84:4 cannot be “subordination” to other nations, since the same passage uses עבדות to describe Israel’s subordination to Egypt. In *Sifre* 84:4, גלות means geographical exile and עבדות means subordination and vassalage to a foreign kingdom.

The Jerusalem Talmud’s use of עבדות to describe the subjugations during both Egyptian bondage and Babylonian exile further supports the fact that עבדות is more appropriate than גלות when referring to subjugation. The Yerushalmi states, “The enslavement to Babylon was tougher than the enslavement to Egypt” (שיעבודא של בבל היה קשה משיעבודא של מצרים) (y. Suk. 4:3). The rabbis do not need גלות to describe Babylonian subjugation; had *Sifre* or the Yerushalmi wished to speak of “subordination” to other nations, as opposed to physical exile, they simply would have used עבדות, rather than opting for a metaphorical usage of גלות. Thus, the rabbinic conception of “exile” should be understood as the journeys from Israel that Jews made to any of the lands under Egyptian, Babylonian, Median, Greek, or Roman control.

Exile in Genesis Rabbah

As with the rabbinic literature we have seen thus far, *Genesis Rabbah* states that Jews outside the Land of Israel are in “exile,” but Jews in the Land of Israel are not. *Genesis Rabbah* never uses the word “exile” (גלות) with reference to existence in the Land of Israel. Rather, the midrash always follows the biblical definition of exile as either expulsion from the Land or continued existence in the foreign land to which one has been expelled. *Genesis Rabbah* refers to geographical exile to Babylon in the biblical period. For example, in a discussion of Rachel’s

burial in Gen 35:19, the midrash asks, “What was Jacob’s reason for burying Rachel on the way to Ephrath? Jacob foresaw that the exiles (גליות) would pass on from there [to Babylon]; therefore he buried her there so that she might pray for mercy for them. Thus it is written [in Jer 31:15-16], ‘A voice is heard in Ramah... Rachel weeping for her children’ (*Gen. R.* 82:10). This text emphasizes the geographical nature of exile in that the “exiles” are those who were forced to journey “on the way to Ephrath” from “Ramah” to Babylon. When the rabbinic authors mention the “exiles” (גליות) in this and other cases, they refer to the people who were exiled in the biblical period.³⁰⁴

Also in line with the biblical definition of גלות is *Genesis Rabbah*’s presentation of life outside Israel as life in “exile” (cf. Ezek 1:2; 33:21; 40:1; Obad 1:20). For instance, in Jacob’s words about Esau in Gen 32:8—“If Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it, then the camp that is left will escape”—the rabbis see an allusion to Jews in both Israel and abroad. According to *Gen. R.* 76:3, “The rabbis commented... ‘if Esau comes to the one camp and attacks it’—this alludes to our brothers in the South [i.e., Judea]; ‘then the camp that is left will escape’—this alludes to our brothers in the exiles (בגליות).” Like the passage from the Tosefta that speaks of “our brothers” in both the “South” as well as in “exile” (*t. Sanh.* 2:6), *Genesis Rabbah* makes a clear bifurcation between those living in Judea, who were attacked by “Esau” [Rome], and those who “escaped” from Judea via their exile.

The midrash makes a similar distinction between those living in the Land and those living elsewhere when it asks about the various Jewish communities in Israel and abroad:

On account of what merit do the children of Babylonia live? By merit of the Torah. And by what merit the children of the Land of Israel? By merit of tithes. And by what merit the men

³⁰⁴ For further references to the biblical exile(s), see *Gen. R.* 18:5; 36:4; 56:1; 57:4; 64:10; 68:13; 75:8; 92:3 cf. 16:3; 70:10.

outside of the Land (וְאֵנְשֵׁי חוּצָה לְאֶרֶץ) [i.e., the Diaspora]? By the merit [that] they honor the Sabbaths and festivals.” (*Gen. R.* 11:4)

This midrash breaks up late antique Jewry into three separate groups: those living in Babylonia, in the Land of Israel, and “outside the Land”—that is, everywhere apart from the rabbinic centers of Babylonia and Israel. Elsewhere, *Genesis Rabbah* speaks of anyone living outside the Land as living in “exile” when it refers to a “teaching [that] came to us from the Exile (הַגְּלוּת)” (*Gen. R.* 42:3; cf. 37:8)—the “us” constitutes those in Israel, while the teaching came from outside the Land. Thus, for *Genesis Rabbah*, those living in the Land of Israel are not in exile.

While Jews in Israel during the rabbinic period are not in “exile,” the Romans nevertheless continue to harass and pursue them, so that the sages are forced either to depart from a given area or to flee from the Romans within the Land. *Gen. R.* 10:7 relates the story of R. Eliezer, a tanna from the Land of Israel, “in a bathroom (בְּבֵית הַכֶּסֶּא) when a certain Roman (הַדּוֹר הַרומי) came and drove him away (וַתְּרַכֶּיהָ) and sat down. ‘This has a purpose,’ said R. Eliezer. And immediately a snake emerged and struck and killed him [i.e., the Roman]. At that he applied to himself the verse: ‘I give a man in exchange for you’ (Isa 43:4).” That the story recounts a Roman (as opposed to a Jew) being killed in place of R. Eliezer coheres with the context of the cited verse, which goes on to state, “and of the nations (וְלֵאמֹתַי) in exchange for your life.” According to *Genesis Rabbah*, even when Jews in Israel are in the most private of places, Romans have the power to drive them away, but God allows such harassment for a purpose—in this case, to protect R. Eliezer from death. However, being “driven away” from point A to point B within the Land does not constitute exile.

Just as one can be “driven away” from places within the Land, one can also take refuge in a safe haven without being in exile. *Genesis Rabbah* contains a story of Jews preemptively fleeing from Gentile military forces within the Land: “R. Huna said, ‘We were taking refuge

from troops in the caves of Tiberias. We had lamps with us; when they were dim, we knew it was day, and when they shined brightly we knew it was night” (*Gen. R.* 31:11). Günter Stemberger understands this text to refer Roman rule under the 4th century governor Ursicinus: “The text speaks of R. Huna staying in the caves of Tiberias on his flight from the Goths. We do not know whether this means Roman troops or perhaps the patriarch’s Gothic bodyguard.”³⁰⁵ Whether the troops in this story are Roman or Gothic, the midrash provides a picture of Jews in the Land of Israel being harassed by the nations to the point that R. Huna and others flee into caves for safety. R. Huna is in Tiberias, not in exile, but, like R. Eliezer, he is forced to go from point A to point B because of the Gentiles who occupy the Land. Thus, while Jews in the Land are not in exile, they share the plight of the exiles insofar as both groups live under Gentile control—Jews in the Land are driven away much like the exiles were driven away. However, forced movement within the borders of Israel is not called גלות; rather, exile is a phenomenon that only touches those outside the Land of Israel.

Finally, just as those living in Israel are not in exile, God, according to *Genesis Rabbah*, is not in exile either. The midrash does not contain the passage about the *Shekhinah* accompanying Israel in their many exiles, but it does use the examples of Isaac going down to Gerar (*Gen* 26:1), Joseph going to work for Laban in Haran (*Gen* 27:43), and Joseph in Potiphar’s house (*Gen* 39:1-2) to show that “wherever the righteous go, the *Shekhinah* accompanies them” (*Gen. R.* 86:6). This must mean that the *Shekhinah* is also among the people in the Land, since the rabbis also claim, “there is no Torah [learning/teaching] like the Torah of the Land of Israel, and no wisdom like the wisdom of the Land of Israel” (*Gen. R.* 16:4). Furthermore, the midrash states, “Every time that Israel praises the Holy One blessed be he, he

³⁰⁵ Günter Stemberger, *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century*, trans., Ruth Tuschling (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 166.

causes his *Shekhinah* to rest upon them” (*Gen. R.* 48:7); those upon whom the *Shekhinah* would rest include Jews who praise God in the Land. Insofar as the *Shekhinah* can accompany people from the Land of Israel to other lands and yet remain with people in the Land, the rabbinic conception of divine presence is fluid—God can be in more than one place at a time.³⁰⁶ However, *Genesis Rabbah* never asserts that the people of Israel are living in a Land from which God is exiled.

Conclusion

Despite the tendency of both New Testament and rabbinic scholarship to frame their primary texts in terms of ongoing “exile,” neither Matthew nor *Genesis Rabbah* reflects this idea. Matthew’s genealogy shows that the exile is over by the time the Gospel begins, and Matthew’s fulfillment citations do not refer to Israel’s ongoing exile. Mt 2:15’s quotation of Hos 11:1 has an exilic context, but the evangelist cites it in order to compare Israel’s exodus with Jesus’ coming out of Egypt. Those who conceive of ongoing subjugation as “exile” in rabbinic literature miss key passages in that literature that bar the idea of exile for those in the Land. While the rabbis can be either forcibly moved or can voluntarily flee from in-Land Gentile occupation, this does not put these rabbis in exile. More, *Genesis Rabbah*, like Matthew, does not reflect an ongoing exile for the God of Israel.

In order to see that Matthew does not see first-century Israel in exile, one must read the Gospel metaleptically, with reference to the wider context of the biblical citations. In doing this, narrative patterns emerge between Jesus and biblical Israel. Yet, the “worlds” of Gospel and Israel’s Scriptures are not exactly the same—the content of the forms differs slightly. While

³⁰⁶ On this kind of divine fluidity in ancient Israel, see Benjamin D. Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. 38-57.

neither the Israel of Scripture or of Matthew are “in exile,” salvation within the Land looks different: Scripture describes the defeat of foreign aggressors against Israel, whereas Matthew describes Jesus saving his people from their sins (1:21). While Rome is present in the First Gospel (e.g., Mt 27), the evangelist is concerned with the defeat of sin, rather than the defeat of Rome. The following chapter will provide discussions of “sin” for both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*, and the ways both texts’ authors deal with that sin. Understanding sin and the means of forgiveness will supply the reasons that Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* create symbols in their commemorative narratives.

V. THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL'S SIN AND FORGIVENESS IN MATTHEW AND *GENESIS RABBAH*

In 70 CE the Romans destroyed the Second Temple, burned the city of Jerusalem, and killed and exiled many Jews living in the Land of Israel. After these events, Jews whose biblical worldviews presupposed sin and atonement through Temple sacrifice responded in various ways. The authors of Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are among those who offered approaches for living in a post-sacrificial world. Matthew asserts that Jesus' death atones for his peoples' sins, and therefore stands in for the inoperative sacrificial system. The rabbis maintain that collective suffering under Gentile rulers purges post-Temple sins, and that biblical individuals provide templates for how to live in light of such suffering. The symbols of biblical Israel that Gospel and Midrash produce point to the means of atonement for the people of Israel. In order to appreciate these symbols as responses to sin, it is necessary to establish Matthew and the rabbis' understanding of how sin effects the people, as well as the process for dealing with that sin.

Matthew's Jesus deems the Temple to be "desolate" (ἐρημος; Mt 23:38) and awaiting destruction (24:1-2). In light of the narratively predicted loss of the Temple, Matthew states that Jesus' blood effects forgiveness of sins (26:28). For the Gospel, as well as other Jewish literature both before and after the first-century Gospel, the sins that people commit generate a debt to God.³⁰⁷ Matthew's Jesus gives his life as a "ransom" (λύτρον; 20:28)—i.e., a ransom payment—in order to clear that debt and thereby "save his people from their sins" (1:21). In light of Jesus' sacrificial debt payment, the evangelist argues, post-70 Jews (and Gentiles) should become part

³⁰⁷ The Dead Sea Scrolls contain pre-Matthean references to sin as debt (e.g., CD 3:11-12; 11QMelchizedek), and Targum Onqelos refers to sin as debt after the first-century (e.g., Exod 10:17; Lev 5:2; 24:15 TgO). I will return to this metaphor in both DSS and Targum later in this chapter.

of Jesus’ “assembly” (ἐκκλησία) of disciples who affirm that God has given to Jesus “all authority on heaven and on earth” (28:18).

Genesis Rabbah points to Israel’s ongoing subordination to a newly Christianized Rome as the proof that sin remains among the people. In the Midrash, as in the Tanakh and qumranic literature, sin is seen as a kind of trap or snare in which the people have become entangled. The rabbis see their enslavement (עבדות) to the Romans as the manifestation of sin’s power to hold people in bondage. Israel’s suffering under Christian Rome purges the sin that traps the people. Eventually, Israel’s endurance under suffering will purge sin completely, and God will then redeem Israel from the hands of Gentile rulers.

This chapter proceeds in five parts—four of which are dedicated to understanding the statement that Jesus “will save his people from their sins (σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν)” (Mt 1:21). First, I show that every instance of “people” (λαὸς) in the First Gospel refers to the people of Israel—that is, ethnic Jews.³⁰⁸ I also highlight Matthew’s negative portrayal of Israel’s leaders (scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and elders of the people) vis-à-vis the rest of the people of Israel. The Gospel distinguishes between the leadership and the people; by the end of the narrative, Matthew has separated the leaders from the broader “people.” Matthew offers forgiveness of sins to the λαὸς but not to the leaders. Whereas “all the righteous blood” (πάν ἀίμα δίκαιον) since the beginning of time comes upon the scribes and Pharisees, thereby condemning them (23:35), “all the people” (πᾶς ὁ λαός) cry out for Jesus’ salvific blood to be upon them (27:25), which will save them from their sins once Jesus sheds his blood on the cross.

³⁰⁸ For Matthew’s uses of λαὸς cf. Mt 1:21; 2:4, 6; 4:16, 23; 9:35; 13:15; 15:8; 21:23; 26:3, 5; 26:47; 27:1, 25, 64.

In the second section, I show that the terms “Israel” (Ἰσραήλ) and “Jews” (Ἰουδαίους) refer to God’s historical Jewish people, and that Gentiles do not replace Israel or become part of Israel. While Gentiles come to worship Jesus (2:1-12) and to receive healing from him (8:5-13; 15:21-28), they do not follow him—nor does Jesus seek them out. The only active mission that Jesus and his disciples have is “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5b; 15:34). Matthew notes that, after Jesus’ resurrection, Israel’s leaders spread a rumor that Jesus’ disciples stole his body (28:13). The evangelist also notes that this rumor remains among “Jews to this day” (28:15). However, Matthew does not explicate how this rumor was received among Jews, and the rumor itself has no effect on the salvation from sin that Jesus achieves for “all the people” of Israel.

Third, I discuss Jesus’ “assembly” of Jesus followers (ἐκκλησία), which begins with Jesus’ disciples—a group made up of ethnic Jews within the Land of Israel. The Jesus assembly comes out of the people of Israel, but is not synonymous with Israel; the ἐκκλησία does not replace Israel as a people, but rather attempts to incorporate those people into its membership. At the end of the Gospel, Jesus commissions eleven Jewish disciples (minus the late Judas) to make disciples of “all the Gentiles” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη; 28:20). Matthew hints at the full Gentile inclusion throughout the Gospel via Gentiles in Jesus’ genealogy (1:5-6), the magi (2:1-12), and the presence of Gentiles at the eschaton (8:11; 24:31; 25:32). Jesus also states that “the gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations” (24:14). However, while the Gospel anticipates Gentile followers of Jesus, the actual inclusion of the nations into the assembly is beyond the narrative horizon of the Gospel; within Matthew’s narrative parameters, the ἐκκλησία is limited to ethnic Jews.

Fourth, I discuss the problem of “sin” (ἁμαρτία) in order to show why Jesus must save his people from it. I argue that, according to Matthew, the Temple is inoperative in Jesus’ day and will soon be destroyed, so that Jesus must serve as a substitute for the atoning Temple sacrifices. As Matthew understands sin to be a debt that must be paid, Matthew’s Jesus gives his life as a “ransom” (λύτρον)—that is, a ransom payment—in order to pay off the sin debt (20:28). This discussion will provide the necessary background to the following chapter, in which I show that Jesus ransoms Israel from sin by experiencing in his passion the greatest possible punishment for sin: exile.

Finally, I show that *Genesis Rabbah* understands sin as a snare in which the people of Israel are trapped. Israel’s enslavement to foreign nations, according to *Genesis Rabbah*, is the outward sign that the people are, in fact, ensnared in sin. Salvation from the clutches of sin and bondage to the nations comes through Israel’s collective suffering at the hands of these nations—in *Genesis Rabbah*’s case, Christian Rome. While Rome enslaves and abuses the people of Israel, suffering under Rome purges collective Israel of its sins, and salvation will follow purification. As the people of Israel wait for redemption, they must repent and continue to worship God; repentance and worship are ways that the people can receive forgiveness and actively ensure the coming salvation. The concept of sin and its effect on Israel is the impetus for *Genesis Rabbah*’s symbols of biblical Israel for rabbinic Israel: the symbols deliver a message about how the collective can endure under sin and Roman rule, and also provides assurance that salvation from both is on the horizon.

The “People” in Matthew

At the outset of Matthew’s Gospel, the evangelist states that Jesus “will save his people from their sins (σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν)” (1:21). In this section, I

argue that the “people” (λαὸς) to whom Mt 1:21 refers is the people of Israel—the only people for whom the loss of the Jerusalem Temple would obstruct atonement of sins. Throughout Matthew, λαὸς always (and only) refers to ethnic Jews.³⁰⁹

Before moving to my analysis of λαὸς, I must note that the question of what constitutes “ethnicity” in the ancient world is very complex, and the terms “Jew” and “Jewishness” have been variously defined, particularly since the arrival of Christianity.³¹⁰ I only wish to define a “Jew” or a “person of Israel” from the perspective of Matthew’s narrative world, which makes a clear bifurcation between “Israel” and “Gentiles” (and Samaritans) (see Mt 10:5b-6). From a biblical perspective, “the people of Israel” include, to begin with, males who are circumcised on the eighth day (see Gen 17:12-14; Lev 12:3 cf. *Jub.* 15; Lk 1:59; Acts 7:8; Phil 3:5; *m. Arak.* 2:2; *Shabb.* 19:5).³¹¹ Both males and females whose fathers were circumcised on the eighth day are of the people of Israel, along with those who identify themselves within the ancestral line of Abraham (such as the ancestral line Matthew offers in 1:1-17) and who choose to—or at least, have the option to—worship the God of Israel from birth. Since, as Paula Fredriksen notes, “gods run in the blood” in antiquity, the adoption of one’s particular deity, in part, defined one’s ancestry and ethnicity.³¹²

³⁰⁹ Cf. Mt 1:21; 2:4, 6; 4:16, 23; 13:15; 15:8; 21:23; 26:3, 5; 26:47; 27:1, 25; 27:64.

³¹⁰ See Cynthia M. Baker, *Jew* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016), esp. 16-46.

³¹¹ On circumcision and Jewish identity, see Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). In ancient Israel, which had many elements that moderns would define as androcentric, there is no eighth-day marker of Israel-ness or Jewishness for women, though defining ancient Israel as “patriarchal” is imprecise. See Carol L. Meyers, “Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society,” *JBL* 133 (2014): 8-27.

³¹² Paula Fredriksen, “Mandatory Retirement: Ideas in the Study of Christian Origins Whose Time Has Come to Go,” in David B. Capes, April D. DeConick, Helen K. Bond, and Troy

From the start of the Gospel, when Matthew refers to “people” (λαός) the referent is the people of Israel. In narrating Jesus’ life before he begins his ministry (Mt 1:1-4:16), Matthew uses the term λαός four times in the context of a divine response to Israel’s needs (cf. Mt 1:21; 2:6; 4:16, 23).³¹³ In the first instance, an angel appears to Joseph and tells him that his fiancée, Mary, will “bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus because he will save his people (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ) from their sins” (Mt 1:21). Although the Gospel does not immediately explicate the identity of this people, a scriptural allusion in Mt 1:21 points to the identity of “his people” as Israel. The verse echoes Ps 129:8 LXX: “He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities” (αὐτὸς λυτρώσεται τὸν Ἰσραηλ ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτοῦ). Readers knowing this psalm would equate “his people” with Israel.³¹⁴ Although Donald Hagner agrees that the psalm “provides similar language [to Mt 1:21] and finds its fulfillment” in Matthew’s Jesus, he concludes, “Matthew and his readers were capable of a deeper understanding of the expression [“his people”] wherein it includes both Jews and Gentiles.... We may thus finally equate this λαός, ‘people,’ with the ἐκκλησία, ‘Church.’”³¹⁵

Miller, eds., *Israel’s God and Rebecca’s Children: Christology and Community in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 32.

³¹³ See Saldarini, *Community*, 29.

³¹⁴ See Carter, *Matthew*, 69; idem., “‘To Save His People from Their Sins’ (Matthew 1:21): Rome’s Empire and Matthew’s Salvation as Sovereignty,” in *SBL Seminar Papers 39* (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 379-401; repr., in idem., *Matthew and Empire*, esp., 83-84; idem., “The Gospel of Matthew,” in Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 79; Joshua E. Leim, *Matthew’s Theological Grammar: The Father and the Son* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 58.

³¹⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 19-20; cf. Brown, *Birth*, 131; Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 8; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.210; Hubert Frankemölle, *Jahwe-Bund und Kirche Christi: Studien zur Form und Traditionsgeschichte des Evangeliums nach Mattäus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984), 218-20; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2 Volumes. 2nd ed. [HTKNT] (Freiburg:

Yet there is no evidence textual for Hagner’s “deeper understanding” that Gentiles are a part of Mt 1:21’s people. The idea that Mt 1:21 includes a reference to Gentiles is frequently based upon the appearance of Gentiles later in Matthew. For example, because the Gentile magi worship Jesus (Mt 2:1-11) and some of Israel’s leaders would later reject Jesus, Piotrowski concludes, “the reader is justified in understanding ‘his people’ as whosoever follows and obeys Jesus be they Jew or Gentile.”³¹⁶ However, there is no mention of the magi “following” Jesus—in fact, they leave him and go back to their own country (2:11)—and they do not “obey” him, since, being an infant, Jesus is unable to speak any words for them to obey. In fact, no Gentile ever follows Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel. This is not to say that Gentile readers of Matthew would not understand themselves to be part of Jesus’ “people” by the end of the Gospel—particularly in light of Mt 28:19’s commission to make disciples of “all the Gentiles” (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη). However, because Matthew’s next use of λαός in 2:5-6 identifies Jesus’ “people” as Israel, I read Mt 1:21 as referring to an Israel composed of ethnic Jews.³¹⁷

Herder, 1988/1992), 1.19; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on his Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* [2nd ed.] (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 23-24.

³¹⁶ Piotrowski, *New David*, 38. Herbert Bassler, apparently referring to the Great Commission (28:19), concludes, “The reference [in Mt 1:21] is to Israel, but ironically ‘save his people’ will, in the end, mean ‘save his Gentile nations.’” Herbert W. Bassler with Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-based Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 44. Bassler unnecessarily collapses “all the nations” at the end of the Gospel into “his people” at the beginning. If the biblical writers can include Gentiles within the salvific framework (e.g., Isa 49:6; Amos 9:7; Zec 8:23) and also refer to Israel as “my people,” there is no reason that Matthew cannot do the same.

³¹⁷ For others who read Mt 1:21 as referring to ethnic Jews, see Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 29; J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* [TNTC] (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, International, 1996), 36; David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* [SNTW] (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 251; Soares Prabhu, 266; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Continental Commentary*. Translated by Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 121;

Indeed, Mt 2:5-6 confirms that Israel—that is, ethnic Jews—is Jesus’ “people.” When Herod asks the chief priests and “scribes of the [Jewish] people (γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ)” (2:4) where the Messiah is to be born, they answer, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel (τὸν λαὸν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ)’” (Mt 2:5-6; cf. Mic 5:2; 2 Sam 5:2). Thus, with 2:5-6 Matthew clarifies that the identity of “his people” in 1:21 is the people of Israel. Jesus is a shepherd to God’s people, Israel, which Matthew emphasizes in Jesus’ earthly mission to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 15:24 cf. 10:6).

The third instance of λαός occurs in Mt 4:13-16, and mentions the Land and people of Israel in Matthew’s day with reference to that same Land and people in Isaiah’s day:

And leaving Nazareth, [Jesus] went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people (ἔθνη/ὁ λαός) walking in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, a light has dawned on them.” (cf. Isa 8:23-9:1 [9:1-2 LXX])

Much has been made of the reference to “beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,” as a foreshadowing of the Great Commission at the end of the Gospel.³¹⁸ However, Matthew is

idem., *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*. 3 Volumes [Hermeneia] (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 1.95; J. C. R. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 85; Boris Repschinski, “For He Will Save His People from Their Sins: (Matthew 1:21): A Christology for Christian Jews,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68 (2006): 248-67, esp. 255-56; Joel Willitts, *Matthew’s Messianic Shepherd King: In Search of ‘The Lost Sheep of the House of Israel’* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 109; Martin Hasitschka, “Matthew and Hebrews,” in David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski, eds., *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 91; Wayne Baxter, *Israel’s Only Shepherd: Matthew’s Shepherd Motif and His Social Setting* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 132-33.

³¹⁸ See, e.g., France, *Matthew*, 143; Osbourne, *Matthew*, 143; David L. Turner, *Matthew* [BECNT] (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 133-34; Talbert, *Matthew*, 62.

merely citing the Septuagint's "people" (λαὸς) in Isa 9:2 LXX, which is a reference to God's people living in the Land of Israel.³¹⁹ In citing Isaiah, Matthew no more makes a comment on Gentile inclusion into a theologized, universal "people" than does Isaiah; just as λαὸς in Isa 9:2 LXX means the people of Israel, so it does in Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew then refers to Jesus speaking in the people's synagogues and healing them in Mt 4:23: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and every sickness among the people (λαῶν)" (cf. 9:35). As Jesus is in Galilee and teaching in synagogues (Jewish gathering places), Matthew describes Jesus' work among Jewish people. Matthew's references to "their synagogues" (συναγωγῶν; cf. Mt 4:23; 9:35; 10:17) suggest a distancing of Matthew's target audience from synagogues.³²⁰ Matthew also associates the Pharisees—Jesus' main opponents in the first Gospel—with synagogues (cf. 12:9-14; 23:23:6, 34) so that "the synagogue and Pharisees become conjoined."³²¹ The evangelist's negative presentation of synagogues is a foil for the positive presentation of the Matthean "assembly" (ἐκκλησία; cf. Mt 16:18; 18:17)—that is, an alternative gathering place for (Jewish) followers of Jesus. This portrayal of the synagogue does not denote a distancing from Jews or Judaism, but rather an attempt to forge an alternative identity within Israel vis-à-vis the Pharisees.³²²

³¹⁹ See John Goldingay, *Isaiah* [NIBC] (Grand Rapids: Hendrickson, 2001), 70; John D. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* [WBC] (Dallas: Word Books, 2005), 172.

³²⁰ See Amy-Jill Levine, "Matthew's Portrayal of the Synagogue and its Leaders," in Donald Senior, ed., *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity* (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 177-94, esp. 177-81.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 181.

³²² See Anders Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *JBL* 127 (2008): 95-132; *idem.*, "Saving the Lost

Matthew also refers to the “many crowds” (ὄχλοι πολλοί; 13:2) that come to Jesus by loosely quoting Isa 6:10: “For this people’s heart has grown dull (ἐπαχύνθη γὰρ ἡ καρδία τοῦ λαοῦ τούτου)” (Mt 13:15). While this is a decidedly negative assessment of the people, the text still refers to the people of Israel. Matthew will also consistently refer to the “elders of the people” (πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαου; cf. 26:3; 26:47; 27:1). As the elders are associated with the chief priests and scribes, λαὸς here means the Jewish people. These same elders, along with the chief priests and scribes, plot to kill Jesus (26:3), but choose not to carry it out at the time in order to avoid an uproar among “the people (τῷ λαῷ)” (26:5). Eventually “all the people” (πᾶς ὁ λαὸς) will call for Jesus’ blood before Pilate in Jerusalem (27:25), and day after Jesus’ death, the chief priests and Pharisees express a concern that Jesus’ disciples will steal his body and “say to the people (τῷ λαῷ), ‘He has risen from the dead’” (27:64). In each of these cases, λαὸς refers to the people of Israel.

Matthew’s only other reference to λαὸς refers not to the people as a whole, but to the Pharisees and scribes in particular. After Jesus critiques the Pharisees and scribes for breaking “the commandment of God for the sake of [their] tradition” (15:3), Matthew cites Isa 29:13 LXX: “This people (λαὸς) honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of human beings” (Mt 15:8-9). Matthew adopts Isaiah’s reference to λαὸς and directs it to the scribes and Pharisees whose traditions are “commandments of human beings”—the term λαὸς does not refer to the people of Israel as a whole. More, whereas Mt 1:21 states that Jesus will save “his people” (τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ) from their sins, Mt 15:8 refers to the scribes and Pharisees as “this people” (ὁ λαὸς

Sheep of the House of Israel: Purity, Forgiveness, and Synagogues in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Melilah* 11 (2014): 8-24.

οὐτος), thereby distancing the scribes and Pharisees from Jesus' people in 1:21. Still, as with every other instance of λαὸς in Matthew's Gospel, Mt 15:8 refers to the Jewish people of Israel.

The People vs. Israel's Leaders

That Matthew distinguishes between Israel's leaders and Israel's people in 15:8 is supported by other Matthean distinctions between the people and their leaders—that is, the “scribes and Pharisees,” and the “chief priests” and “elders of the people.” This separation between leaders and people is important because (1) it discourages the reader from conflating Matthew's negative view of the leaders with the evangelist's attitude toward the people of Israel (i.e., Jews in general), and (2) it shows that Jesus comes to save “his people” from their sins, but not the leaders. The leaders are part of “Israel” but they are not part of the “people” (i.e., the common population of Israel).

Matthew presents Israel's leaders in an overwhelmingly negative light. The evangelist associates the “chief priests and scribes of the people” with Herod in his attempt to destroy the infant Jesus (Mt 2:6), the “chief priests and elders of the people” plot to kill Jesus (27:1), and the “chief priests and elders” persuade the people to call for Jesus' blood (27:20). More, the scribes and Pharisees oppress the general population insofar as they “tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's (ἀνθρώπων) shoulders” (23:4); they also hamper people's relationships with God in that they “shut up the kingdom of heaven in front of people (ἀνθρώπων)” (23:13-15; cf. 23:34-35). The scribes and Pharisees are a class unto themselves that Matthew pits against the general population. Matthew makes the same bifurcation between the people and the “chief priests” (ἀρχιερεῖς) and “elders of the people” (πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ) who plot to kill Jesus (26:3), but decide not to carry out their plan “lest there be an uproar among the people” (ἵνα μὴ

θόρυβος γένηται ἐν τῷ λαῷ; 23:5; cf. 21:45-46). When the Gospel mentions the “people” of Israel as a whole, it does not include the leaders of Israel.

Another way that the Gospel makes a distinction between the people and the leaders is in its discussion of the people’s sins that are forgiven (26:28) vs. the leaders’ sins that will not be forgiven. According to Matthew, the Pharisees commit blasphemy against the Holy Spirit when they claim of Jesus’ exorcisms, “It is only by Beelzebul, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons” (12:24). Jesus retorts that he casts out demons “by the Spirit of God” (12:28), not by Beelzebul. In attributing Jesus’ work to that of a demon, the Pharisees blaspheme against the Spirit of God. In response, Jesus states, “whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (οὐκ ἄφεθήσεται)” (12:32). This lack of forgiveness for the Pharisees sharply contrasts with the “people” Jesus saves from their sins (1:21) when he pours out his blood for the “forgiveness of sins (ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν)” (28:26). This distinction between the people Jesus saves and the leaders he condemns is crucial for understanding the first Gospel’s opposition to Israel’s leaders, rather than Jesus’ people.³²³

Along with separating the scribes and Pharisees from the people, Matthew also blames the scribes and Pharisees, at least in part, for the destruction of the Temple. This can be seen in Jesus’ final critique against them in 23:29-36, which precedes his prediction of the Temple’s destruction (23:37-24:2). First, Jesus claims that the scribes and Pharisees, insofar as they are the “sons of those who murdered the prophets,” are responsible for the deaths of all the prophets who came before them (23:29-32)—particularly Zechariah son of Berachiah, whom they killed

³²³ See Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form, and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 318-19; Saldarini, *Community*, 62.

in the Temple courts (cf. 2 Chron 24:20-21). Immediately after leveling this charge, Jesus says that the Temple is left “desolate” (ἐρημος) and will be destroyed:

You are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.... Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you kill and crucify... so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Berachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Amen, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. (Mt 23:32b-36)

Catherine Sider Hamilton notes the biblical and Second Temple trope that the shedding of innocent blood pollutes the Land, and she argues convincingly that Matthew sees the destruction of the Temple as the result of the scribes and Pharisees’ blood pollution.³²⁴ She concludes that, in light of Jesus’ prediction, which includes the lament over “Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets” (23:37), “Zechariah’s blood thus mingles with the blood of Jerusalem; his death is tied directly to the destruction of the city and temple.”³²⁵ Thus, according to Matthew, the scribes and Pharisees are, at least in part, to blame for the desolation of the Temple and the destruction of the city in which it resides.³²⁶

The leaders’ culpability notwithstanding, Jesus also implicates Jerusalem in the Temple’s destruction:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her

³²⁴ See Catherine Sider Hamilton, “‘His Blood Be upon Us’: Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew,” *CBQ* 70 (2008): 82-100, esp. 86-98. She discusses the tradition of “the Blood of Zechariah” found in 2 Chron 24:20-22; *y. Taan.* 69ab; *Lam. R.* Proem 5 2:2 and Proem 4 13:16; *Qoh. R.* 3.16.1 and 10.4.1; *PRK* 15:7; *TgEst* 1:2, 12; *b. Git.* 57b; *Sanh.* 96b. She follows Sheldon Blank, “The Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12-13 (1937-38): 327-46; cf. Betsy Halpern Amaru, “The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling the Midrash,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983): 153-80; Charlene McAfee Moss, *The Zechariah Tradition and the Gospel of Matthew* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 103-26.

³²⁵ Sider Hamilton, “Blood,” 89.

³²⁶ Cf. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 126.

wings, and you were unwilling. See, your house is left to you, desolate. . . . Jesus left the Temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the edifices of the Temple. But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Amen, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down. (Mt 23:37-24:2)

Matthew’s Jesus clearly states that the inhabitants of Jerusalem, beyond the scribes and Pharisees, have some responsibility for the fallen Temple. Yet, Jesus’ main focus still seems to be on Jerusalem’s leaders, rather than all of Jerusalem’s inhabitants. Jesus has just finished saying that the scribes and Pharisees are the ones who kill the prophets (23:30-35), so the reader’s first inclination is to think of the leaders as representing Jerusalem. While the first five chapters of the Gospel describe Jerusalem as a collective (cf. Mt 2:3; 3:5; 4:25; 5:35), the evangelist increasingly associates the leaders with city as the narrative progresses: the scribes and Pharisees come “to Jesus from Jerusalem” (15:1), and Jesus repeats that he is going to Jerusalem to suffer many things from the “elders and chief priests and scribes” (16:21; 20:17-18). Granted, Matthew also refers to the “whole city” of Jerusalem when Jesus enters it on a donkey (21:10), so that when Matthew next refers to Jerusalem in 23:37, all the inhabitants seem to be in view. I will show in the next section, however, that “all the people” (Mt 27:25) will be forgiven of their sins when Jesus sheds his blood on the cross. Thus, while the entire “generation” (23:36) would witness the destruction of Jerusalem and fall of the Temple, Jesus’ people—the commoners of Israel—are saved from the sins that caused the Temple’s destruction (1:21). Matthew asserts that despite the loss of the Temple, the people can know that Jesus’ blood has effected their atonement.

Salvation for “All the People” in Mt 27:25

In Mt 27:25 “all the people” (πᾶς ὁ λαός) call for Jesus’ blood. After Pilate says to the crowd (ὄχλους; Mt 27:20) gathered before him, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it

yourselves” (27:24), Mt 27:25 states, “All the people (πᾶς ὁ λαός) answered, ‘His blood be upon us and upon our children.’” In this section, I argue that 27:25 is Matthew’s climactic answer to the question of *how* Jesus will save his people from their sins (1:21)—a question that has gone unanswered up to this point in the Gospel. During the Last Supper, Matthew’s Jesus says that he is about to pour out his blood for the “forgiveness of sins” (ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν; 26:28). Leading up to the meal, Matthew clarifies that Jesus’ death is “necessary” (δεῖ; Mt 16:21 cf. 26:54) in that it accomplishes God’s “will” (θέλω; Mt 26:39). Therefore, the cry from “all the people” for Jesus’ blood in 27:25 is best understood as the people’s unconscious act of corporate obedience to a divine plan. The request for Jesus’ blood assures the reader that (per 1:21) Jesus will save (all) his people from their sins when he sheds his blood on the cross.

Some have interpreted Mt 27:25 as marking Israel’s rejection of Jesus, which eventuates the mission to the Gentiles and the replacement of Israel with the church.³²⁷ As Douglas Hare claims, the blood cry expresses Matthew’s “theological conviction that Israel as a whole has rejected its Messiah in a final and definitive way and in consequence deserves to be deselected as God’s special people.”³²⁸ In Hare’s reading, the blood cry marks the end of Israel’s status as

³²⁷ See Trilling, *Israel*, 72-75; Frankemölle, *Mattäus Evangelium*, 206-07; Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 1.24-25; Gundry, *Matthew*, 565; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975), 165-66; Frank J. Matera, *Passion Narratives and Gospel Theologies: Interpreting the Synoptics through their Passion Stories* (New York: Paulist, 1986), 120, 130-37; Ulrich Luz, “Der Antijudaismus im Matthäusevangelium als historisches und theologisches Problem: Eine Skizze,” *Evangelische Theologie* 53 (1993): 310-27, esp. 315; Henry Wansbrough, “The Four Gospels in Synopsis,” in John Barton and John Muddiman, eds., *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1011. Others see the blood cry as enacting a curse among the Jewish people that recapitulates the curse that Judas brings upon himself in Mt 27:4. See Tilborg, *Jewish Leaders*, 94; Patte, *Matthew*, 380.

³²⁸ Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew [Interpretation]* (Louisville: John Knox, 1993), 317-18; cf. idem., *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 153-56; idem., “The Rejection of the Jews in

God's special people, so that Jesus becomes the cause of a collective sin (rejecting the Messiah) that ensures his people's separation from God. It is this reading of Mt 27:25 that leads Frank Matera to claim, "Matthew's Gospel is the tragic story of why and how Israel rejected her Messiah."³²⁹ Since I have shown that "people" (λαὸς) always refers to the people of Israel, this view of Mt 27:25 forces the reader to claim that Matthew's Gospel is the story of how Jesus fails in his mission to save his people from their sins. That is, if "all the people" separate themselves from God in calling for Jesus' blood, then Jesus does not save any of his people from their sins—to the contrary, he compounds his people's sins. However, it is difficult to imagine that the Gospel would highlight the failure of its hero, and thus leave a divine prediction of salvation unfulfilled.

Against the idea that Mt 27:25 constitutes Israel's rejection of Jesus, the blood that the people call on themselves is also that which Jesus calls "my blood of the covenant (τὸ αἷμα μου τῆς διαθήκης) that is poured out for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 26:28). Therefore, rather than condemning or replacing Israel, the evangelist highlights the blood cry from "all the people" as the means by which Jesus gets to the cross—where he will be able to save those very people from their sins.³³⁰ All the people have, unwittingly, been saved from their sins by calling for

the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," in W. D. Davies, *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 38-39.

³²⁹ Matera, *Passion*, 130.

³³⁰ For those who note the plausibility of this reading, see Sider Hamilton, "Blood," 99; Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Social History: "Go Nowhere Among the Gentiles..." (Matt. 10:5b)* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1988), 269; T. B. Cargal, "'His Blood Be upon Us and upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?" *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 101-12, esp. 110-11; cf. Desmond Sullivan, "New Insights into Matthew 27:24-25," *NB* 73 (1992): 453-57; Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels* [2 Volumes] (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1.839; Carter, *Matthew*, 529; Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's*

Jesus' blood to be upon them—or, rather will be once Jesus sheds his blood—so that Mt 27:25 fulfills the promise made in 1:21.

Matthew strengthens the connection between Jesus' "blood of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28) and the people's cry for Jesus' blood to be upon them via an allusion to Exodus 24 LXX. According to Exod 24:3, when Moses dictated the commandments to Israel, "all the people (πᾶς ὁ λαός) answered with one voice, saying, 'All the words that the Lord has spoken, we will do and we will listen (ποιήσομεν καὶ ἀκουσόμεθα).'" This verse describes the people's willingness to be obedient to the Mosaic covenant. After this declaration, Moses made sacrifices and "took the blood and sprinkled it upon the people (τοῦ λαοῦ), and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant (τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης) that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (24:8 LXX). Matthew's passion narrative echoes the institution of Moses' blood covenant in order to highlight an intrinsic relationship between Moses' blood sprinkled upon the people who promised to obey the Lord's will and Jesus' blood upon "all the people" for the forgiveness of sins.³³¹

Granted, the covenant in Exod 24 confirms the people's fidelity to God, rather than the forgiveness of their sins as in Matthew. However, there are elements of Exodus 24 that would

Exposition of the Death of Jesus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 136; InHee C. Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 169-71; *pace* Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3.592.

³³¹ Desmond Sullivan ["New Insights," 453-57] connects the "blood" for the forgiveness of sins in Mt 26:28 with the blood of the Passover lamb in Exod 12:13, 26. However, because there is no point of linguistic contact between these verses apart from "blood" (αἷμα), the Matthean echo of Exod 24:3-8 is to be preferred. For others who have connected Exod 24 to Mt 27:25, see Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 197-98; Nolland, *Matthew*, 1079; Carter, *Matthew*, 529; John A. Dennis, "Death of Jesus," in Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 183; Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* [trans. Kathleen Ess] (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 341.

warrant the evangelist's understanding of the Mosaic blood as effecting forgiveness.

Specifically, Exod 24:4-6 describes Moses building an altar, making sacrifices on it, and pouring the sacrificial blood upon it. As all of these actions are associated with sacrifice, it does not require a cognitive leap to imagine that Moses' covenant had something to do with atonement. In fact, these cultic uses of the blood in Exodus 24 lead the Targum to add in its rendering of Exod 24:8 that Moses sprinkles the blood “on the altar to atone for the people (מִדְּבַחַת לְכַפֵּרָה עַל עַמָּא עַל)” (cf. TgO and TgPsJ Exod 24:8)—that is, instead of going on “the people” (as in Exod 24:8 MT [העם] and LXX [τοῦ λαου]), the Targum has the blood going on the altar for the purpose of atonement. Matthew anticipates the later targumic understanding of the blood as atonement for the people, but also reflects the original biblical statement of Exod 24:8 that Moses placed the blood on the people themselves.

Based on the resonance between “all the people” (πᾶς ὁ λαός) affirming the Mosaic covenant by receiving blood upon themselves in Exod 24:3 and the “all the people” calling for Jesus' blood to be upon them in Mt 27:25, the Matthew's blood cry is best understood as a collective act of obedience to a divinely enacted covenant that ensures the peoples' continued forgiveness without the Temple sacrifices. Exod 24:3 LXX supports the notion that the peoples' cry for Jesus' blood in Mt 27:25 is an act of obedience to God's will, since before Moses splashes the blood onto the people, they all confirm that they “will do” (ποιήσομεν) and “will listen” (ἀκουσόμεθα)” to the Lord's commandments—that is, they will obey them. In calling for Jesus' blood to be upon them and their children, the people are unaware that they are being obedient to God and accepting the atonement that Jesus' blood offers. That Jesus would “save his people from their sins” (1:21) has been an unrealized prediction from the beginning of the Gospel. Finally, at Mt 27:25, the reader sees how the people's salvation from sin will be

accomplished: just before Jesus' crucifixion, the people enter into the covenant of Jesus' blood that, once poured out on the cross, will save the people from their sins.

Not only will Jesus' blood save those who call for it and their children, but it will also save all Jews for all time. That Jesus' blood will forgive every succeeding generation becomes clear in a comparison between Mt 27:25 and Jesus' words to the scribes and Pharisees in Mt 23:27. As stated above, Jesus calls upon the scribes and Pharisees "all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berachiah" (23:35). All of this blood comes upon the scribes and Pharisees to condemn them for their murderous deeds. Upon all the "people," on the other hand, comes Jesus' salvific blood. Thus, the blood "shed for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28) is reserved for "all the *people*" of Israel, but their leaders have the condemnatory blood of the righteous fall upon them. Just before declaring that righteous blood would come upon the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus tells them to "fill up (πληρώσατε) the measure of your fathers" (23:32), which recalls Jesus' desire to be baptized "to fill up (πληρώσαι) all righteousness" (3:15).³³² By insisting that "all righteousness" be filled up in him, Jesus ensures that his blood will be an appropriate substitute for the Temple's blood sacrifices. The righteous blood that fills the measure of the scribes and Pharisees' fathers causes the Temple's destruction, but Jesus' fully righteous blood upholds the salvific system the Temple facilitates. Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees have "full measures" of righteous blood—one that will condemn the scribes and Pharisees, and one that will forgive the people. Seeing as the scribes and Pharisees *inherit* the sin of their fathers' bloodshed from the *beginning* of time (Abel's death) until Matthew's present, Jesus' blood must *forgive* sins from Jesus' death until the *end* of time.

³³² On this connection, see Eubank, *Wages*, 125-129.

Thus, Jesus' people who are saved from their sins are *all* the people—even (or, better, *especially*) those people who condemn him to death. For Matthew, Jesus accomplishes an all-encompassing blood atonement for Israel, even for Jews who do not follow him. This does not mean, according to Matthew, that all Israel will be among the “children of the kingdom” (8:11) when the “Son of Man comes in his glory” (25:31). In order to be counted among this group, one must follow Jesus, since he states, “whoever is not with me is against me” (12:30a; cf. 10:38). However, Jesus' blood does enact the *forgiveness of sins* for all the people of Israel regardless of their posture towards him. Such forgiveness is the way Matthew opens the door to Israel's allegiance to Jesus, should they desire it. According to Matthew, forgiveness of sins has been accomplished for all the children of Abraham, but having Abraham as one's father, even after atonement has been made, is not enough (cf. 3:8-10). One must become a disciple of the Messiah who accomplished the salvation from sins, since, according to Matthew's Jesus, “whoever denies me before people, I will also deny before my Father who is in heaven” (10:33). Matthew requires a two-step processes of accomplished forgiveness and resultant discipleship.

Summary

Thus far, I have argued that Matthew's use of *λαὸς* always refers to Jews and, apart from 15:8's reference to the Pharisees, the term always describes the general population of Israel. Israel's leaders (scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and elders) are a part of Israel, but Matthew separates them from the *λαὸς*. However, apart from the leaders, *all* the people of Israel will receive forgiveness of their sins (1:21), as Matthew shows in the description of the collective blood cry that ushers Jesus' people into the covenant ratified by his blood. This reading of Matthew's people as Israel (ethnic Jews) foregrounds the use of Jesus as a symbol of biblical Israel during his passion. This symbol Matthew will form through narrative patterning is for

Matthew's Israel (i.e., "the people), so Matthew's use of Israel's Scriptures in symbol creation is appropriate.

"Israel" and "Jews" in Matthew

In this section, I argue that in Matthew "Israel" (Ἰσραήλ) always refers to ethnic Jews—never to Gentiles—and that "Jews" (Ἰουδαίους) refers to the people within the collective of Israel. In the twelve times that Matthew refers to "Israel" (Ἰσραήλ) the term refers to people (Mt 2:6; 8:10; 10:6; 15:24; 19:28; 27:9) and also to the Land of Israel (2:20-21; 10:23), and in some instances both people and Land could be in view (9:33; 15:31; 27:42). The first instance of "Israel" referring to people comes in Matthew's citation 2 Sam 5:2. In its original context, 2 Sam 5:2 refers to David being anointed king over Israel, but Matthew applies it to Jesus "who will shepherd [God's] people Israel" (Mt 2:6). To begin, then, Matthew uses a biblical reference to Israel in order to speak of the Israel in Jesus' day.

After 2:6, Matthew refers to the "Land of Israel" twice (2:20-21), and later refers to the "towns of Israel" (10:23). Matthew will also describe people near the Sea of Galilee glorifying "the God of Israel" as a result of Jesus' healings (15:31), and Matthew's Jesus refers to the "twelve tribes of Israel" in his description of the eschaton (19:28). During the Passion Narrative, Matthew describes the chief priests and elders who pay Judas to betray Jesus as "sons of Israel" (27:9), and these same people mockingly call Jesus "King of Israel" while he is on the cross (27:42). All of these uses of Israel are either linked to biblical Israel, the Land of Israel, the God of Israel, or the ethnically Jewish people of Israel.

While it is not uncommon in Matthean scholarship to claim that Matthew's "Israel" includes both Jews and Gentiles, there is no indication that the Gentiles in Matthew's narrative are to be associated with Israel. Raymond Brown's assertion that "Israel, for Matthew, included

both Jews and Gentiles” is representative of the mistaken view that Israel constitutes an audience beyond ethnic Jews.³³³ The distinction between Israel and the Gentiles is apparent, for instance, in Mt 10:5b-6, in which Jesus says to his disciples, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Matthew makes a hard bifurcation between Israel and the rest of the world (cf. 15:24).

The reader finds a similar bifurcation between Israel and non-Jews in Mt 8:10. When Jesus heals the Gentile centurion’s servant in Capernaum (Mt 8:5-13), he remarks on the centurion’s faith, “Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith” (8:10; cf. 9:33). Matthew clarifies that the centurion, even while he puts his faith in Jesus, is not among the people of Israel. Since the centurion’s faith arises in the geographical Land of Israel, when Matthew’s Jesus states that he has not found such faith “in Israel” (ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ) he must mean “among the people of Israel,” rather than “in the Land of Israel.” The centurion’s faith stands in contrast to the lesser faith found among the people of Israel. However, his faith in Jesus does not earn him a place in the people of Israel because, if that were the case, then the comparison that Jesus makes between him and the rest of Israel would breakdown. For Matthew, there is a distinction between Gentiles and Israel, and no amount of Gentile faith can change this distinction.

The term “Jews” (Ἰουδαίους) appears five times in Matthew (Mt 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37; 28:15). In four out of the five times Matthew applies Ἰουδαίους to Jesus. First, the Gentile magi come from outside of Israel to find the infant Jesus, asking, “Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?” (2:2). Thus, at the outset of the Gospel, Matthew makes a bifurcation between Gentiles and Jews: Jesus is not the Gentile magi’s king, he is king of the Jews. Even the

³³³ Brown, *Birth*, 131.

fact that the magi “worship” (προσκυνέω) Jesus (2:2, 8, 11) does not change the fact they are Gentiles, since they go back to their Gentile land (2:12)—Matthew has no concept of a “spiritual Jew” or that Gentiles who worship Jesus are the “true Jews.” In the next three appearances of “king of the Jews,” the phrase appears on the lips of Pilate (27:11), Roman soldiers (27:29), and a Roman inscription above Jesus’ head while he hangs on the cross (27:37). Thus, throughout the Gospel, Matthew highlights the divide between Jews and the Gentiles who refer to Jesus as “king of the Jews.”

Near the end of the Gospel, Matthew states that the chief priests and elders start a rumor that the disciples stole Jesus’ body after he died (28:12-13), and that this rumor has been spread among “Jews to this day (Ἰουδαίοις μέχρι τῆς σήμερον)” (28:15). Matthew states that when the chief priests and elders met with Roman soldiers after Jesus’ crucifixion, “they gave sufficient money to the soldiers, saying, ‘Say that his disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep’.... So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this word (λόγος) has been reported among Jews to this day” (28:12b-13, 15).

It is both curious and unfortunate that every English translation of 28:15 I can find translates Ἰουδαίοις as “the Jews,” which sounds like an all-encompassing people group, despite the fact that there is no definite article in the Greek.³³⁴ The text states that this rumor (lit. “word” (λόγος, i.e., the statement that the disciples stole Jesus’ body) has been reported among Jewish people at the time Matthew writes. However, the chief priests and elders, rather than the general population, start this rumor. More important, Matthew says nothing about any Jews *believing* the

³³⁴ Cf. Mt 28:15 in the AKJV, ASV, ESV, KJV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NLT, NRSV, RSV. The CEB has “all Judea,” which appears to be an attempt to blunt the charge against Jewish *people*, but it inserts the word “all” into the text, which is surely worse than “the” from a Jewish-Christian relations perspective. The only translation I could find that translates the word without an added definite article is the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB), which renders the Greek, “all Judeans.”

rumor. As most Jews are not Jesus followers in Matthew's day, Gospel readers can assume that the rumor has taken hold on some level, but skepticism about Jesus' resurrection cannot change the efficacy of Jesus' blood. All the Jewish "people" (λαός) who called for Jesus' blood to be upon them are still saved from their sins. Apparently, skepticism in Jesus' resurrection does not even disqualify one from being a "disciple" (μαθητής) since when the eleven disciples saw the risen Jesus "some doubted" (28:17). Thus, Mt 28:15 has no adverse effect on the notion that Jesus' blood forgives all the Jewish people.

Matthew's Jewish Assembly

The final group that deserves comment is Jesus' "assembly" (ἐκκλησία). This assembly consists of Jesus' followers, beginning with Peter and Jesus' disciples (Mt 16:18) and, by the end of the Gospel, including anyone (Jew or Gentile) who becomes a "disciple" (μαθητής; 28:19). As Matthew upholds the assembly as the ideal group with which to identify, some scholars have argued that the ἐκκλησία is the "new" or "true" Israel.³³⁵ However, I will show in this section that the assembly does not replace Israel; rather, the assembly comes out of Israel (Jesus' original disciples) and it grows to include people from other nations. However, the assembly is not synonymous with Israel, nor does it usurp Israel as God's people. The disciples go to "all the nations" (28:19), but Matthew nowhere rescinds the same disciples' mission "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:6b). Thus, Israel must remain an entity unto itself whose people the disciples are called to evangelize along with the rest of the nations.

In the world of Matthew's narrative there exists a collective called the ἐκκλησία or "assembly" (cf. 16:18; 18:17). This assembly need not be thought of as a "community" in the

³³⁵ See, e.g., Trilling, *Israel*, passim; Gnllka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2.510; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 624.

sense of a locality of people living together and sharing goods and services; nor must one view it as an identifiable “audience” to which the text was deliberately disseminated. However, because Matthew associates the ἐκκλησία with Jesus (Mt 16:18), and because Matthew’s Jesus provides instructions about how the assembly is to proceed in intra-assembly disputes (18:17), the reader must conclude that Matthew writes with this assembly in view.

Though commonly translated as “church,” ἐκκλησία simply means “assembly.”³³⁶ The term originates in ancient Greece to describe a civic assembly within the city (πόλις).³³⁷ The Septuagint uses ἐκκλησία to translate קהל (assembly or congregation).³³⁸ The Hebrew and Greek terms can refer to the entire people of Israel, as in Deut 31:30a: “Moses spoke the words of this song in the hearing of the entire assembly of Israel” (לְשָׂרָא כָּל-קְהָל יִשְׂרָאֵל/πάντης ἐκκλησίας Ἰσραηλ). At other times, ἐκκλησία refers to a group within Israel (e.g., 1 Sam 19:20; Ps 88:6; 2 Chron 28:14 LXX), including the remnant of Israel that has returned from exile in Babylon (cf. Ezra 2:64; 10:8-14; Neh 7:66; 8:2, 17 LXX). More, when it precedes κυρίου or θεοῦ, ἐκκλησία identifies a group within Israel that carries out cultic or liturgical duties (cf. Deut 23:2-9; 1 Chron 28:8; 29:20; Neh 13:1).

In light of these Septuagintal usages, we should understand Matthew’s ἐκκλησία as a group that begins within the “people” of Israel, but is not synonymous with Israel. This distinction emerges from the three appearances of “Israel” after Matthew introduces the ἐκκλησία in 16:18 and 18:17 (cf. 19:28; 27:9, 42). First, in 19:28, Jesus tells Peter and the rest of the disciples (that is, the initial assembly members) that at the eschaton, “You who have followed

³³⁶ *LSJ*, 509.

³³⁷ See Young-Ho Park, *Paul’s Ekklesia as a Civic Assembly: Understanding the People of God in their Politico-Social World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), esp. 5-61.

³³⁸ *BDB*, 874. For a summary of the LXX uses of ἐκκλησία, see Park, *Ekklesia*, 62-68.

me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life" (19:28-29). Jesus' comment implies that there will be those from the twelve tribes of Israel who will choose to leave their families, homes and possessions for his sake and those who will not—like the rich man in the preceding pericope (19:16-22 cf. 18:8; 25:46). Thus, while there will be (Jewish) Jesus followers among the twelve tribes of Israel, the Jesus assembly cannot be synonymous with all of Israel.

The next verse that contains "Israel" makes the distinction between Jesus followers (i.e., the assembly) and broader Israel even more clearly. When the chief priests give Judas thirty pieces of silver to betray Jesus, Matthew states that this was the price for Jesus "set by some of the sons of Israel" (27:9). If these "sons of Israel" are putting a price on Jesus' head, then they are certainly not joining his assembly; thus, the assembly cannot be synonymous with Israel.

Finally, at the cross, the chief priests, scribes, and elders mockingly refer to Jesus as "King of Israel" (27:42), which approximates the title that Gentiles ascribe to Jesus: "King of the Jews" (27:11, 29, 37 cf. 2:2). Since "King of Israel" is the leaders' way of saying "King of the Jews," one must conclude that "Israel" cannot mean those who follow Jesus, since Matthew clarifies that many Jews do not follow him after his resurrection because of the rumor that his disciples (i.e., his ἐκκλησία) had stolen his body (28:15). Because Matthew equates "King of the Jews" with "King of Israel" and also implies that some in Judea do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, "Israel" cannot be the same as "the assembly," and vice versa. As Matthias Konradt puts it,

Matthew neither identifies the Church with Israel nor lets the Church step into Israel's position. Rather, the ecclesia is the part of Israel (and the rest of the world) that has recognized the Christ event... as the eschatological salvific act of Israel's God and has allowed itself to be called to discipleship and follow Christ.... Its nucleus is the circle of

disciples that Jesus created during his ministry *in Israel*, which, according to the Matthean conception, is open to people from all nations post-Easter.³³⁹

Matthew envisions the ἐκκλησία as a group of Jewish Jesus-followers within Israel that will grow to include Gentiles (28:20 cf. 24:14).

This future ingathering of Gentiles into the assembly notwithstanding, Matthew’s two uses of ἐκκλησία appear in Jesus’ conversations with his Jewish disciples, and Jesus explicates that he will build his assembly on a Jewish foundation. In 16:18, Jesus tells Peter, “I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my assembly (μου τὴν ἐκκλησίαν), and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Peter (a Jew) is the founding member of Jesus’ assembly, which, in the immediate context, would also include the rest of Jesus’ Jewish disciples.

In becoming “disciples” (28:19), Gentiles will join this assembly after Jesus’ resurrection, but the narrative does not explicate this extra-Israel initiative until the very end (28:19-20), and Matthew never narrates the process of this post-resurrection Gentile inclusion into the assembly. The mission to the Gentiles is, in the plainest sense of the term, an “afterthought” in the narrative world of the Gospel. Instead of having Jesus and his disciples go to Gentiles (which Jesus forbids in 10:5-6), Matthew describes Gentiles—including the magi (2:1-16), the centurion (8:5-13), and the Canaanite woman (15:21-28)—coming to Jesus (cf. 2:1, 11; 8:5; 15:22). Matthew explicates that Gentiles either leave Jesus on their own accord (2:12), that Jesus leaves them (15:29), or that Jesus tells them to leave after their interactions with him (8:13)—Gentiles do not follow Jesus. The ἐκκλησία in Mt 16:18 refers to the nucleus of Jewish disciples within Israel, and not to Gentiles.

Likewise, in Mt 18:15-17, Jesus speaks to his Jewish disciples (18:1) about the protocol for dealing with “your brother” (ὁ ἀδελφός σου) who “sins against you” (ἁμαρτήση εἰς σέ). If

³³⁹ Konradt, *Israel*, 335-36 (emphasis original).

sinners do not listen to the one against whom they have sinned, or to two or three witnesses (18:16), Jesus says, “Tell [the sin] to the assembly (τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ), but if the sinner does not listen to the assembly (τῆς ἐκκλησίας), let that sinner be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (18:17). If the sinning brother (or sister) is obstinate in front of the entire assembly (as opposed to one to three individuals), then that sinner is excommunicated from the ἐκκλησία—although not without hope of return, since Gentiles and tax collectors are the very people Matthew wants evangelized (cf. 9:10-11; 11:19; 21:31-32; 28:19).

Nonetheless, to be “as a Gentile” is to be outside the assembly of Mt 18:17. Were the assembly made up of Gentiles at this point in the Gospel, becoming “as a Gentile” through excommunication would not constitute a change in their status, and hence would not constitute much of a threat. Jesus has already asked his Jewish disciples during the Sermon on the Mount whether greeting only those whom they love should be lauded—after all, “do not the Gentiles do the same?” (Mt 5:47). In both 5:47 and 18:17, Matthew’s Jesus disparages Gentiles and sets them apart from his Jewish followers.³⁴⁰ According to Mt 18:17, and indeed to the entire narrative world of Matthew’s Gospel, the ἐκκλησία is only made up of Jews. This Jewish assembly is charged with assembling non-Jews after Jesus’ resurrection but, strictly speaking, the ἐκκλησία as a *corpus mixtum* is beyond the horizon of the Gospel’s story.

Thus, if we stay within the parameters of the narrative itself, the most we are able to conclude is that the Matthean ἐκκλησία is a collective of Jesus-following Jews who have been commissioned to make disciples of “all the nations” (28:19). Judging by the author’s concern for Israel, which is placed directly into the mouth of Jesus, the founder of the ἐκκλησία (15:24), “all the Gentiles” must include the nation of Israel as well. Since, from the time of Abraham, the

³⁴⁰ Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.559.

Jewish people have been a “great nation” (גדולת גוי/ἔθνος μέγα) among the rest of the nations (Gen 12:2), the missionary stance toward “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:6; 15:24) remains after Jesus’ resurrection. Indeed, Matthew’s Jesus compares a (presumably) Jewish child (παιδίον; 18:2)—that is, a Jew of the generation beyond his own—to a lost sheep over whom God rejoices when it is found (18:10-14). Whether or not this is meant to be taken as a missional reference, the several references to Jesus as a “shepherd” over his “sheep” throughout the Gospel (2:6; 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; 18:12; 25:32-33; 26:31) would have continued to resonate for Matthew’s readers and, therefore, would have kept the door open for later generations of Jews to be included in the ἐκκλησία.

Summary

To this point, I have argued that Matthew’s Gospel is a story that is primarily concerned with Israel as Jesus’ people—that is, ethnic Jews. Every instance of λαὸς in Matthew refers to Jews, and never to Gentiles. The evangelist distinguishes between the “people” broadly construed and those people’s leaders: the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and elders of the people. While “all the people” (27:25) receive forgiveness from their sins in that they call Jesus’ forgiving blood upon them just before Jesus sheds it, the people’s leaders do not receive this righteous blood. Instead, all the “righteous blood” of the murdered prophets comes upon them (23:35). More, the term “Israel” (Ἰσραήλ) also never refers to Gentiles. In fact, Matthew makes a clear bifurcation between Jews (Israel) and Gentiles. The latter group never follows Jesus in the way that his Jewish disciples do, and Gentiles do not “become” Israel through their faith.

Matthew usually uses the term “Jews” (Ἰουδαίους) with reference to Jesus as “King of the Jews” (cf. 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37). The phrase “King of the Jews” always appears on Gentile lips (magi, Pilate, and Roman soldiers), which is another way that Matthew distinguishes between

Jews and Gentiles. Towards the end of the Gospel, the evangelist notes that the chief priests and scribes spread a rumor that Jesus' the disciples stole Jesus' body, and that this rumor has been spread among "Jews to this day ('Ιουδαίοις μέχρι τῆς σήμερον)" (28:15). However, Matthew says nothing about which Jews believe or disbelieve this rumor, and there is no indication that the forgiveness that "all the people" receive is rescinded based on 28:15.

Finally, Matthew describes the "assembly" (ἐκκλησία) as beginning with a group of Jewish disciples who will make disciples of "all the Gentiles" (28:19). While the assembly will expand to include anyone who follows Jesus, Matthew does not narrate this expansion. The assembly is not synonymous with Israel; rather, the people of Israel remain a people group that the assembly must evangelize along with the rest of the nations.

Sin and Ransom in Matthew

The entire message of the First Gospel is predicated upon the problem of sin and the means of forgiveness. Understanding the Matthean paradigm of sin and forgiveness is crucial for seeing how Jesus functions as a symbol of a past Israel in sin for the sake of Matthew's Israel. In the previous section, I argued that "all the people" are forgiven of their sins after they call Jesus' blood upon them before he sheds it on their behalf (27:25). In this section, I explain why such forgiveness is necessary in Matthew and I also identify how Matthew understands sin. Specifically, because Matthew deems the Temple inoperative by the end of Matthew 23, and because its destruction is narratively predicted thereafter (24:1-2), Jesus must give his own life as a ransom for sin (20:28). The idea that a human being could substitute for the Temple sacrifices is pre-Matthean, as it appears in Second and Fourth Maccabees. Similarly, the notion that Matthew's Jesus needs to give his life as a "ransom" (λύτρον) follows from one of the prevailing metaphors for sin in early Judaism: sin as a debt. The idea that sin puts people in debt is attested

in both the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Targums, and Matthew affirms it. Matthew's Jesus endures the cross in order to serve his people by becoming a ransom to save them from their sins (1:21).

Sin and the Loss of the Temple

The First Gospel presents Jesus as a savior from sin because, according to Matthew, the Temple is inoperative and will soon be destroyed. In Mt 23:38, Jesus says to the people of Jerusalem, “Behold, your house is left to you desolate (ἰδοὺ ἀφίμῃ ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν ἔρημος).” The present form of the verb ἀφίμῃ (“is left”) in 23:38 shows that Matthew already deems the Temple “desolate” or “ruined” (ἔρημος; 23:38) in Jesus' day—that is, not functioning as a house of sacrifice. In the Septuagint, for the Land and/or Temple to be ἔρημος meant that it had been destroyed. For example, speaking of the Babylonian exiles about to return to Zion, Isaiah proclaims, “They shall build up the ancient ruins (ἐρήμους); they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the desolate (ἐρήμους) cities” (Isa 61:4 LXX).³⁴¹ Jesus must die in order to effect the forgiveness that the Temple cult can no longer accomplish. More, because Matthew's Jesus predicts the ultimate destruction of the Temple (24:1-2), Jesus' death preempts the Temple's destruction so that Matthew's readers can see Jesus' “blood for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28) as a replacement for the soon-to-be destroyed Temple. As Anders Runesson has recently noted, “Jesus' sacrificial death... becomes necessary precisely *because* of the (narratively predicted) fall of the temple.”³⁴² I would add to Runesson's comment that Jesus'

³⁴¹ Cf. Isa LXX 51:3; 52:9; 54:1; 58:12; 62:4; 64:10; Jer 2:6, 15; 4:26; 9:10-12; 33:10-12; Ezek 5:14; 6:14; 13:4.

³⁴² Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 12 (emphasis original).

sacrificial death is *first* necessary because the Temple is inoperative in Jesus' day and *also* necessary because the Temple will fall in 70 CE.³⁴³

The books of the Maccabees (2 and 4 Macc) provide an analogue to Matthew's idea that Jesus must sacrifice himself due to an inoperative Temple. According to 2 Maccabees, during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE),

The Temple was filled with debauchery and reveling by the Gentiles, who dallied with prostitutes and had intercourse with women within the sacred precincts.... The altar was covered with abominable offerings that were forbidden by the laws. People could neither keep the sabbath, nor observe the festivals of their ancestors." (2 Macc 6:4-6 NRSV)³⁴⁴

As the altar was defiled and Jews could not keep the festivals that involve sacrifices, 2 Maccabees states that the Temple was inoperative for Jews. The Jewish narrator sees these and other unfortunate events as "punishments [that] were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people" (6:12).

It is during this period of punishment that Antiochus arrests and tortures seven Jewish brothers and their mother (2 Macc 7). After the youngest brother witnesses the deaths of his elder siblings, he declares, "I, like my brothers, give up body and life for the laws of our ancestors,

³⁴³ Other post-Second Temple Jews responded to the Temple's destruction in various ways. Indeed, Diaspora Jews had, even before the destruction of the Second Temple, established several ways of atoning for sins that did not involve the priestly cultus, including charity (e.g., Tobit 4:7-11), repentance (*Prayer of Manasseh* 7) and the sacrificial blood of righteous people within Israel (e.g., 2 Macc 7:37-38; 4 Macc 17:20-22). See Michael Tuval, "Doing Without the Temple: Paradigms in Judaic Literature of the Diaspora," in Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss [in collaboration with Ruth A. Clements], eds., *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). 181-242. Rabbinic Judaism would also adopt these alternative means of atonement, including prayer, charity, and repentance (e.g., *y. Taan.* 2:1), suffering (e.g., *Sifre Deut.* 32), and the notion that "the death of the righteous makes atonement" (cf. *y. Yoma* 2:1; *b. M.K.* 28a). For some of the alternative rabbinic means of atonement after 70 CE, see Jonathan Klawans, "Josephus, the Rabbis, and Responses to Catastrophes Ancient and Modern," *JQR* 100 (2010): 278-309, esp. 289-307.

³⁴⁴ All translations of the Maccabean literature are from the NRSV translation.

appealing to God to show mercy soon to our nation... and through me and my brothers to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation” (7:37-38).

Whereas Temple sacrifices would have atoned for Israel’s sins before it was defiled, now the lives of the brothers must stand in for those sacrifices.

A similar picture emerges in the version of this story in 4 Maccabees, which states plainly that under Antiochus “the temple service was abolished” (4:20). Speaking of the martyred mother and her seven sons, 4 Macc 17:21-22 states that they “had become, as it were, a ransom (ἀντίψυχον; lit. “life exchange”) for the sin of our nation. And through the blood of those devout ones and their death as an atoning sacrifice, divine Providence preserved Israel.” Because the Temple sacrifices are not taking place, the blood of human beings serves as a substitute for the blood of the sacrificial animals.

Matthew’s Jesus functions in much the same way as the Maccabean martyrs. In light of a desolate Temple, Jesus comes to “save his people from their sins” (1:21). In being crucified, Jesus’ blood is “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (26:28), so that his blood stands in for the blood of the sacrifices that had atoned for Israel while the Temple was operative (cf. Lev 17:11). According to Matthew, Jesus’ death is the proof that sins can be atoned for after the loss of the Temple—both prior to and after 70 CE. The Gospel urges its readers to assent to the notion that, through Jesus, God remains with Israel and upholds blood atonement through Jesus’ sacrifice.

Sin as Debt in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Targums

One of the main metaphors for sin in ancient Jewish thought is that of debt. The idea of sin as debt appears in nascent form in the Tanakh but emerges more fully in the post-biblical

period.³⁴⁵ Although Isa 40:2 does not mention debt explicitly, it expresses the idea that sins must be paid off: “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her that her service has ended, that her iniquity has been satisfied (נִרְצָה עִינָה); for she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins (חַטָּאתֶיהָ).” As Joseph Blenkinsopp notes, this verse declares that Jerusalem “has satisfied her obligations and paid off her debts.”³⁴⁶ Thus, Isaiah is the biblical foundation upon which later Jewish literature stands when it describes sin as debt (cf. Isa 50:1).³⁴⁷

Gary Anderson notes the shift in metaphor from burden to debt in the Dead Sea Scrolls.³⁴⁸ For example, the *Damascus Document* notes that when Israel sinned the people fell into a debt for which they were punished. As the writers of the Scrolls believed themselves to be the latest members of God’s covenant people, they refer to the biblical Israelites as the “first members” of the covenant. *CD* 3:11-12 states that, when the Israelites sinned, “the first members of the covenant were indebted (חֲבוּי); they were given over to the sword. They had forsaken the covenant of God.” This text claims that the sins for which Israel was punished created a debt that was eventually paid when the people were killed by Gentile armies.

Similarly, 11QMelchizedek describes salvation from sin in terms of paying off a monetary debt. The text interprets Lev 25:13 and Deut 15:2, both of which describe creditors releasing people from financial debts. Lev 25:13 reads, “In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property.” In the jubilee year, all debts are cleared and everyone redeems his or her property. As Lev 25:23 notes, “The land shall not be sold in perpetuity... and in all the country

³⁴⁵ See Anderson, *Sin*, esp. 27-42.

³⁴⁶ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55* [ABC] (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 180; cf. Anderson, *Sin*, 47.

³⁴⁷ Cf. Anderson, *Sin*, 48.

³⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 33-39.

you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.” According to Deut 15:2, “This is the manner of release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it [the debt] of his neighbor, his brother, because the Lord’s release has been proclaimed.”

The qumranic interpretation of these verses is freedom from the metaphorical “debt” of sin.

According to 11QMelchizedek, “liberty will be proclaimed for them [i.e., the people of Israel], to free them all their iniquities.” Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls use biblical texts that refer to financial debt remission in order to discuss Israel’s eventual release from the debt of their sins.

Targum Onqelos, an Aramaic translation of the Torah that was completed by roughly the fourth century CE, also contains the idea of sin debt.³⁴⁹ The following examples show that the Targum changes the biblical instances of sin as burden into references to sin as debt:³⁵⁰

<p>Exod 10:17 Bear (שא) my sin (חטאתי), just this once.</p>	<p>Exod 10:17 TgO Remit (שבוק) my debt (להובי), just this once.</p>
<p>Lev 5:1 MT If a person should sin (תחטא) he shall bear his sin (ונשא עונו).</p>	<p>Lev 5:1 TgO If a person becomes indebted (יהוב)... he shall assume a debt (ויקביל חוביה).</p>
<p>Lev 24:15 MT Anyone who blasphemes his God shall bear his sin (ונשא חטאו).</p>	<p>Lev 24:15 TgO Anyone who brings about wrath before his God shall assume a debt (ויקביל חוביה).</p>

These examples from Targum Onqelos show that Jews in the early centuries CE preferred the metaphor of debt to the biblical notion of sin-as-burden when discussing sin. Indeed, the concepts of debt and sin were so closely tied together in Aramaic parlance that חובא carried both

³⁴⁹ Chilton and Fleisher, *Targums*, 5; cf. Israel Drazin [*Targum Onkelos to Numbers: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary* (Denver: Ktav, 1998), 2] who puts the date just after the fourth century.

³⁵⁰ Anderson [*Sin*, 28] uses each of these examples.

meanings.³⁵¹ Although there is much more Second Temple and post-Temple Jewish literature reflects this financial framework for sin, the Dead Sea Scrolls show that the idea of sin a debt would have been available to Matthew in the first century, and the Targums confirm that sin-debt continued to appear in Jewish texts after Matthew.³⁵²

Sin as Debt and Jesus as Ransom in Matthew

Matthew's understanding of sin also assumes a financial framework, and the evangelist's presentation of Jesus as a "ransom" (λύτρον; 20:28) is predicated upon this assumption. For instance, Matthew reflects the notion of sin as debt in Jesus' prayer: "Forgive (ἄφεσις) us our debts (ὀφειλήματα) as we forgive our debtors (ὀφειλέταις)" (Mt 6:12). Matthew's gloss on this phrase shows that the debt language refers to sin: "For if you forgive (ἀφήτε) people their trespasses (παραπτώματα), your heavenly Father will also forgive (ἀφήσει) you" (6:14-15). According to Matthew, when people sin against one another, they go into debt to each other and to God; when people forgive one another their "debts," God is inclined to forgive the debt of their sin. As Raymond Brown notes, while in "Greek 'debt' has no religious coloring, in Aramaic *hōbā* is a financial and commercial term that has been caught up into the religious vocabulary."³⁵³

This understanding of sin as debt also appears prominently in Matthew's Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (18:23-35). Jesus offers the parable after Peter asks him if he is required to

³⁵¹ See Jastrow, 428-29.

³⁵² For a survey of financial language for sins and good deeds in Second Temple and post-Temple Jewish literature, see Eubank, *Wages*, 30-44.

³⁵³ Raymond E. Brown, "The Pater Noster as an Eschatological Prayer," in *ibid.*, *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965), 244 (emphasis original); cf. Anderson, *Sin*, 31.

forgive a person should that person “sin” (ἁμαρτήσῃ) against him seven times (18:21). Jesus responds, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” (18:22). Jesus goes on to describe “a king who wanted to settle accounts (συνᾶραι λόγον) with his slaves” (18:23).³⁵⁴ One slave, who owed the king ten thousand talents (18:24) is unable to pay, the slave pleads for mercy until “the master of the servant released him and forgave him the debt (τὸ δάνειον ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ)” (18:27). Despite having enjoyed this act of mercy, the slave finds a fellow slave who owed him a hundred denarii (18:28) and demands the he be paid back. When the indebted slave asks for more time to pay back the debt, the forgiven slave refuses and throws the debtor in prison (18:30). When the master hears of the incident, he says to the slave whose debt he had forgiven, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?” (18:32-33). Thus, the master hands the wicked slave over to “torturers” (βασανιστᾶις) until his debt is paid (18:34).

When Jesus finishes his parable, he adds, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (18:35). In summarizing this parable, Eubank concludes, “for Matthew, sin is debt. Those who sin against God or against another person are in danger of being thrown into debtor’s prison (i.e., Gehenna) where they will remain until they pay back all they owe.”³⁵⁵ Jesus’ parable offers an earthly approximation of the way the heavenly economy works; just as a master forgives his slaves’ debts on earth, God can forgive humans of their sins—as long as they, in turn, forgive one another.

³⁵⁴ For a full treatment of Mt 18:23-35 with attention to the interplay between debt and forgiveness, see Eubank, *Wages*, 53-67.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

Yet, according to Matthew, the people of Israel’s sins have not been forgiven by the time Jesus is born. When Matthew states that Jesus “will save his people from their sins” (σώσει τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν) at the outset of the Gospel (1:21), the reader is alerted to the notion that Jesus’ people are living in collective sin-debt. The way that Matthew’s Jesus will pay this debt is by giving “his life as a ransom (λύτρον) for many” (20:28)—that is, dying as a ransom-payment for collective sin-debt.

In the Septuagint, λύτρον “always refers to some price or exchange.”³⁵⁶ For example, Leviticus 25 describes the process for redeeming a poor Israelite who has sold himself to a rich stranger or sojourner in the Land (Lev 25:47). A fellow Israelite with financial means can buy the poor Israelite back with a ransom payment: “He [the wealthier Israelite] shall pay his ransom (λύτρα) out of his purchase money. And if only a little time is left of the years [of the poor Israelite’s servitude] until the year of release, then he shall calculate and pay his ransom (λύτρα)” (25:51-52).³⁵⁷ According to the Septuagint, then, λύτρον is a financial term that constitutes the means of paying off a debt.

Along with the notion of a ransom paying off a financial debt in the LXX, the idea that ransom payments can pay off sins appears in literature roughly contemporary with Matthew’s Gospel. For example, the *Didache* exhorts its wealthy readers to give to the poor as a ransom for their sins: “If you have [funds] through the work of your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins (λύτρωσιν ἁμαρτιῶν σου)” (*Did.* 4:6). The *Didache* claims that by offering earthly funds to the poor, one can pay down the debt created through one’s sins.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 150-51.

³⁵⁷ For further instances of λύτρον in the LXX, cf. Exod 21:30; 30:12; Lev 19:20; 25:24-26; 27:31; Num 3:12, 46-51; 18:15; Isa 45:13; Prov 6:35; 13:8.

Matthew shifts from the payment of money to the payment of a life, which is also a concept that predates Matthew. 4 Maccabees contains the clearest example of the idea that a life could serve as a means for forgiveness. While 4 Maccabees uses the term ἀντίψυχον (lit. “life exchange) rather than λύτρον, the text states that the Maccabean martyrs who gave their lives under Antiochus Epiphanus “became a ransom for the sin of our nation (ὡςπερ ἀντίψυχον γεγονότας τῆς τοῦ ἔθνους ἀμαρτίας)” (4 Mac 17:21 NRSV cf. 6:29). Matthew applies this same logic to Jesus, who gives his life as a ransom payment for the sins of his people.

Although 4 Maccabees uses ἀντίψυχον rather than λύτρον, the later term carries the same connotation of “exchange” as does ἀντίψυχον. The closest parallel to Matthew’s reference to a human life as a λύτρον appears in Num 3:12 when the Levites serve as ransoms for the firstborns of Israel. The Lord states, “Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel, instead of (ἀντὶ) every firstborn that opens the womb from among the children of Israel. They will be their ransom (λύτρα) and the Levites will be mine.” The ransom of the Levites is given “instead of” the firstborn of Israel. Thus, a ransom payment has an element of exchange built into it. Matthew’s Jesus will serve as a substitute who goes into “exile” in his passion on the peoples’ behalf. As a λύτρον, Jesus will give his life in exchange for many lives.

The People of Israel in *Genesis Rabbah*

From the opening chapter of *Genesis Rabbah*, its authors write with Israel (i.e., Jews) in mind; the “people” of Israel, according to the rabbis, consist of themselves and their fellow Jews. The rabbis provide a scriptural rationale for the fact that the Land of Israel belongs to the people of Israel, of which the rabbis and their contemporary Jews are a part. *Gen. R.* 1:2 reads,

So that the nations of the world might not taunt Israel and say to them, “Are you not a nation of thieves?”... Israel can reply to them, saying, “Aren’t your own lands stolen? Did not ‘the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroy them and settle in their place’ (Deut 2:23)? The

world and its fullness (cf. Ps 24:1) belong to the Holy One, blessed be he. Thus, when it pleased him, he gave it [sc. the Land of Israel] to you, and when it pleased him, he took it from you and gave it to us.” Thus it is written [in Ps 111:6], “In giving them an inheritance of the nations, he has declared to his people the power of his works.”

This passage seeks to establish Israel’s legitimacy as a “nation” (אומה) vis-à-vis the other Gentile nations, as well as the Jews’ right to the Land in the fourth and fifth centuries. The writer(s) provide biblical texts that support their assertion that the Land is Israel’s inheritance.

Indeed, the rabbis are members of the same genealogical family whose history is recorded in Scripture, and they refer to the Israel of their own day (rabbinic Israel) with reference to biblical Israel. For example, speaking of biblical Israel, *Genesis Rabbah* 29:3 remarks, “The Holy One, blessed be he, found three treasures: ““And you [God] found his [Abraham’s] heart faithful before you (Neh 9:8); I have found David my servant (Ps 89:21); I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness (Hos 9:10).” In recalling when God “found” Israel, the rabbis are referring to the time, long before their lifetimes, in which God chose Israel as a people.

Elsewhere, *Genesis Rabbah* refers to “Israel” in the rabbinic period:

In the days of R. Tanhuma [4th century CE], Israel needed to fast.³⁵⁸ So they went to him and said, “Rabbi, proclaim a fast.” He proclaimed a fast for a day, another day, and another day, but no rain fell. . . . While they were giving charity to the poor, they saw a man give money to his divorced wife. . . . [Tanhuma] summoned them [sc. the divorced couple] and asked him, “Why did you give money to your divorced wife?” He answered him, “Rabbi, I saw her in trouble, and I was filled with compassion for her.” Thereupon R. Tanhuma turned his face up [to heaven] and said, “Master of the Universe, this man on whom this woman has no claim for provision; saw her in her trouble and was filled with compassion for her. Since, then, it is written of you, ‘The Lord is full of compassion and grace’ (Ps 103:8), while we are your children, the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, how much more should you be filled with compassion for us!” Immediately the rain descended and the world had relief. (*Gen. R.* 33:3)

³⁵⁸ The reference to Israel needing to fast is a euphemism for saying that Israel was in the midst of a drought, but the people also self-impose the fast as a means of bringing rain.

Genesis Rabbah speaks of rabbinic Israel as God’s children, as well as the “children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Also, the rabbi draws on Scripture that describes God’s compassion toward biblical Israel with application to his own situation. Here, then, *Genesis Rabbah* conceives of Israel as a family whose roots go back to the patriarchs.³⁵⁹ For the rabbis, the Israel of the past and the Israel of the present are both part of the same genealogical line, and both Bible and Midrash describe Israel as a whole.

Genesis Rabbah establishes a picture of Israel’s past and present according to the rabbis. As recent scholarship has shown, the emergence of rabbinic authority among the people was a very gradual process. Throughout the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods covered in *Genesis Rabbah*, the rabbinic class saw a steady climb from a relatively small cluster of elites to an increasingly prominent group. It was only in the Geonic period (post-600 CE) that rabbinic Judaism became the religious standard of world Jewry.³⁶⁰ While *Genesis Rabbah* makes statements about all of Israel, the text is the intellectual property of the rabbis—whose presentation of Israel constitutes a vision for Israel’s collective identity, but comes from a rabbinic class that lacks authority over the rest of the population. Naftali Cohen’s description of

³⁵⁹ For Israel as a “family” in *Genesis Rabbah*, see Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Its Social Metaphors: Israel in the History of Jewish Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 116-30.

³⁶⁰ See Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1990); Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee A.D. 132-212* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983); Shaye J. D. Cohen, “The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century,” in Levine, ed., *Galilee*; Catherine Heszer, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Rachel A. Anisfeld, *Sustain Me With Raisin-Cakes: Pesikta deRav Kahana and the Popularization of Rabbinic Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Naftali S. Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

the mishnaic rabbis also holds for the authors of *Genesis Rabbah*: “The rabbis were not... a powerful group with authority over the Jews of Roman Palestine; but they hoped to be... [and they]... argued for the centrality of... the rabbinic version of the [Jewish] way of life.”³⁶¹ In *Genesis Rabbah*, the rabbis created a document that had the potential to (and eventually would, by the Geonic period) form the collective identity of Israel as a whole.

Sin and Forgiveness in *Genesis Rabbah*

The problem of sin and the need for salvation are of central importance for understanding the ways that symbols function in *Genesis Rabbah*. The paradigm of sin and salvation is the theological lens through which the rabbis view the world as well as the roles of humanity and God within it. In this section, I include a description of the prevailing metaphor for sin in *Genesis Rabbah*, which also appears in the Tanakh and Dead Sea Scrolls: sin as a snare or trap. Being ensnared, the rabbis of *Genesis Rabbah* express a desire to be “saved” (ישע) from sin. According to the Midrash, bondage to sin also causes enslavement to foreign nations, and suffering under Gentiles purges Israel’s collective sin; salvation from sin will come eventually, but continued endurance under the nations, as well as worship and repentance, are necessary until that time comes.

Sin as a Snare in the Tanakh and Dead Sea Scrolls

The Tanakh states that people become ensnared or trapped because of sins, and this general idea reappears in *Genesis Rabbah*. Sinful behavior has concrete consequences, which the biblical text often envisions as a “snare” (מִוִּקֶשׁ): “Through the transgression (בַּפֶּשַׁע) of [one’s] lips is a snare (מִוִּקֶשׁ) to the evil [person]” (Prov 12:13 cf. 29:3; Ps 9:16). Similarly, Prov 22:24-

³⁶¹ Naphtali Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3, 14.

25 states that anger and wrath lead to being snared: ““Make no friendship with an angry master, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle your life in a snare (מוקש לנפשך) (ולקחת).” That the consequences of sin is entrapment is explicit in Job 22:5: ““There is no end to your sins (לענינתך)... Therefore traps (פחים) surround you, and sudden terror overwhelms you” (cf. Job 18:5-9). For the most egregious sin in ancient Israelite thought, idolatry, the people of Israel are consistently and collectively ensnared. Speaking of the peoples who dwell in Canaan before the arrival of the Hebrews, God declares, “They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin (יחטיאו) against me; for if you serve their gods, it will surely be as a snare (למוקש) to you” (Exod 23:33; cf. Jos 23:13-16). The worship of gods other than the God of Israel is a sin that manifests itself as a snare for the people. This idea that sin has a materiality that restricts human beings is a trope throughout the Tanakh.

The notion of sin as a trap also appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The *Damascus Document* refers to “the three nets of Belial” and states that Belial

trapped Israel with them (תפש בהם בישראל), making them seem as if they were three kinds of righteousness. The first is fornication, the second is arrogance, and the third is defilement of the sanctuary. He who escapes from this one is caught (יתפש) in that one, and he who is saved from that one is caught (יתפש) in this one (CD 4:16-19).

The idea of sin being something in which one can become trapped runs through the Tanakh and into the literature of the Second Temple period. The notion that one can escape from one trap and become ensnared in another will reappear explicitly in *Genesis Rabbah*.

Sin and Slavery to the Nations in the Tanakh

While the Tanakh does not always explicate the precise nature of the snares of sin, it does state that sin leads to slavery under Gentile nations. The slavery/bondage (עבדות) to the nations is the real-life manifestation of the burdensome and ensnaring nature of sin. Nowhere is this

relationship between sin and slavery clearer than in Ezra/Nehemiah, which describes the people in the Land of Israel after their return from Babylon. Despite the people's recent release from exile, their sin increases in the Land and leads to their enslavement therein:

“Our sins have multiplied higher than our heads, and our guiltiness has grown as far as the heavens (עונותינו רבו למעלה ראש ואשמתנו גדלה עד לשמים). Since the days of our ancestors to this day we have been greatly guilty; because of our sins (ובעונותינו) we, our kings, and our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands—to the sword, to captivity, to plundering, and to utter shame, as it is today. But now, for a brief moment, favor has been shown to us by the Lord our God to leave us a remnant and to give us tent pin within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery, for we are slaves (בעבדותנו כי עבדים). Yet in our slavery (ובעבדותנו) God has not forsaken us, but has extended to us his steadfast love before the kings of Persia, to grant us some reviving and to set up the house of our God, to repair its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judea and Jerusalem. (Ezra 9:6b-9)

Behold, we are slaves (עבדים) to this day; in the Land that you gave to our ancestors to enjoy its fruit and its goodness, behold, we are slaves (עבדים). And its great yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins (בחטאותינו). They rule over our bodies (משלנו גדלה אנהנו) and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great affliction (ועל גויתנו ובצרה). (Neh 9:36-37)

Ezra/Nehemiah establishes a relationship between Israel's sins and their subsequent slavery. As we will see in the next section, *Genesis Rabbah* also reflects this relationship, as well as the notion of sin that ensnares the people.

Sin as a Snare and Slavery to the Nations in Genesis Rabbah

Gen. R. 56:9 builds on the biblical notion of sin as having burdensome and captivating capabilities. Although the midrash does not use the biblical words for “snare” or “trap,” it describes Israel being seized by sin, and subjected to foreign kingdoms as a result—a scenario that is prefigured in the sacrificial ram that Abraham sees trapped in the thicket in Genesis 22:

After all that has happened, [the people of] Israel are seized by transgressions (בעבירות) and entangled in afflictions (ומסתבכין בצרות)... Because our father Abraham saw the ram pull itself from one thicket and go and become entangled in another, the Holy One, blessed to he, said to him, “Thus will your future children be entangled by kingdoms (ממלכות)

להסתבך): the kingdom of Babylon to Media, from Media to Greece, from Greece to Edom [Rome]. Yet, eventually, they will be redeemed by the ram's horn, as it is written, "And the Lord God will blow the horn... the Lord of hosts will defend them" (Zec 9:14-15).³⁶²

In this passage, Israel is first captured by transgressions (i.e., sins); and then subjected to afflictions. As in the Tanakh, sin is an external entity that takes hold of people and locks them into bondage like the ram that is stuck in the thicket. The midrashic language of being "seized" (אחז) by transgressions is similar to the way that sinners are seized by fear in the Tanakh: "The sinners (חטאים) in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has seized (אחזה רעדה) the ungodly" (Isa 33:14). While Isaiah states that *fear* seizes sinners, *Genesis Rabbah* cuts out the middleman, as it were, and asserts that sin itself seizes transgressors. After sin takes hold, Israel is entangled in "afflictions" (צרות), which follows the biblical precedent of "many evils and afflictions (צרות)" coming upon the people if they break God's covenant (Deut 31:17 cf. 31:21). We saw that Nehemiah also draws on this precedent of the people being in afflictions due to sin. Addressing God on behalf of collective Israel, Neh 9:37 mentions "the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins (בהטאותינו). They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great affliction" (בצרה גדלה)." *Genesis Rabbah* states that once Israel has been seized by transgressions and trapped in afflictions, the restrictive nature of sin is actualized when the people become "entangled by kingdoms." One day, God will redeem Israel, but *Gen. R.* 56:9 does not explain the requirements for such redemption to take place.

Gen. R. 69:5 (and its parallel in *Gen. R.* 41:9) contains an illustration of sin and affliction similar to that of *Gen. R.* 56:9, and also adds that Israel's suffering under the nations will purge

³⁶² Variations of this passage appear throughout rabbinic literature with slight variations (cf. *y. Taan.* 2:4, 65d; *Lev. R.* 29:10; *PRK* 23:10). The Yerushalmi has Israel being entangled in "sins" (עוונות) rather than "transgressions" (עבירות) (cf. *Lev. R.* 29:10). *Leviticus Rabbah* and *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* add that Abraham's children will be "seized by the nations and entangled in kingdoms, and dragged from kingdom to kingdom" (ונסבכין במלכויות ונמשכין ממלכות למלכות) (נאחזים באומות).

away collective sins. The midrashic discussion revolves around an interpretation of Gen 28:14, in which God meets Jacob at Bethel and says to him, “Your seed shall be like the dust of the earth.” The rabbis identify Jacob’s seed as themselves—that is, Israel in the rabbinic period—and liken their current suffering to the way that dust gets trampled underfoot. Yet, this trampling, while painful, also beats off the sin to which Israel is also captive:

As the dust of the earth is trodden upon, so will your children be downtrodden by the kingdoms (למלכות), as it is written, “And I will put it into the hand of those who afflict you” (Isa 51:23). What does “those who afflict you” (מוגיך) mean? [It means] those who make your wounds flow (ממיניך). Nevertheless, it [affliction] is for your benefit because they [the kingdoms] beats you from your sin (משקשקין ליד מן חוביך), as you read, “You make her soft (תמננה) with showers; you bless her growth” (Ps 65:11).

This midrash states that the Gentile kingdoms that afflict Israel—in the rabbis’ case, Christian Rome—beats or knocks (שקשק) ³⁶³ the people of Israel free from the sin (חובה) that has latched onto them and holds them captive. The rabbis use Ps 65:11 to paint a graphic picture: God allows the nations to beat an embodied Israel until its wounds flow, thereby making Israel “soft,” but in so doing the nations also beat away the sin-burden that stunts Israel’s blessed growth. For the present time, Israel suffers, but “the benefit of suffering is claimed to far outweigh the pain.” ³⁶⁴ Israel’s current afflictions beat away the sins that surround it so that the people can reap the full benefits of God’s blessings. In time, the nations will shake Israel from its sin completely (purge it away), but until then, Israel must be able to stand up under suffering.

A final midrashic example will suffice to show that *Genesis Rabbah* reflects the idea that collective rabbinic Israel must endure a period of suffering under sin and foreign powers before redemption comes. In asking how long the negative repercussions of Adam’s sin in the Garden

³⁶³ According to Jastrow [1626], שקשק is a transposition of שקשק, which Jastrow [1431] translates, “to knock, strike, shake.”

³⁶⁴ David Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 118.

will last, the rabbis draw on Dan 8:13-14, which contains a question and its answer: “‘For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that causes desolation, and the giving over of the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?’ And he said to me, ‘For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be set right.’” The rabbis read the “sanctuary” (קֹדֶשׁ) as referring to Adam, the “transgression” (פֶּשַׁע) to Adam’s sin, the “host” (צְבָא) to Adam’s descendants, and the “trampling” (מַרְמִס) to those descendants’ deaths under foreign rule. Thus, in rabbinic thinking, after “2,300 evenings [and] mornings” (8:14), the “sanctuary” (Adam) will be “set right” (8:14)—that is, after Israel lives under foreign rule for an extended period, God will restore Adam to righteousness:

Will the decree that was decreed against the first person [Adam] be forever? Certainly not! “And the transgression (וְהַפֶּשַׁע) that causes desolation” (Dan 8:13): Will his [sc. Adam’s] transgression (פֶּשַׁע) make him desolate in the grave? “To give both the sanctuary () and the host to be trampled (מַרְמִס)” (*ibid.*): Indeed, he and his descendants will be trampled (מַרְמִס) before the angel of death. “And he said to me, ‘Until 2,300 evenings [and] mornings; then the sanctuary will be set right’” (Dan 8:14). R. Azariah and R. Jonathan b. Haggai in R. Isaac’s name observed... “When the morning of the nations of the world (אִיּוֹמֵי הָעוֹלָם) turns to evening, and the evening of Israel to morning, ‘then the sanctuary will be set right (נִצְדָק).’ At that time, [God says], ‘I will justify him from the time of the decree (מֵאוֹתָהּ הַנִּזְרָה) (מצדדיק).’” (Gen. R. 21:1 cf. 21:7).

Reading Adam as the Danielic “sanctuary” (קֹדֶשׁ) that will be “set right” (נִצְדָק), *Genesis Rabbah* says that after a lengthy period (2,300 days according to Daniel) during which the people of Israel are subjected to the “nations of the world,” Israel’s suffering will end and Adam will be cleared of his sin. Adam is guilty of transgression and Israel continues to feel its effects but, eventually, Israel will emerge from the “evening” of suffering to the “morning” of righteousness when God sets the world to rights.

Genesis Rabbah also agrees with Ezra/Nehemiah that sin leads to slavery. In particular, the midrash asserts that Israel is enslaved to the Roman Empire in the rabbinic period. One of the ways the rabbis do this is by reading the relationship between Jacob and Esau as prefiguring the

relationship between Israel and Rome. In referring to Israel as “Jacob,” the rabbis follow the Tanakh’s equation of the person of Jacob with Israel as a whole.³⁶⁵ Israel’s Scriptures also establish a rivalry between Jacob and Esau (Mal 1:2-3) and contain several references to the impending destruction of Edom, of which Esau was the founding ancestor (Josh 24:4; Jer 49:8-10; Obad 1:6-9, 18-21). Thus, just as Jacob represented the people Israel in the Tanakh and in rabbinic literature, so the rabbis associated Esau with Rome—Jacob’s opponent in Scripture and rabbinic Israel’s opponent in late antiquity.³⁶⁶

The Esau-Rome equation is clear in *Genesis Rabbah*.³⁶⁷ For example, in its comment on the “two nations” in Rebekah’s womb (Gen 25:23), the midrash states, “Two [people groups] hated by the nations are in your womb: all the nations hate Esau [i.e., Rome] and all the nations

³⁶⁵ See Exod 19:3; Num 23:7, 10, 21, 23; 24:5, 17, 19; Deut 32:9; 33:4, 10, 28; 2 Sam 23:1; 1 Kgs 18:31; 2 Kgs 17:34; 1 Chron 16:13, 17; Ps 14:7; 20:2; 24:6; 44:5; 46:8, 12; 47:5; 53:7; 59:14; 75:10; 76:7; 78:5, 21, 71; 79:7; 81:2, 5; 84:9; 85:2; 87:2; 94:7; 99:4; 105:10, 23; 114:1, 7; 132:2, 5; 135:4; 146:5; 147:19; Isa 2:3, 5-6; 8:17; 9:7; 10:20-21; 14:1; 17:4; 27:6, 9; 29:22-23; 40:27; 41:8, 14, 21; 42:24; 43:1, 22, 28; 44:1-2, 5, 21, 23; 45:4; 46:3; 48:1, 12, 20; 49:5-6, 26; 58:; 59:20; 60:16; 65:9; Jer 2:4; 5:20; 10:16, 25; 30:7, 10, 18; 31:7, 11; 46:27-28; 51:19; Lam 1:17; 2:2-3; Ezek 20:5; 28:25; 37:25; 39:25; Hos 10:11; 12:2; Amos 3:13; 6:8; 7:2, 5; 8:7; 9:8; Obad 1:10, 17-18; Mic 1:5; 2:7, 12; 3:1, 8-9; 4:2; 5:7-8; 7:20; Nah 2:2; Mal 2:12.

³⁶⁶ For Esau as a symbol of Rome in rabbinic literature, see Gerson D. Cohen, “Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought,” in Alexander Altmann, ed., *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19-27; Mireille Hadas-Lebel, “Jacob et Esau ou Israel et Rome dans le talmud et le midrash,” *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions* 201 (1984): 369-92; Sacha Stern, *Jewish Identity in Early Rabbinic Writings* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 18-21; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judasim* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 3; Burton L. Vistozky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates: Studies in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 154-72; idem., *Aphrodite and the Rabbis: How the Jews Adapted Roman Culture to Create Judaism as We Know It* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016), 55-86; Jacob Neusner, *Persia and Rome in Classical Judaism* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), esp. 1-73. For pre-rabbinic equations between Esau and Rome, see Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus’ Portrait of Jacob,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 79 (1988-89): 130-33; idem., *Josephus’s Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 322-24.

³⁶⁷ See Jacob Neusner and Bruce Chilton, *Jewish and Christian Doctrines: The Classics Compared* (London: Routledge, 2000), 61-62.

hate Israel.... From you shall arise Jews and Arameans (יהודאי וארמאי) (Gen. R. 63:7). It is likely that the text uses “Arameans” (ארמאי) due to its close orthographic and phonetic ties with “Romans” (רומאי).³⁶⁸ While *Genesis Rabbah* never mentions Christianity explicitly, the Jacob-Esau/rabbinic Israel-Christian Rome relationship coheres with the idea of two rival nations that emerged from the same scriptural and theological womb.³⁶⁹

In discussing Esau and Jacob, *Genesis Rabbah* also alludes to the notion that Israel is in slavery to Rome. On Scripture’s assertion that “the older [Esau] shall serve the younger [Jacob]” (Gen 25:23), R. Huna states, “If he [Jacob-Israel] is deserving, he [Esau-Rome] shall serve [him]; if not, he [Esau-Rome] shall enslave [him] (אם זכה יעבוד ואם לאו ייעבד)” (Gen. R. 63:7). Although rabbinic Israel is currently enslaved to Christian Rome, Israel’s righteousness can make Esau’s hands those of a slave, rather than a slave owner.

Genesis Rabbah explicitly equates enslavement to Rome with the Israelites’ biblical slavery in Egypt in a comment on Gen 15:13-14a. God tells Abram, “Know for certain that your descendents will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them (ועבדום). And they shall afflict them for four hundred years. But also (גם) that nation [Egypt] whom they [Abram’s descendents] shall serve (יעבדו), I will judge.” The midrash claims that God not only refers to Egypt in this statement, but “also (גם) Egypt and the four kingdoms which will enslave you [Israel] (יעבודיך)” (Gen. R. 44:19). The rabbinic interpretation of Gen 15:13-14 extends God’s words about Egyptian slavery to include all the future bondage of Israel under Gentile kingdoms.

³⁶⁸ Stern, *Jewish Identity*, 17.

³⁶⁹ See Alan F. Segal, *Rebecca’s Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 1.

The midrash also reflects the power dynamic between Israel and Rome in its comments on Gen 27:22. In this verse, a blind Isaac tells Jacob—who is dressed up as Esau in an attempt to steal his older brother’s birthright—that his voice is that of Jacob, but his hands, which he has covered in animal skin, are those of Esau. One of the interpretations of Gen 27:22 describes Rome’s military power over Israel:

Jacob maintains power by his voice... [but] Esau does not maintain power except by his hands... Rabbi Phineas said: [If] the voice of Jacob [Israel] becomes soft, [then] “the hands are the hands of Esau [Rome]”... Rabbi Berekiah said: When Jacob speaks with wrath in his voice, the hands of Esau have dominion (שולטות); when his voice bursts forth [with peace], Esau has no dominion... When the voice of Jacob rings out in the synagogues, Esau has no hands. (*Gen. R.* 65:20)

This passage constitutes a recasting of Jacob’s story in light of rabbinic concerns under Christian Rome.³⁷⁰ The text not only describes Roman rule with reference to Esau’s hands, but it also assigns Israel a role in deciding the extent of Roman dominance: when the topic of Israel’s discussions is wrath against the Empire, Rome tightens its grip on the people, but if Israel broadcasts its Scriptures and prayers from its synagogues and thus promotes peace, then Rome has no real power. As Steven Kepnes notes, “Esau represents material strength and power that Jacob-Israel lacks and needs to forge and solidify its identity as a people.”³⁷¹ According to *Genesis Rabbah*, the people of Israel must join together in houses of prayer, which will result in a shift in Israel’s favor.

³⁷⁰ Cf. *Gen. R.* 63:6 for a similar rabbinization of Jacob: “Whenever [Rebekah] stood near synagogues or houses of study, Jacob struggled to come out, as it is written, ‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you’ (Jer 1:5). While when she passed idolatrous temples, Esau eagerly struggled to come out, as it is written, ‘The wicked are estranged from the womb’ (Ps 58:4).” For *Genesis Rabbah*’s presentation of Scripture “rabbinization,” see Philip S. Alexander, “Pre-Emptive Exegesis: Genesis Rabbah’s Reading of the Story of Creation,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43 (1992): 230-44; Visotzky, “Rabbis,” 84-85.

³⁷¹ Steven Kepnes, “Hagar and Esau: From Others to Sisters and Brothers,” in Peter Ochs and William Stacy Johnson, eds., *Crisis, Call, and Leadership in the Abrahamic Traditions* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 40.

This final point—that Israel must continue to worship God in their slavery—is crucial to the rabbis’ salvific schema. Along with enduring suffering under Gentile powers, the rabbis assert that worshipping God can enact redemption:

Israel was not redeemed (גאלי) except through the merit of its worship (השתחוויה): “And the people believed... and they bowed and worshipped” (Exod 4:31)... Hannah was not remembered except through the merit of her worship: “And they worshipped before the Lord” (1 Sam 1:19). The exiles will be reassembled only through the merit of worshipping: “... and they shall worship on the holy mountain in Jerusalem” (Isa 27:13). The Temple will be rebuilt only through the merit of worshipping: “Exalt the Lord your God, and worship on his holy hill” (Ps 99:9). The dead will come to life again only through the merit of worshipping: “Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker” (Ps 95:6) (*Gen R.* 56:2).

The rabbis regard repentance in much the same way as they do worship, as an act that the people of Israel can perform in order to hasten salvation. The rabbis read “And the spirit of God hovered” (Gen 1:2) as a reference to the spirit of the Messiah, and then assert that Israel’s repentance will enact the Messiah’s coming. According to *Gen. R.* 2:4, ““And the spirit of God hovered”” (Gen 1:2)... alludes to the spirit of Messiah, and you read, ““And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him’ (Isa 9:2). In the merit of what will [Messiah] eventually come?... In the merit of repentance (התשובה).”

Along with ushering in the messianic era, repentance is also necessary for God to forgive sins. According to *Gen. R.* 44:12, the call of 2 Chron 7:14b that Israel should “turn from their evil ways” shows the causal relationship between repentance and forgiveness. R. Judan notes that the biblical statement “denotes repentance (תשובה) [since] after that [the text states], ‘Then I will forgive their sin (ואסלח להטאתם)’ (2 Chron 7:14c). While the rabbis and their fellow Jews must endure punishments in slavery to Rome, they also must both worship God and repent so that God will forgive their sins. *Genesis Rabbah* does not explicate a sequence or hierarchy between these aspects of rabbinic Israel’s duties. Rather, these duties seem to work in concert

with one another; endurance, worship, and repentance all contribute to eventual salvation from sin and slavery.

Although rabbinic Israel is trapped by sin and enslaved to Rome, the rabbis express hope for deliverance after the time of suffering has come to an end. The anonymous sage in *Gen. R.* 20:7 acknowledges Israel's weakness in comparison to the prevailing Gentiles powers, but hopes for divine salvation: "We are weak (תשיים אנו), yet though weak, we hope for the salvation (לתשועתו) of the Holy one, blessed be he" (cf. *Song R.* 7:11). The rabbis know such salvation assured because God gave salvation as a gift to the world at creation. In a discussion of Gen 1:17, *Gen. R.* 6:5 notes, "Three things were given as a gift to the world: the Torah, the lights [God set in the firmament; Gen 1:17], and rain.... R. Joshua b. R. Nehemiah said, 'Salvation also! 'You have given me the shield of your salvation (ישעך) (2 Sam 22:36a).'" There is no question as to whether such salvation will come, but of when; God will save Israel from sin and enslavement after an indeterminate period of suffering that will knock them loose from their sins. Sin as a burden or entity by which one can become trapped is a controlling metaphor for *Genesis Rabbah*, and endurance, repentance, and worship in the midst of slavery are the mechanisms that will release Israel from its bonds of iniquity.

Conclusion

Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are concerned with the people of Israel and their salvation from sin. Matthew's attitude towards the general population of Israel is positive, but Matthew presents Israel's leaders negatively. The Jesus assembly (ἐκκλησία) is a Jewish group into which Gentiles can gain membership after Jesus' resurrection. Matthew's Jesus is sent to save his people—that is the people of Israel—from their sins (1:21), and he the reader knows that he will accomplish this mission when "all the people" of Israel ask for Jesus' salvific blood

to be upon them and upon their children (27:25)—this blood cry ensures that when Jesus dies on the cross, that his salvific blood will reach “his people” in order to save them from their sins. The primary focus of *Genesis Rabbah* is also Israel (also ethnic Jews) and the rabbis view themselves and Jews in their day (rabbinic Israel) as heirs to biblical Israel. Rabbinic Israel struggles under Christian Rome, and *Genesis Rabbah* reflects the rabbinic antipathy towards Gentile rulers. Matthew’s Israel is living in debt to sin, which Jesus pays by giving his life as a “ransom” payment (20:28). *Genesis Rabbah* sees rabbinic Israel as entangled and ensnared in sin, and suffering under Rome purges Israel of its sins. These understandings of sin and forgiveness provide the framework necessary for viewing Matthew and the rabbis’ symbols of biblical Israel in the following two chapters.

VI. MATTHEW'S JESUS AS A SYMBOL OF ISRAEL

Matthew provides extended narratives of Jesus' suffering and death in two places: the Vineyard Parable (21:33-46) and the Passion Narrative (26-27).³⁷² Both of these passages draw on Israel's Scriptures in order to build narrative patterns between Jesus and biblical Israel. The effect of these narrative patterns is to present Jesus as enduring the suffering that Israel underwent in captivity and exile to Babylon. Thus, in enduring the suffering that leads to his death, Matthew's Jesus becomes a symbol of an afflicted, and eventually exiled, biblical Israel. This symbol reminds Matthew's readers of their shared identity as members of a movement rooted in Israel's sacred history. More, the symbol provides the collective with examples of how to stand up under persecution, and also offer a picture of the self-sacrifice that Jesus demands of his followers (Mt 10:38; 16:24).

Matthew's Vineyard Parable (21:33-46), which the First Gospel adopts from Mark (Mk 12:1-12; cf. Lk 20:9-19; *GThom* 65-66), portrays Jesus as a parabolic son who is cast out of his father's vineyard and killed (21:39). The parable's exegetical foundation is Isaiah's parable of the vineyard in Isa 5:1-7 LXX. While the linguistic similarities between the openings of both parables secure their analogous relationship, Matthew's story also differs from Isaiah's: the Isaian vineyard, which represents the people of Israel, is destroyed because of sin; the Matthean vineyard, which also represents the people, remains intact. Instead of having the vineyard destroyed, Matthew has the son cast out (ἐξέβαλον). This difference is the first hint that Matthew's parable positions the son (Jesus) as a substitute who is cast out instead of the people—"a ransom for many" (20:28).

³⁷² Cf. Jesus' predictions of his death in Mt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19.

While there is no mention of anyone being “cast out” in the Greek version of Isaiah’s vineyard parable (5:1-7), Isaiah 5 goes on to explain that the vineyard’s destruction is a metaphor for “the people” (ὁ λαός) becoming “captives” (αἰχμάλωτος; Isa 5:13). Furthermore, there is a reference to collective Israel being “cast out” (ἐκβαλεῖ) later in Isa 5:29 LXX—a euphemism for Israel’s exile. It is possible that Mark (who Matthew follows) noted this reference to the people being “cast out” in Isa 5:29 and used ἐκβάλλω with reference to the son, rather than the entire people, thus leaving the NT “vineyard” (i.e., people) intact. By this reading, Matthew’s understanding of Jesus being “cast out” as a substitute for the entire people is strengthened.

By the time Isaiah’s parable was translated into Aramaic (c. 200-400),³⁷³ post-70 Jews had included a reference to the people being “cast out” (טלטל) in the vineyard parable itself (IsaTg 5:1-7), not just at the end of Isaiah 5. According to the Isaiah Targum, the people of Israel as a whole are “cast out” (מטלטלין) of the vineyard (IsaTg 5:6), and thus the Targum provides an analogue to the son being “cast out” (ἐξέβαλον) of the vineyard in the Gospel. In comparison with the Targum, Matthew’s individual son being cast out of the vineyard emerges as a parabolic expression of Matthew’s ransom Christology: the son, Jesus, will be cast out—that is, exiled—for the people as a whole in his passion. A similar story of Israel being cast out by their corrupt leaders in the Targum to Jeremiah 23:2 strengthens the idea that Matthew’s Jesus substitutes for the people. This reading of Matthew points to the fuller picture of Jesus in the Passion Narrative as a representative of Israel who will enter into his own personal “exile” to ransom his people from sin-debt.

³⁷³ For the Targums to Isaiah and Jeremiah having both Tannaitic (first and second century) and Amoraic (third through fifth century) phases of composition and redaction, see Chilton and Fleisher, *Targums*, 169-97, 207-13.

In the Passion Narrative, Matthew shows exactly how Jesus “will save his people from their sins” (1:21)—not by bringing them out of exile, but by going into exile on their behalf. Matthew presents Jesus’ (1) arrest and Sanhedrin trial, (2) trial before Pilate and crucifixion, and (3) death in a way that recapitulates and corresponds to (1) Babylon’s breach and captivity of Jerusalem, (2) the destruction of the Temple and exile of the people, and (3) the end of exile when the God allows Israel to come home. Through various citations and allusions to Israel’s Scriptures, Matthew asserts that Jesus’ crucifixion represents his own personal exile, and that his death marks the end of that exile. In recapitulating past Israel’s captivity, the razing of its Land, and the exile in 586 BCE, Matthew’s Jesus becomes a symbol for Matthew’s Israel circa 70 CE.

The sacrifice of Matthew’s Jesus replaces the Temple sacrifices. To make this replacement, Matthew shows that God abandoned Jesus and used human agents to achieve his death, just as God had abandoned Jerusalem and used the Babylonians to destroy its First Temple. More, by portraying Jesus as the Temple, the resurrection of Matthew’s Jesus reveals him to be a more resilient than the Temple that is non-functional in Jesus’ day and destroyed in Matthew’s day. Thus, the Gospel provides Matthew’s readers with an indestructible symbol that will sustain and shape collective identity in a world without a Temple.

Matthew’s Jesus is also a symbol of Jerusalem and its inhabitants at the time of the biblical exile. Matthew presents Jesus as a symbol of biblical Israel because, in order to save his people from their sins in the Second Temple period, Jesus must experience the captivity, destruction, and exile that Israel’s sin caused in the First Temple period. To take on and take away Israel’s sin, Jesus must stand in for sinful Israel, which means experiencing all of the suffering that Israel experienced according to Scripture. As a personified symbol of the people,

Jesus functions as a substitute for the people, and thereby gives “his life as a ransom for many” (20:28).

This chapter proceeds in four parts. First, I introduce Matthew’s Vineyard Parable in which the vineyard owner’s son being “cast out” (ἐξέβαλον) (21:39). Second, I show how Matthew builds on the vineyard passage in Isa 5:1-7 LXX, which pictures the people (and Land) of Israel as a vineyard subjected to destruction, and precedes Isa 5:29’s reference to the people themselves being “cast out.” Third, I treat Matthew’s Vineyard Parable in light of the targumic version of Isa 5:1-7, which describes the people of Israel being “cast out” (טלטל) of the vineyard, as does similar vineyard imagery in Targum Jeremiah 12:10 and 23:2. The cumulative effect of the Isa 5 LXX and Tg is to show that Matthew portrays Jesus as an individual who gives his life in exchange for his people—thereby saving his people from their sins (1:21).

Fourth, I show that Matthew includes implicit citations and allusions to Israel’s Scriptures throughout the Passion Narrative. Moving chronologically through each phase of Jesus’ passion—Gethsemane, arrest, trial, delivery to Pilate, crucifixion, and death—I demonstrate how Matthew interweaves biblical references to Israel’s destruction and exile into the narrative. Through these references, Matthew presents Jesus as a mimetic symbol of endurance under suffering as well as a declarative symbol for Matthew’s Israel: because Scripture informs Jesus’ suffering, Matthew’s readers can be assured that the Jesus movement is a product of Israel’s sacred history and that Jesus has, indeed, given his life as a ransom for his post-70 Jewish people.

Matthew’s Vineyard Parable (Mt 21:33-46)

Matthew’s Vineyard Parable, a version of which appears in the other Synoptics as well as the *Gospel of Thomas* (cf. Mk 12:1-12; Lk 20:9-19; *GThom* 65-66), describes a vineyard owner

who prepares his property and then leases it to his tenants (γεωργοῖς). Having departed to another country, he sends his slaves to the vineyard to collect the produce. The tenants beat and kill these slaves (21:34-36). Finally, the owner sends his son in the conviction that the tenants will treat the son more respectfully than they had the slaves (21:37). Instead, in a bid to get the son's inheritance, the tenants "seized him, and cast him out (ἐξέβαλον) of the vineyard and killed [him]" (21:39). Building on the foundation of Isa 5:1-7 LXX, which pictures the Land and people of Israel as God's vineyard, Matthew's parable is an allegorical retelling of Israel's history, with the vineyard being Israel (both people and Land), the vineyard owner being God, the persecuted slaves being Israel's prophets, the tenants being Israel's current leadership—as the chief priests and Pharisees themselves recognize at the conclusion of the parable (cf. 21:45)—and the son symbolizing Jesus.³⁷⁴

The parable is Matthew's first extended indication of how Jesus will "save his people from their sins" by giving "his life as a ransom for many." By describing the "son" as "seized," "cast out" of the vineyard, and "killed," the parable offers an allegorical foretaste of Jesus being arrested in Jerusalem, crucified at Golgotha, and dying on a cross. Insofar as the vineyard represents both the people and the Land of Israel, the parable is prime evidence that Matthew's Israel is not living in exile; nor is Matthew's Jesus in exile until he is "cast out of the vineyard." To read Matthew as understanding the people themselves as already in exile would be to rob Jesus' substitutionary exile of its salvific purpose. The Vineyard Parable shows that Jesus'

³⁷⁴ See John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory* (London: SPCK, 1985), 64, 96; Ivor H. Jones, *The Matthean Parables: A Literary and Historical Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 376; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 361-62; Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Inquiry into Parable Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 73-95; idem., *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 284-86; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 74-88.

people are landed people, and that Jesus will be expelled from the vineyard (in crucifixion and death) as a ransom for them.

Matthew's Vineyard Parable and Isaiah 5 LXX

The exegetical foundation for reading Matthew's Parable of the Vineyard is Isaiah's Vineyard Song (Isa 5:1-7 LXX).³⁷⁵ Isaiah describes "my beloved" (ἀγαπητοῦ μου)—that is, God—as having a "vineyard on a high hill" (5:1), which points to Mount Zion within the broader Land of Israel. God adds other structures to the vineyard, including a tower and a winepress, and plants a choice vine therein (5:1-2). God waits for the vine to yield grapes, but it only produces thorns—meaning the people of Israel produced sin in their Land (5:2). In response to such sin, God "will remove [the vineyard's] hedge and it shall be devoured; [God will] break down its wall and it shall be trampled" (5:5)—that is, God will allow foreign nations to breach Israel's borders and destroy the people so that the vineyard becomes a "barren land (χέρσον)" (5:6). Isa 5:7 clarifies that the "vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel and the people of Judah [a] beloved plant (ἀμπελῶν κυρίου σαβαώθ οἶκος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ ἐστι καὶ ἄνθρωπος τοῦ Ἰουδα νεόφυτον ἠγαπημένον)." Thus, Isaiah's Vineyard Song describes both the destruction and desolation of the Land of Israel as well as the exile of the people therein.

³⁷⁵ Davies and Allison [*Matthew*, 3.178] call the similarity between the Matthean and Isaian vineyards "a fact recognized throughout exegetical history." Also see Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants: An Inquiry into Parable Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 47-48; Ivor H. Jones, *The Matthean Parables: A Literary and Historical Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 373-76; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 357; John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, "Egyptian Viticultural Practices and the Citation of Isa 5:1-7 in Mark 12:1-9," *Novum Testamentum* 44 (2002): 134-59, esp. 154; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics, and Agrarian Culture in Jewish Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 149-72; Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 9-12.

The beginning of the Matthean parable draws on Isa 5:1-2 in its use of the same Greek words to describe the construction of a “fence,” a “tower,” and a “wine vat” within a “vineyard”:

Isa 5:1a-2 LXX	Mt 21:33
My beloved had a vineyard (ἀμπελών)... made a fence around [it] (φραγμὸν περιέθηκα), and dug a trench, and planted a choice vine, and built a tower (ὠκοδόμησα πύργον) in the midst of it, and dug a place for the wine vat (προλήνιον ὄρυξα ἐν αὐτῷ) in it.	There was an owner of a house who planted a vineyard (ἀμπελώνα) and made a fence around it (φραγμὸν αὐτῷ περιέθηκεν) and dug a winepress in it (ὄρυξεν ἐν αὐτῷ ληνὸν) and built a tower (ὠκοδόμησεν πύργον).

Isa 5:1-2 LXX describes God planting the people of Israel as a vineyard, and Matthew’s use of the same language suggests that the vineyard owner’s (that is, God’s) planting also represents the people and Land of Israel in the Gospel.³⁷⁶ The many references to Israel as a vineyard elsewhere in Israel’s Scripture supports this conclusion (see Isa 1:8; 3:14; 27:2; Jer 12:10 cf. Ezek 19:10). Any reader of Matthew who was familiar with the biblical narrative would know that its authors “employed vineyard imagery as a stock image for Israel. And to know this is to know that a parable set in a vineyard is a parable about Israel.”³⁷⁷ As Warren Carter notes, since the son (Jesus) is cast out of the vineyard and killed, the vineyard also represents the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus goes to be arrested, handed over to the Romans, and crucified (Mt 16:21; 20:17-18).³⁷⁸

Yet, the similarities are only the starting point of the comparison, and the differences reveal the real import for understanding Matthew. The major difference between the vineyards in

³⁷⁶ As Nolland [*Matthew*, 869] notes, “Matthew’s “link with Is. 5:2 immediately confirms that God is to be identified as the landowner. It also makes virtually certain that the vineyard is to be identified with the Jewish people, established as a people by the efforts of God.”

³⁷⁷ Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel’s Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48.

³⁷⁸ Carter, *Matthew*, 426.

Isaiah and the Gospel is that Matthew never condemns the vineyard, that is, the people and Land of Israel. Rather, Matthew comments on the deficiencies of the vineyard's current tenants—Israel's leaders in the first century—rather than those of the people as a whole. After relating his parable, Matthew's Jesus asks what the vineyard owner (God) should do with the tenants who persecuted his servants and cast out his son (21:40). The disciples answer, "He will put those wretches to a wretched death and let out the vineyard to other tenants (ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς) who will give him the fruits in their seasons" (21:41). In Matthew's Gospel, the vineyard itself is never destroyed; rather, it is allowed to flourish under new tenants after the original tenants are disposed.

Jesus confirms this judgment of the tenants when, speaking directly to the chief priests and Pharisees, he declares, "Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation (ἐθνεί) producing its fruit" (21:43). In Jesus' explanation, the vineyard imagery shifts from Israel to "the kingdom of God."³⁷⁹ This shift clarifies that at the arrival of God's kingdom (which is near) the leadership will be taken from the chief priests and Pharisees and given to Jesus' Jewish assembly—new "tenants" whose leadership will mark a time when Israel, as a holy nation under the kingdom of God, will produce good fruit. While many Gentiles will come from the east and the west to join Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God (8:11), the owner of the keys to that kingdom will be Peter (16:19), upon whom Jesus will build his assembly (16:18). According to Matthew, this change in leadership will take place when the Son of Man brings the kingdom of heaven to earth (cf. 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64) and Jesus' twelve disciples sit on twelve thrones as judges over the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28).

³⁷⁹ For the "kingdom" as a place into which people reside, enter into, and go from, see Mt 5:19-20; 7:21; 8:11-12; 11:11-12; 13:41-44. 52; 16:19; 18:1-4; 19:23-24; 20:21, 31; 23:13; 25:34; 26:29.

After Jesus gives his parable, Matthew adds, “when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parable, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowd because they held him to be a prophet” (21:45-46). Not only does this text confirm that the “vineyard tenants” are limited to “the chief priests and Pharisees,” the notice that they feared the crowd shows that Matthew distinguishes the general population of Israel from its leaders. The tenants, the chief priests and Pharisees, will be dispossessed of their leadership roles over Israel, but Israel itself will continue to produce its fruit.

Some have understood the Parable of the Vineyard to mean that Jesus takes away the kingdom of God from the entire people of Israel and replaces them with the Gentiles (cf. Mt 28:19).³⁸⁰ This reading is untenable since Matthew directs the parable against the chief priests and Pharisees, not the general population of Israel. The current leaders are the “tenants” (γεωργοῖς) who are replaced with “other tenants” (ἄλλοις γεωργοῖς)—that is, other leaders of the people.³⁸¹ The other tenants are the Jewish leaders of the Jesus movement, namely Peter—upon

³⁸⁰ See Trilling, *Israel*, 55-65; Gundry, *Matthew*, 600; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 623; Hare, *Persecution*, 153; idem., *Matthew*, 248-49; Jeremias, *Parables*, 51-63; Bruner, *Matthew*, 770; Martens, “Produce Fruit,” 158-62; Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 212; Osbourne, *Matthew*, 791; Saunders, *Matthew*, 220. Graham Stanton argues that the of Mt 21:43 marks the replacement of Israel with a “‘new people’ – in effect a ‘third race’ (*tertium genus*) over against both Jews and Gentiles.” Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 11-12; cf. Wesley G. Olmstead, “A Gospel for a New Nation: Once More, the ἔθνος of Matthew 21.43,” in Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willitts and Richard A. Burridge, eds., *Jesus, Matthew’s Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 115-32; idem., *Matthew’s Trilogy of Parables: The Nation, the Nations and the Reader in Matthew 21:28-22:14* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 109-17. While Olmstead [“Gospel,” 132] does not conclude that the Gentiles replace Israel, he sees Mt 21:43 as marking the “suspension of national privilege” for Israel.

³⁸¹ For the kingdom of God being given to new group of leaders, see, e.g., Levine, *Dimensions*, 206-15; Harrington, *Matthew*, 302-08; Saldarini, *Community*, 58-64; Overman, *Church and Community*, 299-304; Sim, *Matthew*, 148-49; Carter, *Matthew*, 429-30; Repschinski, *Controversy Stories*, 40-42; Turner, *Matthew*, 516-19; Talbert, *Matthew*, 252; cf. Morna D.

whom the ἐκκλησία is built (Mt 16:18)—and the rest of the disciples who, when the Son of Man returns, will “sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Mt 19:28).

The Vineyard Parable provides a concrete example of the care Matthew takes to separate the leaders from the people. Matthew condemns Israel’s leaders, but in keeping with the Gospel’s generally positive treatment of the “people,” the Vineyard Parable contains no condemnation of Israel as a whole. The reason that Matthew spares the vineyard from the destructive fate it receives in Isaiah is because (1) Matthew, despite the destruction of the Second Temple, sees Jews as a people continuing “to this day” (28:15), and (2) Jesus is cast out and killed as a ransom for the sins of the vineyard.

The idea for the son being “cast out” (ἐκβάλλω) of the vineyard may come, in part, from the fact that Isaiah 5 LXX, which includes the vineyard parable (5:1-7), contains ἐκβάλλω near the end of the chapter. After Isa 5:13 LXX concretizes the metaphorical destruction of the vineyard by saying that God’s people have become “captives” (αἰχμάλωτος), Isa 5:29 LXX states that Babylon will “cast out” (ἐκβαλεῖ) the people from their Land. While it is impossible to know for certain, the impetus for the son being “cast out” (ἐξέβαλον) in Matthew (which follows Mark) may be this reference to ἐκβάλλω in the wider context of Isaiah’s vineyard parable. If so, the Matthean logic would be that the individual is substituted for the whole people when he is cast out of the vineyard. The probability of a Matthean substitution of the son for the people becomes stronger in a comparison the Vineyard Parable with the targumic version of Isa 5:1-7. In this later iteration of the parable the entire people of Israel are “cast out” of the vineyard.

Matthew’s Vineyard Parable and the Targums to Isaiah and Jeremiah

Hooker, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* [BNTC] (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991), 276.

The targumic version of Isa 5:1-7 includes a further reference, absent in the Hebrew and Greek, to the people of Israel being “cast out” of the vineyard (IsaTg 5:6). A comparison of the Targum to Matthew’s picture of Jesus, the son, being “cast out” of the vineyard, yields glimpse at how Jesus functions as a ransom for many (20:28). Specifically, Matthew’s picture of the one son being cast out of the vineyard contrasts with the targumic picture of the whole people being cast out of the vineyard.

As with Isa 5:1-7 LXX, the beginning of the Aramaic translation of Isa 5:1-7 contains number of parallels to Matthew’s Vineyard parable:³⁸²

1 אמר נבייא אשבחיה כען לישראל דמתיל בכרמא זרעיה דאברהם רחמי תושבחת רחמי
לכרמיה עמי חביבי ישראל יהבית להון אחסנא בטור רם בארץ שמינא
2 וקדישהינון ויקרתינון וקיימתינון כמיצב גפן בחיירא ובנית מקדשי ביניהון ואף מדבחי יהבית לכפרא
על חטאיהון

1 The prophet said, “I will sing now for Israel, which is like a vineyard; the seed of Abraham my friend, my friend’s song about his vineyard. My people, my beloved, Israel: I gave them an inheritance on a high hill in a fertile land.
2 And I sanctified them and I honored them and I established them as the plant of a choice vine. And I built my sanctuary in their midst, and I even gave them my altar to atone for their sins.

³⁸² See Michel Hubaut, *La parabole des vigneronns* (Paris: Gabalda, 1976), 22-23, 77-79; Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977), 136-37; Hans-Josef Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese: in synopyischen Gleichnistexten* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), 306; Bruce Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 111-16; Chilton and Fleisher, *Targums*, 389; Craig A. Evans, “The Life of Jesus,” in Stanely E. Porter, ed., *A Handbook to the Exegesis of the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 465-66; idem., “How Septuagintal is Isa. 5:1-7 in Mark 12:1-9?” *Novum Testamentum* (2003): 105-110; Idem., *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), 111, 182-83; idem., “Jesus’ Dissimilarity from Second Temple Judaism and the Early Church,” in Robert B. Stewart and Gary R. Habermas, eds., *Memories of Jesus: A Critical Appraisal of James D. G. Dunn’s Jesus Remembered* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), 147-50; Johannes C. de Moor, “The Targumic Background of Mark 12:1-12: The Parable of the Wicked Tenants,” *JSJ* 29 (1998): 63-80; Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd Edition (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 330; Wim J.C. Weren, *Studies in Matthew’s Gospel: Literary Designs, Intertextuality, and Social Setting* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 201.

As Craig Evans notes, insofar as the Targum refers to “Israel, which is like a vineyard” (בכרמא ישראל דמתיל), the targumic Vineyard Song has been “parabolized” to the effect that “Israel may be likened to a parable about a vineyard.”³⁸³

In place of the Hebrew and Greek references to a “tower” and “wine vat,” the Targum describes cultic structures: “I built my sanctuary (מקדש) in their midst, and even gave them my altar (מדבח) to atone for their sins” (Isa Tg 5:2).³⁸⁴ The mention of Temple construction coheres with the Gospel incorporation of the Vineyard Parable into Jesus’ larger Temple discourse. Matthew 21:23 says that Jesus “entered the Temple [and] the chief priests and elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching.” Matthew reaffirms that the Vineyard Parable is directed, at least with reference to the chief priests, to a cultic audience. According to Mt 21:45, “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.” So, both Matthew and the Targum speak of their respective vineyards within

³⁸³ Evans, “How Septuagintal,” 107-08 (emphasis original); cf. de Moor, “Targumic Background,” 77.

³⁸⁴ The Dead Sea Scrolls contain what may be the earliest extant attestation of Isaiah’s vineyard being equated with the Jerusalem Temple. The fragmentary 4Q500, usually dated to the first half of the first century BCE, (for dating 4Q500, see George J. Brooke, “4Q500 1 and the Use of Scripture in the Parable of the Vineyard,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* Vol. 2, No. 3 (Nov., 1995): 268-294; Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 90-91) notes that the winepress of Isa 5:2 was “built of stones,” which could refer to the “altar of stones” in Deut 27:5. See Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 90-91. If this is the case, then according to this scroll, the winepress in Isaiah’s vineyard represents a sacrificial altar, so that the vineyard itself would be the Temple in which the altar resides. Rabbinic interpretation also makes the shift to cultic imagery, and it does so more explicitly. In its commentary on Isaiah’s Song of the Vineyard, the Tosefta states, “‘And he built a tower in the midst of it’—this is the sanctuary; ‘and hewed out a wine vat in it’—this is the altar” (*t. Sukk.* 3:15 cf. *t. Me’il* 1.16). The Tosefta was finalized two to three centuries after Matthew’s Gospel and its interpretation is attributed to Rabbi Yosé b. Halafta, who lived in the mid-second century CE. For more information on the Tosefta’s reading of Isaiah 5 and how it relates to the NT parable, see Evans, *Noncanonical Writings*, 183; Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 91-92. Also of interest is Origen’s *Commentary on Matthew* (c. 246 CE), which provides an allegorical reading of the NT parable that parallels early Jewish interpretations of Isaiah. Origen’s assertion that “the tower is the sanctuary, the press is the place of offerings” (*Comm. in Matt.* 17.6) may point to his contact with rabbis (or at least the rabbinic exegesis of Isa 5:1-2). See Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 98.

Temple contexts.³⁸⁵ A final similarity that scholars note is the references to “inheritance” in the Gospel and the Targum: just as the Targum refers to the vineyard as an “inheritance” (אִתְּסַנְתָּא), the tenants refer to the vineyard as the son’s “inheritance” (κληρονομίαν) in Mt 21:38 (cf. Mk 12:7; Mt 21:38; Lk 20:14).³⁸⁶ Thus, both the Targum and Matthew speak of a vineyard as an inheritance, with the Targum poetically referring to Temple functionaries and Matthew’s Jesus giving the Vineyard Parable in the Temple.

For all the similarities that scholars have found between the Vineyard parables in Matthew and Targum Isaiah, they have missed the most important linguistic parallel for understanding Matthew’s ransom Christology: whereas the people as a whole are “cast out” in the Targum, only Jesus is “cast out” in Matthew—the Matthean parable therefore points to the idea that Jesus will give his life as a ransom for many (20:28). The Targum to Isaiah 5:5-6 states,

I will tell you what I am about to do to my people... I will break down... their sanctuaries and they shall be for trampling. I will make them banished; they will not be helped and they will not be supported, and they will be cast out (מַטְלֵטְלִין) and forsaken.

After IsaTg 5:6 states that the people will be “cast out,” the following verse adds that this punishment comes because the people “multiply sins” (מַסְנֵן חַוְבֵּין) (IsaTg 5:7). In contrast to the targumic picture of the *people* being cast out because of their sins, Matthew states that the tenants seized the son “and cast him out (ἐξέβαλον)” (21:39). Because Matthew has already stated that Jesus will die as a ransom for many (20:28), we can see that 21:39 is a parabolic vision of how this ransom payment will be made: Jesus will give his life *in exchange* for the lives of the

³⁸⁵ See Bruce Chilton, *A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1984), 113-16; cf. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, “Jesus and Israel’s Scriptures,” in Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations and the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 304-06; Chilton and Flesher, *Targums*, 389; Gundry, *Use*, 44.

³⁸⁶ Cf. de Moor, “Targumic Background,” 77; Evans, “How Septuagintal,” 108.

people; rather than having the many cast out (as in the Targum), Matthew's Jesus gives himself as an individual ransom.

The Targum explicates that the "multiplied sins" of the people cause them to be "cast out" of the vineyard. In so doing, the Aramaic translation expands on an idea that is already in the LXX, though less pronounced. In the same chapter that contains Isaiah's Vineyard concludes with Babylon "casting out" the people from their Land. Babylon will "roar like a wild beast, and he shall cast out (ἐκβαλεῖ) and there shall be no one to deliver them" (Isa 5:29). In light of the Targum, it is likely that Matthew's Vineyard Parable is the allegorical foreshadowing of Jesus' substitutionary death as the means to save his people from their sins (1:21).

While this picture of Jesus as a ransom works on a soteriological level, from an historical perspective, Matthew's readers are aware that the Temple has been destroyed and some of the vineyard people were exiled after 70. Thus, the "son," Jesus, did not spare the "vineyard" from physical destruction. Matthew has already prepared the reader for the Temple's destruction (see Mt 21:1-21) and will describe that destruction (and the tribulation in Jerusalem that will come with it) in detail after the Vineyard Parable (23:37-24:28). However, Matthew does not claim that Jesus will save his people from physical harm; the claim is that he will save his people from their sins. The sins of those living after the destruction of the Temple are not responsible for the destruction of 70 CE because Jesus had already saved them from those sins. Matthew's message to the survivors of 70 is that they can be assured that God is not punishing them for sin, and that, in light of Jesus' ransom payment, they can know that their sins have been atoned for even without the Temple.

A further comparison between the Vineyard Parable and the Jeremiah Targum also shows that Matthew's description of Jesus being cast out contrasts with targumic descriptions of the

people as a whole. First, the Jeremiah Targum contains its own references to God’s vineyard-people being killed. The Hebrew and Greek readings of Jer 12:10a state, “Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard (כַּרְמִי/ἀμπελῶνά μου); they have trampled my portion (חֲלָקְתִּי/μερίδα).” The Targum reads, “Many kings have killed my people (עַמִּי); they have trampled my inheritance (אִדְחַסְנִתִּי).” The Targum dissolves the vineyard metaphor in favor of what the vineyard represents—the people of Israel. It also changes the original “portion” language to “inheritance” language, which is analogous to the description of the vineyard as an inheritance in both Matthew and the Isaiah Targum.³⁸⁷ This analogy shows that although the Jeremiah Targum replaces “vineyard” with “people,” the Aramaic translator still inserts “inheritance” language to maintain some of the original texts’ vineyard imagery.

The Gospel states that after the son is cast out of the vineyard, the tenants “killed [him]” (ἀπέκτειναν), just as the Targum states that kings have “killed” (קַטְלִי) God’s people. Thus, once again, what the Targum describes in collective terms, Matthew describes in singular terms with reference to Jesus. Matthew’s biblically informed reader expects that a vineyard parable would include the people being cast out and/or killed—Matthew overturns expectations when it is the son, not the people, who is cast out and killed. Yet, the original tenants *are* killed (21:41)—the son does not remove sin from those who cast him out of the vineyard. That the tenants are killed aligns with the fact that Jesus’ forgiving blood comes upon “all the people” (27:25), but not upon the leaders of those people. The scribes and Pharisees have the righteous blood of Israel’s martyrs upon them, for which they will be punished, but the people’s sins will be purged through Jesus’ blood.

³⁸⁷ Robert Hayward also links Jer 12:10 and Isa 5:1-7. See Robert Hayward, *The Targum of Jeremiah: Translated with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 87 n. 15.

The punishment of Matthew's vineyard tenants (the chief priests and Pharisees) coheres with the Targum's own presentation of wicked leaders being punished for "casting out" the people. The Targum to Jeremiah 23:2 reads, "Concerning the leaders who support my people: You have scattered my people and cast them out (וּטְלִיתִּיהֶמוֹן) and you have not sought them. Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your deeds." The Targum has God punishing Israel's leaders for casting out the people, and Mt 21:41 has the returned vineyard owner (God) avenging the death of his son by putting the tenants who cast him out to "a miserable death." The major difference between Matthew and the Targum is, once again, Matthew has the leaders cast out the son, rather than the people as in the Targum.

Thus, based on the similarities and differences between the cast out son in Matthew's Vineyard Parable and the people "cast out" in the Targums of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the NT parable emerges as an allusion to what Matthew will make explicit in the Passion Narrative: Jesus represents his people Israel, and takes on their sin as a substitute when he is cast out (crucified) and killed on the cross.

Jesus as a Symbol of Israel in the Passion Narrative

Jesus' exilic death, to which Matthew alludes in the Vineyard Parable, is made explicit in the Passion Narrative. Matthew interweaves implicit citations (quotations without formal introductions) and allusions (single biblical catchwords) to Israel's Scriptures throughout the Passion Narrative in order to present Jesus as a representative of biblical Israel in exile. Through intricate narrative patterning and metalepsis, Matthew positions Jesus as undergoing the punishment of the Temple's destruction, the city's devastation, and the peoples' exile at the hands of Babylon. Matthew offers the figure of Jesus as a model of resilience in the face of

destruction (mimetic symbol) and a banner under which present Israel can come together as God's forgiven, covenant people (declarative symbol).

Jesus' Cup in Gethsemane: Lam 2:13 and 4:18

Matthew's many allusions to the destruction of the exile of biblical Israel begin when Jesus is praying in Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46). The content of Jesus' prayer and his words immediately following it resonate with verses from Lamentations that allude to Israel's capture by the Babylonians. While Matthew does not make explicit use of Lamentations in 26:36-46, citations become increasingly prominent in Mt 26-27.

In Gethsemane, Jesus asks, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup (ποτήριον) pass from me" (Mt 26:39).³⁸⁸ In the prayer's immediate context, the cup is indicative of Jesus' internal struggle, but it also alludes to his impending suffering and death (cf. Mt 20:22-23; 26:42). In light of the broader context of the Septuagint, the "cup" language refers to Jerusalem's destruction at the hands of Babylon. Mourning a Jerusalem razed by the Babylonians, Lamentations asks, "What shall I witness to you, or to what shall I compare you, daughter of Jerusalem? Who shall save and comfort you, virgin daughter of Zion? For the cup (ποτήριον) of your destruction is enlarged, who will heal you?" (Lam 2:13 LXX). In Lamentations, the cup of destruction is a euphemism for the devastation of Jerusalem and the affliction of its people at

³⁸⁸ For the connection between the exilic and Matthean "cups" see Barbara and Kurt Aland, et al., eds., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*. 27th edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 792; M. Eugene Boring, "The Gospel of Matthew: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in Leander E. Keck, et al, eds., *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VIII: New Testament Articles, Matthew, Mark* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 398; Harrington, *Matthew*, 288, 373.

Babylon’s hands.³⁸⁹ For Matthew, the questions in Lam 2:13—“who shall save and comfort you?” and “who will heal you?”—foreshadow Jesus asking God to save him from his own cup of destruction. The unvoiced answers in both Lamentations in Matthew are also the same: no one will save Jerusalem, and God will not save Jesus by allowing this cup to pass from him. A metaleptic reading of both Lam 2:13 reinforces the idea that the events that are about to befall Jesus will parallel Israel’s suffering under Babylon.

Jesus’ words immediately after his prayer support the idea that Matthew understands Jesus’ Passion in terms of the Babylonian exile. After divine silence implicitly confirms that it is God’s “will” (θέλω; Mt 26:39) that Jesus drink from his cup, he declares, “See, the hour has drawn near (ἤγγικεν ἡ ὥρα), and the Son of Man is handed over into the hands of sinners (παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀμαρτωλῶν)” (Mt 26:45). The phrase “the hour has drawn near” echoes Lam 4:18b LXX, in which the inhabitants of Jerusalem cry, “Our time has drawn near (ἤγγικεν ὁ καιρὸς ἡμῶν); our days are fulfilled; our time has come.” The Greek of Mt 26:45a aligns more closely with Lam 4:18 LXX than does the Markan parallel (Mk 14:41), which states that Jesus’ hour “has come” (ἦλθεν), rather than “has drawn near” (ἤγγικεν).

In alluding to Lam 4:18 LXX, Matthew also employs metalepsis. The verses following the allusion describe the nations pursuing the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and even refer to the “anointed” (χριστὸς) of the Lord: “Our pursuers were swifter than eagles of the sky; they flew on the mountains, in the wilderness they laid wait for us. The breath of our nostrils, anointed of the Lord (מִשִּׁיחַ יְהוָה / χριστὸς κυρίου), was taken in their snares, of whom we said, ‘In his shadow we shall live among the nations (בְּיַיְנוּ / ἔθνεσι)’ (4:19-20). The broader context of Matthew’s allusion to Lam 4:18 anticipates the crowd that comes to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus. Nor would

³⁸⁹ This motif recurs throughout the Bible. See Deut 32:1; Ps 11:6; 16:5; 75:9; Isa 51:17, 21-23; Jer 25:15-29; Lam 4:21; Ezek 23:31-34; Zech 12:2 cf. Rev 14:10; 16:19; 17:4; 18:6.

the evangelist have objected to readers associating Jesus with the enigmatic “anointed of the Lord” who was taken into snares. Just as the “anointed” (χριστὸς) was taken in the Babylonian exile, so too will Matthew’s Jesus, who is called “Christ” (χριστὸς; Mt 1:16), be taken by the crowd that has come to arrest him (see 26:47).

The effect of such metaleptic readings of Matthew’s allusions is to present Jesus as an individual representative of biblical Israel just before his own exile. Interestingly, Matthew does this by drawing on Lamentations—a text that describes destruction *after* Israel’s exile. Thus, Matthew shifts the timeline of the master commemorative narrative. The evangelist needs to do this in order to signal to the reader that what is about to happen to Jesus will end in the same destruction that Jerusalem saw in 586 BCE. This intertextual presentation alerts Matthew’s reader that Jesus’ death will rerun the major punishment for sin in Israel’s history. Matthew presents Jesus as suffering as a righteous representative of biblical Israel. Matthew’s reader, then, is able to see Jesus as a participant in Israel’s long history of suffering; through Jesus, Matthew underscores suffering as an identity marker of the people of God. Matthew’s reader, then, can view Jesus as both a declarative symbol of a group that has undergone trials since the biblical period, and a mimetic symbol of fidelity in the midst of adversity.

Jesus’ Arrest and Isa 5:25

Matthew’s allusions to biblical Israel’s destruction at the hands of the Babylonians expand into implicit citations of Scripture when the crowd arrests Jesus in Gethsemane. Mt 26:50b is an implicit citation of Isa 5:25 LXX, by which the Gospel connects Jesus’ arrest to God’s initial strike against Israel. Matthew states that the crowd that comes with Judas to arrest Jesus “laid hands on him and seized him” (Mt 26:50b//Mk 14:46). This wording ties Jesus’

experience to that of Israel as depicted in Isaiah 5 LXX. The prophet declares that, because of Israel's sins, God became angry with his people and "he laid his hand upon them and struck them" (Isa 5:25a LXX). A comparison of the Greek shows the shared language between the two verses, as well as the nearly identical syntax:

Isa 5:25 ἐπέβαλεν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπ' αὐτούς καὶ ἐπάταξεν αὐτούς

Mt 26:50 ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐκράτησαν αὐτόν

The fact that Matthew has already drawn on Isaiah 5 in the Vineyard Parable, supports the thesis that the evangelist implicitly cites Isaiah 5 again here. Matthew compares God's initial blow against Jerusalem with Jesus' arrest and thereby presents him as a symbol of Israel besieged by Babylon.³⁹⁰

In the immediate context of Isa 5:25, the reader can see that God's laying a hand on Israel was the first step in a process that would culminate in Babylon casting the people out of their Land:

Therefore, as the tongue of fire devours the stubble, and as dry grass sinks down in the flame, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom go up like dust. For they have rejected the instruction of the Lord of hosts.... Therefore, the Lord of hosts was greatly angry with his people, and he laid his hand upon them and struck them.... He will raise a signal for the nations far away, and hiss for them from the ends of the earth; and behold, they come very quickly.... Their roaring is like a lion, like young lions they draw close; and he shall seize, and roar like a wild beast, and he shall cast out (ἐκβαλεῖ) and there shall be no one to deliver them. (Isa 5:24-26, 29)

In the same chapter that opens with the destruction of the "vineyard" (Isa 5:1-7), Isaiah uses more imagery from nature to describe the people's demise; Israel becomes "stubble" and

³⁹⁰ Huzienga sees Mt 26:50 as an allusion to Genesis 22:12 LXX, when an angel of the Lord tells Abraham, "Do not lay your hand on the child" (μὴ ἐπιβάλης τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ τὸ παιδάριον). Without dismissing the possibility of a Matthean allusion to the Akedah, Mt 26:50's relationship with Isaiah 5:25 is closer than that of Gen 22:12, both linguistically and syntactically. Huzienga also notes that the angel says, "Do *not* lay you hand on the child," which weakens the connection to Jesus' captors who *do* lay their hands on him. Huzienga does observe that, ultimately, "Jesus grants permission" to lay hands on him. See Huzienga, *New Isaac*, 251-51, 256-57.

“grass” that is consumed in the “fire” of captivity and exile. The fact that Matthew metaleptically recalls the broader context of Isa 5:25 reaffirms Jesus’ role as an exile who is “cast out” (ἐξέβαλον; 21:39) as a ransom for the people. The context of Isaiah 5 as a whole links the predictive illustration of the son being “cast out” in the Vineyard Parable (Mt 21:39) with the actual casting out of Jesus at his crucifixion. In implicitly citing Isa 5:25, Matthew tells the contextually attentive reader that at the moment the crowd lays its hands on Jesus, a process of judgment and abuse begins that will culminate in an exile, first to the nations (i.e., the Romans) and then to the cross.

Since it is God who lays hands on Israel according to Isaiah, Matthew also alludes to God as the one who orchestrates Jesus’ captivity. Although a number of actors contribute to Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion, Matthew has already noted that “it is necessary” (δεῖ) that Jesus goes to Jerusalem to die (Mt 16:21), and Jesus has just petitioned God to let this cup pass from him (Mt 26:39). The parallel between Mt 26:50 and Isa 5:25 suggests that, while the arresting party lays hands on Jesus, it is actually God who seizes him in order to accomplish a salvific purpose (cf. Rom 4:25). The allusion to Isa 5:25 makes sense of the theology of Mt 26:50: using Babylon as a tool, God laid a hand on biblical Israel in order to exile them; now the same God, through the agency of the arresting crowd, lays hands on Jesus in order to exile him. For Jesus to save his people from their sins, he must undergo the punishment of exile—the ultimate punishment for collective sin according to Israel’s Scriptures.

Jesus’ Trial and Lam 1:19

During Jesus’ trial at the house of Caiaphas (Mt 26:57-68), Matthew cites Lam 1:19 in order to draw a parallel between the priests and elders at the time of the Babylonian destruction and the chief priests and elders who preside over Jesus’ interrogation. According to Mt 26:59b-

60a, “the chief priests and the elders and the whole Sanhedrin sought false testimony against Jesus, to put him to death, but found none.” Similarly, Lam 1:19a LXX reads, “My priests and my elders failed in the city while they sought food in order to restore their lives, but found none.” The similarities in language and syntax between these two verses support the thesis that Matthew implicitly cites Lamentations:

Lam 1:19b οἱ ἱερεῖς μου καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροί μου ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐξέλιπον ὅτι ἐζήτησαν βρώσιν αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἐπιστρέψωσιν ψυχὰς αὐτῶν καὶ οὐχ εὔρον

Mt 26:59a-60b οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι καὶ τὸ συνέδριον ὅλον ἐζήτουν ψευδομαρτυρίαν κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὅπως αὐτὸν θανατώσωσιν καὶ οὐχ εὔρον

Mt 26:59-60 echoes Lam 1:19 LXX more strongly than its Markan parallel (Mk 14:55), which reads, “And the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin sought testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but found none (οἱ δὲ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ ὅλον τὸ συνέδριον ἐζήτουν κατὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ μαρτυρίαν εἰς τὸ θανατώσαι αὐτόν καὶ οὐχ ἠῦρισκον).” Matthew includes a reference to οἱ πρεσβύτεροι (the elders), which is found in Lam 1:19 but that Mark lacks. Matthew also uses the aorist subjunctive θανατώσωσιν (to put to death), which is the exact inverse of Lamentation’s aorist subjunctive ἐπιστρέψωσιν (to restore [to life]). Finally, Matthew’s concluding phrase, καὶ οὐχ εὔρον, replicates Lam 1:19 verbatim, whereas Mk 14:55 diverges from Septuagint’s grammar in using ἠῦρισκον rather than εὔρον. These changes to Mark’s text reflect Matthew’s intentional appeal to Lam 1:19.

Both Mt 26:59-60 and Lam 1:19 present priests and elders seeking something that would make the difference between life and death, but in both cases, nothing is found: the priests and elders of Lamentations find no food to restore their lives, whereas Matthew’s chief priests and elders find no testimony to warrant Jesus’ death. Matthew’s citation of Lam 1:19 both reinforces the Gospel’s antipathy towards Jerusalem’s leaders and recalls Lamentations’ claim that the city

and people of Zion are destroyed because of “the iniquities of her priests, who shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of her” (Lam 4:13).

When one reads Matthew’s citation metaleptically—with the broader context of Lamentations in view—one sees that Lam 1:19 is a personified Zion’s recollection of a time before exile. This recollection blames Israel’s captivity on Zion’s “lovers”—that is, the corrupt priests and elders. The intertextual connection reinforces Matthew’s assertion the high priests and elders are, in part, responsible for Jesus’ crucifixion:

Zion has stretched out her hand; there is none to comfort her. The Lord has commanded Jacob; his oppressors have surrounded him.... The Lord is righteous, disobeyed his mouth; so hear, all the people (πάντες οἱ λαοί), and behold my grief: my young women and my young men have gone into captivity. I called my lovers, but they deceived me. My priests and my elders failed in the city while they sought food to restore their lives, but they found none. (Lam 1:17-19 LXX)

The context of Lam 1:19 exhorts “all the people” to see Zion’s grief as well as to note the deception of her the priests and elders. In metaleptically alluding to this context, Matthew reminds the reader that Jesus is being oppressed for the sake of “all the people” who called for his blood (27:25). Matthew also shows that, like Zion, there is “none to comfort” Jesus during his trial. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus had told his disciples that they would be delivered “to courts” and “dragged before governors and kings” for his sake (10:16-19): Matthew depicts Jesus as a mimetic symbol for his followers to emulate when they, too, stand trial.

Peter’s Denial and Isa 22:4

Equipped with the knowledge that Matthew links Jesus’ arrest with Israel’s captivity via Isa 5:25, the reader can identify further parallels with Israel’s exile in Isaiah during Jesus’ trial. Peter’s emotional reaction to his triple denial of Jesus alludes to Isaiah’s tears when he sees Babylon breach Israel’s borders. While Jesus is being interrogated, people question Peter as to

his affiliation with the accused, and each time he denies that he is Jesus' disciple (Mt 26:69-74). After the third denial, "Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly (ἐκλαυσειν πικρῶς)" (Mt 26:75). One of two places in the LXX where the words κλαίω and πικρῶς appear in tandem is Isa 22:4 (cf. 33:7), which describes bitter weeping at the captivity of God's people. Thus, Peter's reaction while Jesus is captive to the Sanhedrin recalls the reaction to Jerusalem being taken captive by the Babylonians.

Speaking of the inhabitants of Zion, Isaiah laments, "All your princes have fled, and [your] captives are tightly bound, and the mighty in your have fled far away. Therefore, I said: 'Leave me alone, I will weep bitterly (πικρῶς κλαύσομαι); do not labor to comfort me for the destruction of the daughter of my people'" (Isa 22:4 LXX). Whereas the Synoptic parallel to Mt 27:25 in Mk 14:72 states that Peter "broke down, weeping" (ἐπιβαλὼν ἔκλαιεν), Matthew's specification that Peter "wept bitterly" marks an effort to tie Jesus' trial to Israel's captivity more tightly than does Mark (cf. Lk 22:62). In attending to the whole of Isa 22:4, beyond the two words Matthew applies to Peter, the reader sees that Jesus is recapitulating biblical Israel's captivity. Other scholars have also proposed the connection between Isa 22:4 and Mt 27:25, but they have not provided an explanation for what the connection contributes to Matthew's narrative.³⁹¹ A metaleptic reading of Matthew's allusion is the key to understanding it as a reference to Jesus' captivity, which recapitulates Israel's captivity to Babylon. Insofar as Peter's weeping points to the earlier weeping for Jerusalem—the "daughter of my people" (22:4) and the

³⁹¹ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3.550; Donald Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as a Test Case," in C. M. Tuckett, ed., *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 111; Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 93.

“covering of Judah” (22:8)—Jesus’ experience encapsulates Jerusalem’s destruction in 586 BCE. Jesus is a mimetic symbol of Zion “tightly bound,” which provides Matthew’s readers with a template for suffering.

Jesus Exiled to the Romans and 2 Chron 36

Immediately after Peter’s denial in Mt 26:75, the chief priests and elders hand Jesus over to Pilate, which marks the beginning of Jesus’ exile among the Gentiles. Matthew states, “When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people... bound (δήσαντες) [Jesus] and carried him away (ἀπήγαγον) and handed him over (παρέδωκαν) to Pilate the governor” (Mt 27:1-2). Each of the verbs applied to Jesus in 27:2 (“bound,” “carried away,” and “handed over”) also appear in 2 Chronicles 36 to describe the exiles of king Jechoiakim and the Temple vessels, as well as the deaths of the Jerusalemites:

Against [king Jechoiakim] came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and bound (ἔδησεν) him in chains to take him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried away (ἀπήνεγκεν) part of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon and put them in his Temple in Babylon.... And [the Lord] brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, and he killed their young men in the house of his sanctuary, and he did not spare Zedekiah, and had no mercy on their young women, and they led away their old men; [the Lord] handed over (παρέδωκεν) all into their hands. (2 Chron 36:6-7, 17)

In applying to Jesus all the verbs that the Chronicler applies to the king, the Temple vessels, and the people of Jerusalem, Matthew ensures that Jesus experiences all of the destructive acts of both Nebuchadnezzar and the Lord.

By stating that the chief priests and elders hand Jesus over to Pilate, Matthew compares Israel’s leaders first to Nebuchadnezzar and then to God. Matthew has already anticipated Jesus being “handed over into the hands of human beings” (παραδίδοσθαι εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων; Mt 17:22 cf. 26:45). This language echoes the moment when all the people of Jerusalem were “handed over into the hands (παρέδωκεν ἐν χερσίν)” of the Babylonians (2 Chron 36:17).

However, while it was the Gentile Nebuchadnezzar who bound the king and carried away the Temple vessels, Matthew has the Jewish “chief priests and elders of the people” bind Jesus and carry him away (27:1-2). Initially, Matthew puts the Jewish leaders in the place of Nebuchadnezzar. When the leaders hand Jesus over to Pilate, they, like the Jewish crowd who laid hands on Jesus to arrest him (26:50), are now recapitulating divine action when God “handed over all [of Israel] into their [the Babylonians’] hands” (τὰ πάντα παρέδωκεν ἐν χερσὶν αὐτῶν; 2 Chron 36:17). Thus, while Matthew villainizes the chief priests and scribes to the point of equating them with Nebuchadnezzar, the evangelist also suggests that they are carrying out God’s will in delivering Jesus to Pilate.

Jesus as the Temple and Lam 2:15

Once Jesus is nailed to the cross, Mt 27:39 implicitly cites Lam 2:15 LXX, which connects Jesus’ crucifixion with the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple.³⁹² Mt 27:39 states, “And those who passed by (οἱ παραπορευόμενοι) derided him, wagging their heads ((κινουντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν).” Speaking of the recently destroyed city, Lam 2:15a LXX states, “All those who pass by (οἱ παραπορευόμενοι)... have hissed and wagged their heads (ἐκίνησαν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν) at the daughter of Jerusalem.” The Matthean verse replicates the substantive phrase οἱ παραπορευόμενοι (“those who pass by”) in Lam 2:15 and only diverges from the Septuagint in its present, rather than past, tense reference to people “wagging their heads.” This intertextual

³⁹² Several scholars have noticed this implicit citation. See David M. Moffitt, “Righteous Blood, Matthew’s Passion Narrative, and the Temple’s Destruction: Lamentations as a Matthean Intertext,” in *JBL* 125, no. 2 (2006): 299-320; Susan L. Graham, “A Strange Salvation: Intertextual Allusion in Mt 27, 39-44,” in C. M. Tuckett, ed., *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 501-11, esp. 504; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:618; Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthaean Redaction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 204; Boring, *Matthew*, 491; Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983), 258; NA²⁷, 795.

reference continues when Jesus' mockers tell him, "You who would destroy the Temple (τὸν ναὸν) and rebuild it in three days: save yourself" (Mt 27:40).

In light of Matthew's citation of Lam 2:15, Michael Knowles concludes, "just as Lam. 2.15 announced the mocking of 'the daughter of Jerusalem' because of the ruin wrought by false prophets in her midst (Lam. 2.14), so by means of this allusion Matthew highlights the mocking of Jesus."³⁹³ In claiming that Jesus is the one "who would destroy the Temple," the mockers accuse him of plotting what the Babylonians accomplished in 586 BCE, and what the Romans will also accomplish in roughly forty years. There is irony in the mockers accusing Jesus of wanting to destroy the Temple at the very moment he, like the Temple, is being destroyed as a result of the peoples' sins.

A metaleptic reading of Matthew's citation of Lam 2:15 reveals an explicit reference to the destruction of the Temple in Lam 2:7: "The Lord has rejected his altar, cast off his sanctuary; he has broken the wall of [Jerusalem's] palaces; they [those who destroyed the Temple] have uttered their voice in the house of the Lord as on a feast day" (cf. Lam 2:20).³⁹⁴ The Lord rejected his altar, which led to the sacking of Jerusalem and the exile of its people, and God has also abandoned Jesus, which leads to his crucifixion and death. Matthew confirms that this is the case when Jesus, quoting Ps 22[21 LXX]:1, cries from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46). In his exile on Golgotha, Jesus has been forsaken, just as God forsook the first Temple when the Babylonians razed it. Yet, because Jesus is greater than the Temple that was desolate for seventy years, he will reemerge from the grave after only three days. On the cross, Jesus is a symbol of the Temple destroyed, but at his resurrection he will

³⁹³ Knowles, *Jeremiah*, 204; cf. Moffitt, "Bloodshed," 300.

³⁹⁴ On this Temple context for the Matthean citation, see Moffitt, "Bloodshed," 311-12.

prove to be a stronger and more permanent symbol than the Temple. However, for now, Jesus' resurrection will have to wait; as Matthew's Passion Narrative comes to a close, Jesus-as-people has already been taken captive, Jesus-as-Jerusalem has been made desolate, and as a symbol of the Temple, Jesus has been destroyed.

Jesus' Death as the End of Exile

Jesus' death marks the end of his exile, and Matthew signals the end of exile through further allusions to Isaiah. At the end of the Passion Narrative Matthew records that, when Jesus died, "the earth shook (ἡ γῆ ἐσεισθη), and the rocks were split (πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν)" (27:50-51). According to Isaiah, the shaking of the earth is associated with the punishment of Babylon for having taken God's people into exile.³⁹⁵ When God pours out divine wrath on the Babylonians, it will be so severe that creation itself will feel the repercussions: "For the heavens shall be enraged, and the earth shall be shaken (ἡ γῆ σεισθήσεται) from her foundation because of the fierce anger of the Lord of hosts, in the day in which his wrath shall come" (Isa 13:13 LXX cf. 24:20). Jeremiah corroborates Isaiah's claim: "For at the sound of the taking of Babylon the earth shall shake (σεισθήσεται ἡ γῆ), and a cry shall be heard among the nations" (Jer 27:46 LXX). When Matthew's allusions are read metaleptically, in the context of both Isaiah and Jeremiah, the verses that describe the shaking of the earth refer to the upcoming defeat of Babylon, which precedes the return of the exiles. Therefore, since Jesus has been in exile between the time when Jesus enters the Roman praetorium and his dies, Matthew mentions the shaking of the earth to signal the end of Jesus' exile. When Jesus dies the captivity of exile is over.

³⁹⁵ Allison also reads the cataclysmic events surrounding the death of Jesus in Matthew vis-à-vis earlier passages that refer to exile (Amos 8:9-10) and its end (Ezek 37:12). However, he does not describe Jesus' death as being a parallel event to Israel's exile. See Allison, *New Moses*, 262.

Yet, this is not the end of the story. The splitting of the rocks after Jesus' death not only supports the claim that Jesus' exile is over, but that Jesus is already on his way back to the Land via his resurrection. A similar splitting of the rocks occurs in Isaiah to inaugurate Israel's return from Babylon. Speaking of the Babylonian exiles, Isa 48:21 LXX states, "And if they shall thirst, [God] shall lead them through the desert; he shall bring forth water to them out of the rock: the rock shall be split (σχισθήσεται πέτρα) and the water shall flow forth, and my people shall drink." Matthew echoes Isaiah by stating that the rocks were split (πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν)" at the moment of Jesus' death (27:51). metaleptic reading of Isa 48:21 establishes the context of the exodus from Babylon, which recapitulates the exodus from Egypt:

Go out from Babylon, you who flee from the Chaldeans! Utter aloud a voice of joy, proclaim it to the end of the earth. Say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!" And if they thirst, he shall lead them through the desert; he shall bring forth water to them out of the rock: the rock shall be split and the water shall flow forth and my people shall drink. (Isa 48:20-21 LXX)

Isa 48:20-21 describes the journey from Babylon to Israel—the interim period between captivity and return to the Land. Thus, Matthew signals to the reader that the period that Jesus will be dead and in his tomb is the interim period between his exile and return—that is, his resurrection. When Jesus is raised from the dead three days after his death on the cross, Matthew reveals Jesus' triumphant return to the land of the living. Thus, in Jesus' passion and resurrection, Matthew recapitulates the whole of biblical Israel's experience.

Conclusion

Both the Vineyard Parable (21:33-46) and the Passion Narrative (26-27) portray Jesus experiencing all the punishments that biblical Israel underwent in exile. In Matthew's parable, the "son" (Jesus) is cast out of the vineyard and killed (21:39). Similarly, the Targums of Isaiah and Jeremiah contain stories about vineyards in which the people as a whole are cast out. Thus, a

reading of the Targums helps the reader of Matthew to identify Jesus as a substitute for the people as a whole; Matthew's parable foreshadows Jesus taking on Israel's collective sins in order to save his people from their sins. Matthew expands on this parabolic picture in the Passion Narrative, in which Jesus takes on the sin that caused Israel's exile in the biblical period: the Babylonians exile the people, sack Jerusalem, and destroy the Temple because of Israel's sins, and Jesus receives the punishments for sin corporate Israel once experienced. Matthew incorporates citations and allusions from Israel's Scriptures, primarily from Lamentations and Isaiah, to depict Jesus as recapitulating biblical Israel as a symbol for Matthew's readers.

In the Passion Narrative, Jesus functions as a mimetic symbol. First, in Gethsemane Jesus is a mimetic symbol of fidelity to God's purposes even in the midst of suffering. Moreover, when Jesus goes before the Sanhedrin, he serves as a template for those of his follower who will also find themselves being tried in courts (10:17-18). Jesus is also a declarative symbol of Israel's historical suffering throughout the Passion Narrative. Insofar as Jesus embodies biblical Israel in captivity and exile, Matthew presents him as a symbol that defines a collective identity marked by suffering. However, when Jesus dies on the cross, Matthew signals to Gospel readers that Jesus' exile is over and that God will vindicate Jesus through his resurrection—that is, his “return” to the Land. In this way, Matthew's readers can know that God will also reward them after their own suffering. Indeed, Jesus himself clarifies to his disciples, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (5:10).

Chapter VII. ADAM AND THE PATRIARCHS AS SYMBOLS OF ISRAEL IN *GENESIS RABBAH*

Like Matthew, *Genesis Rabbah* presents individuals who symbolize biblical Israel. These representatives of biblical Israel also provide symbols for rabbinic Israel. The rabbis read the stories of Adam (19:9), Jacob (68:13), and Jacob's sons (92:3) alongside Israel's story throughout the rest of the canon. According to the *Genesis Rabbah*, Jewish life under Christian Rome is part of a lengthy historical pattern of subjugation and restoration that is also reflected in the lives of the earliest biblical characters. *Genesis Rabbah* presents both positive mimetic symbols that offer images of endurance and trust in God should be emulated as well as negative mimetic symbols whose sinful behavior should be eschewed. More, the symbols are all declarative symbols that highlight suffering but also promise and redemption as the heritage of Israel. The rabbis present Adam, Jacob, and Jacob's sons in much the same way that Matthew portrays Jesus: the authors build mimetic and declarative symbols with reference to Israel's Scriptures. A main difference, however, is that while Matthew has Jesus suffering *for* Israel, the rabbis see Adam and the patriarchs as suffering *with* Israel. The rabbis' symbols provide templates for how they, as a collective, can endure under sin and slavery.

Adam as a Symbol of Israel: Gen. R. 19:9

Gen. R. 19:9 uses Scripture to juxtapose Adam's experiences in, and expulsion from, the Garden of Eden with Israel's captivity in, and exile from, their Land. The midrash touches on several aspects of Adam's story in Genesis 2-3, including his brief tenure in the Garden, his

transgressing God's command, and his expulsion from Eden.³⁹⁶ Through scriptural juxtapositions, *Genesis Rabbah* presents Adam as a symbol of biblical Israel that provides a template for rabbinic Israel entangled in sin. Adam stands as a negative mimetic symbol whose behavior should not be emulated and whose poor choices remind the rabbis of how Israel became trapped to sin and foreign powers in the first place. This first example of a rabbinic symbol works in the opposite direction of Matthew's Jesus-symbol: while Matthew's Jesus takes on exile in order to save his people from their sins, *Genesis Rabbah*'s Adam prefigures sin and exile and sets a negative precedent for Israel going forward. To use Paden's distinction between the form vs. content of religious worlds, Adam and Jesus are alike in their symbolic form, but their symbolic contents are quite different. Still, in the midst of their treatment of Adam as a negative mimetic symbol, the rabbis are also able to allude, through metalepsis, to aspects of Israel's history that elicit the positive values of fidelity to commandments, repentance, and hope that will make life under Gentile powers more bearable.

³⁹⁶ For direct references to Adam's "sin" (חטא) in *Genesis Rabbah*, see Gen. R. 8:11; 12:6; 14:3, 6; 15:7; 16:6; 19:7; 22:11; 25:2 cf. 20:11; 21:1, 4; 24:6; 27:3. The rabbis refer to Adam's sin even though חטא does not appear in Genesis 1-3. For a discussion of Adam's sin in *Genesis Rabbah* see Hanneke Reuling, *After Eden: Church Fathers and Rabbis on Genesis 3:16-21* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 261-77. For broader studies of Adam in *Genesis Rabbah*, see Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters between Jewish and Christian Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 39-58; Hector M. Patmore, *Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Interpretation of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 16-40; Anna Tzvetkova-Glasser, *Pentateuchauslegung bei Origenes und den frühen Rabbinen* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), 90-125; Hanneke Reuling, "The Christian and Rabbinic Adam: Genesis Rabbah and Patristic Exegesis of Gen 3:17-19," in Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, eds., *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 63-74; idem., *After Eden*, 221-78; Gabrielle Oberhänsli-Widmer, *Biblische Figuren in der rabbinischen Literatur: Gleichnisse und Bilder zu Adam, Noah und Abraham im Midrasch Bereschit Rabba* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998), 125-200; Gerald J. Blidstein, *In the Rabbis' Garden: Adam and Eve in the Midrash* (Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1997); Andrew J. Busch, *The Rabbinic Image of Adam and Eve* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1994).

All of the midrashic juxtapositions in *Gen. R.* 19:9 reflect rabbinic metalepsis. This rabbinic metalepsis shows that the rabbis are not atomistic in their biblical exegesis. None of the verses in the passage is taken out of context; rather, the original context of each of the verses is required for seeing the narrative pattern that the rabbis build between Adam and Israel. *Gen. R.* 19:9 describes both Adam and Israel receiving commandments, transgressing them, and being driven out because of their transgressions. The text reads,

כת' והמה כאדם עברו ברית וגו' המה כאדם הראשון מה אדם הראשון הכנסתיו לגן עדן וציויתיו ועבר על ציוויי ודנתי אותו בשילוחים ובגירושין וקוננתי עליו איכה הכנסתיו לגן עדן דכת' ויקח יי אלהים את האדם ויניחהו בגן עדן וציויתיו ויצו יי אלהים וגו' ועבר על ציוויי מגן העץ אשר ציויתך ודנתי אותו בשילוחים וישלחהו יי אלהים מגן עדן ודנתי אותו בגירושין ויגרש את האדם קוננתי עליו איכה ויאמר לו איכה איכה כת' אף בניו הכנסתים לארץ ישראל ואביא אתכם אל ארץ הכרמל ציויתים ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל צו את בני ישראל עברו על ציוויי וכל ישראל עברו על תורתך דנתים בשילוחים שלח מעל פני ויצאו בגירושין מביתי אנרשם וקוננתי עליהם איכה איכה ישבה בדר

It is written, “They, like a man, have transgressed the covenant, etc.” (Hos 6:7). “They, like a man,” like the first man [Adam]. What [about] the first man?

Just as I led him into the Garden of Eden and commanded him, and he transgressed my command, and I punished him by sending out and driving out, and mourned over him, “How?”—I led him into the Garden of Eden as it is written, “And the Lord took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden” (Gen 2:15); and I commanded him, “And the Lord God commanded,” etc. (2:16); and he transgressed my command, “Have you eaten of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?” (3:11). And I punished him by sending out: “Therefore, the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden” (3:23); and I punished him by driving out: “So he drove out the human” (3:24). I mourned over him, “How?”—“And he said to him, “Where are you?” (אֵיכָה) (Gen 3:9)—“How” (אֵיכָה) is written.

So [also] I led his children into the Land of Israel: “And I brought you into a land of fruitful fields” (Jer 2:7); I commanded them: “And you shall command the children of Israel” (Exod 27:20), “Command the children of Israel” (Lev 24:2); but they transgressed my command: “Indeed, all Israel has transgressed your Torah” (Dan 9:11); I punished by sending them away: “Send them out of my sight, and let them go” (Jer 15:1); by driving them out: “From my house I will drive them out” (Hos 9:15); and I mourned over them, “How?”: “How alone the city sits” (Lam 1:1).³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ Parallels to *Genesis Rabbah* 19:9 appear in *Lam. R.* proem 4 and *PRK* 15:1; cf. *Yalk.* I § 26. The Targum to Lamentations 1:1 similarly equates the exiles of the first humans and Israel, and 4Q167: 7-8 may also reflect this tradition: “[Like Adam] they broke the covenant... Interpretation: [...] they abandoned God and followed the laws of [...]” The Babylonian Talmud also cites Hos 6:7 with reference to Adam (*b. Sanh.* 38a).

The exegetical starting point for this passage is a wordplay on God’s question to Adam in Gen 3:9: “Where are you?” (אַיִנְךָ). In reading the question as “How?” (אֵיךָ), the midrash links God’s question to Adam in Gen 3:9 to Israel’s lament in Lam 1:1.³⁹⁸ Through this wordplay, the rabbinic commentator superficially imposes a new word and meaning onto Genesis.³⁹⁹ While this connection between Genesis and Lamentations is the product of midrashic manipulation, the rest of the passage includes strong linguistic and thematic parallels between Adam and Israel inherent to the Bible itself—that is, the midrash draws out what is already present in the biblical text.⁴⁰⁰

Genesis Rabbah 19:9 draws its initial parallel between Gen 2:15a and Jer 2:7a, which describe Adam and Israel being placed into Eden and the Land, respectively:

ויקח יהוה אלהים את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן
And the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden. (Gen 2:15a)

ואביא אתכם אל ארץ הכרמל

³⁹⁸ For brief treatments of this midrash, see Reuling, *After Eden*, 269; Oberhänsli-Widmer, *Bibliche Figuren*, 149-52; Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1-3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 6-7; Gary A. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 15-16, 197; Neusner, *Confronting Creation*, 103-05. Also see Neusner’s comments on this tradition in *PRK* and *Lam. R.*, respectively, in Jacob Neusner, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecy*, 222-24 and idem., *A Theological Commentary to the Midrash: Lamentations Rabbati* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001), 9-10. Also, Isaiah M. Gafni, *Land, Center and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 25.

³⁹⁹ See Anderson, *Genesis*, 16.

⁴⁰⁰ Scholars often note the similarities in the biblical narratives between Adam’s expulsion from Eden and Israel’s exile. See, e.g., Eisen, *Galut*, 4-7; Postell, *Adam as Israel*; Anderson, *Genesis*, 15, 121, 208; Robin Parry, “Prolegomena to Christian Theological Interpretations of Lamentations,” in Craig G. Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, and Al Wolters, eds., *Canon and Biblical Interpretation, Volume 7* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 408; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 120-21. Like the rabbis, *Jubilees* also casts Adam’s story in light of Israel’s experiences. See James M. Scott, *On Earth as it is in Heaven: The Restoration of Sacred Time and Space in the Book of Jubilees* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 132-40.

And I brought you into a plentiful Land. (Jer 2:7a)

While these citations share no words in common, the rest of Jer 2:7 (which the rabbis do not cite) provides the linguistic connection: “And I brought you into a plentiful land to eat (לֹאֲכַל) of its fruit (פְּרִיָהּ) and its goodness (יְטִיבָהּ).” The words “eat,” “fruit,” and “good” in immediate succession secure the connection to Eden:

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may eat freely (אֲכַלְהוּ) from every tree of the garden, but you shall not eat (לֹא תֹאכַל) from the tree of the knowledge of good (טוֹב) and evil, for the day you eat (אֲכַלְךָ) from it, you will surely die.... And the woman said to the snake, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden (מִפְּרֵי עֵץ הַגָּן נֹאכַל), but of the fruit of the tree (מִפְּרֵי עֵץ) in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You shall not eat (לֹא תֹאכַל), nor shall you touch it, lest you die’”.... When the woman saw that the tree was good for food (טוֹב הָעֵץ לְמֹאכַל)... she took of its fruit and she ate (מִפְּרֵי וַתֹּאכַל), and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate (וַיֹּאכַל). (Gen 2:16-17; 3:2-3, 6 cf. 3:11-14, 17-19, 22)

Further metaleptic reading reveals that the verses on either side of Jer 2:7 contain the inverse of God’s question to Adam in Gen 3:9: “Where are you?” (אַיִכָּה); Jer 2:7 asks, “Where is the Lord?” Speaking of a wayward Israel, God states,

They did not say, “Where is the Lord (אַיִהּ יְהוָה) who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, who led us through the wilderness, through a land of deserts and pits, through a land of drought and the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no human (אָדָם) dwelt.⁴⁰¹ And I brought you into a plentiful Land to eat of its fruit and its goodness. But when you came in, you defiled my Land and made my heritage an abomination. The priests did not say, “Where is the Lord?” (אַיִהּ יְהוָה). And those who handle the Torah do not know me, and the rulers transgressed against me. (Jer 2:6-8a)

Jer 2:6-8 describes the people of Israel coming out of Egypt and into a Land compared to an Eden where no Adam had yet dwelt. However, when Israel entered this pristine Eden, ripe with edible fruit and goodness, they transgressed God’s teaching, just as Adam did in the Garden.

⁴⁰¹ *Genesis Rabbah* equates the אָדָם of Jer 2:6 with Adam: “Thus it is written, ‘Through a land that no man passed through, and where no person (אָדָם) dwelt’ (Jer 2:6): i.e., Adam (אָדָם) had not dwelt there” (*Gen. R.* 19:3; cf. *b. Ber.* 3a).

In Jer 2:9, the verse that follows the above passage, God says that because Israel sinned, “I still contend with you... and I will contend with your children’s children.” Adam not only symbolizes the biblical Israelites, but Adam’s sin, which the Israelites repeated, still affects later generations. Reading Jeremiah in their own context, the rabbis had scriptural warrant for understanding the prophet’s words as applicable to their own generation. Adam becomes both a declarative and anti-mimetic symbol for Israel, both biblical and rabbinic: Adam’s individual experiences encapsulate those of biblical Israel, so that rabbinic collective identity is bound up in the symbolic individual.

Through a sustained metaleptic reading of both Gen 2:15 and Jer 2:7, we can see that the first scriptural juxtaposition of *Gen. R.* 19:9 draws upon the unstated contexts of both Genesis and Jeremiah to draw parallels between Adam and Israel. Neither verse that the midrash cites is taken out of context; the interplay between the cited verses only reaches its full potential if both are read firmly in their own contexts. The text highlights Jeremiah’s modeling the Land of Israel on the Garden of Eden to show that the Edenic progression from inhabitance to sin is foundational to the story of biblical Israel.

The next citations of Scripture in *Gen. R.* 19:9 bring together Gen 2:16, Exod 27:20, and Lev. 24:2, which all deliver further metaleptic resonances between Adam and Israel. The midrash describes the command God gave to Adam, which he transgressed, vis-à-vis the commands given to Israel, which they kept: “I commanded [Adam], ‘And the Lord God commanded (ויצו) the man’ (Gen 2:16)... I commanded [Israel]: ‘You shall command the children of Israel (וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)’ (Exod 27:20); also, “‘Command the children of Israel (צוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל)’” (Lev 24:2). Ostensibly, the rabbis connect these verses on the basis of one shared word, “command” (צוה). The rabbis note that just as God “commanded” Adam, God

also “commanded” Israel. Metalepsis reveals connections between the passages surrounding the single verses.

First, the contexts of the verses from Exodus and Leviticus recount (nearly verbatim) the lighting of the lamp in the Tent of Meeting (the prototype for the Jerusalem Temple)—an event that the biblical writers describe in terms that are reminiscent of creation in Genesis 1. The version of the lamp lighting in Exodus reads,

You shall command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light (למאור), so that a lamp may continually be set up to burn. In the tent of meeting, outside of the veil that is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning (מערב עד בקר) before the Lord. It shall be a statute forever to be observed throughout the generations by the people of Israel. (Exod 27:20-21 cf. Lev 24:2-3)

The reference to “light” (מאור) for the lamp evokes the opening of Genesis insofar as the only place that מאור (“light”) appears before the command in Exod 27:20 and the anticipatory reference to it in Exod 25:6 is Gen 1:14-16, in which God appoints the sun and the moon to be “lights” (מאורות) in the sky.⁴⁰² Second, the command that Aaron kindle the light “from evening to morning” (מערב עד בקר) also supports the connection to Genesis 1, as it recalls the phrase, “And there was evening, and there was morning” (ויהי ערב ויהי בקר) during the days of creation (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Thus, that Gen 2:16 and Exod 27:20/Lev 24:2 share the word “command” is only a surface connection; other word associations in the proximate biblical context reveal a relationship not only between Israel and Adam, but also between Israel’s cultic

⁴⁰² *Leviticus Rabbah* associates God’s “lights” in Genesis with the light that God commands for Israel in Lev 24:2 (// Exod 27:20). Commenting on the “great things” that God has done according to Psalm 71:19, *Lev. R.* 31:1 states, “‘Great things’ applies to the two great lights, of which it says, ‘The two great lights’ (Gen 1:16)... You [God] give light to all who come into the world, and yet your desire is for Israel’s light! Thus, it is written [in Lev 24:2], ‘Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure beaten olive oil for the light’ (cf. *Lev. R.* 31:6-8; *PRK* 21:1). While *Genesis Rabbah* 19:9 does not connect the lights of God and Israel explicitly, *Leviticus Rabbah* supports the possibility that our midrash alludes to this relationship through its choice of scriptural juxtaposition.

responsibilities and God’s creative activities in Genesis 1. This interplay between creation and Israel’s lamp lighting is a metaleptic way for the rabbis to glimpse the positive memories of their past history. Such glimpses provide the reader with incentive to shun behaviors that recall Adam’s transgression, and to focus on obedience to God’s commandments.

Third, the phrase that *Gen. R.* 19:9 quotes from Lev 24:2—“Command the children of Israel (צו את בני ישראל)”—also appears verbatim in Num 5:2 (cf. Num 28:2; 34:2; 25:2). The context of Num 5:2 resonates with the first humans’ experiences in Genesis 1-3 insofar as it describes people, both male and female, being sent out of the camp like Adam and Eve were sent out of Eden:

Gen 1:27; 2:7; 3:23-24	Num 5:2-4a
And God created the human (האדם) in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female (זכר ונקבה) he created them (אתם)... The Lord God formed the human (האדם) from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the human was a living person (לנפש חיה)... Then God sent out (וישלחהו) [Adam] from the garden of Eden... and the cherubim dwelt (וישכן) at the east of the Garden.	Command the children of Israel that they send out (וישלחו) of the camp everyone who is leprous, and everyone who has an issue, and anyone who is unclean via a [dead] person (לנפש). Both male and female (מזכר עד נקבה) you shall send out (תשלחו)... so that they may not defile their camp, in the midst of which I dwell (שכן). And the children of Israel did so; they sent them out (וישלחו אותם) from the camp.

In Genesis, the first human beings are sent out of the garden where heavenly cherubim dwell; in Numbers, those within Israel who have become unclean through contact with a dead person are sent out of the camp in which God dwells. Num 5 recapitulates the pattern of Adam, who is cast out from God’s presence in the Garden like the unclean Israelites are cast out from God’s presence in the camp. However, significant differences also exist between these passages: (1) Adam leaves the Garden of Eden, while the unclean people leave the camp in the wilderness, and (2) God casts Adam (and Eve) out of the Garden permanently, while the unclean people can regain purity, and therefore reenter the camp. In light of the first point, the writer of Numbers 5

presents the camp as a kind of mobile Eden in which the Israelites temporarily reside on their way to Canaan. This comparison points to the notion that God will bring the Israelites to a permanent Eden when they reach their new Land. Indeed, this Land-as-Eden connection has already been made in *Gen. R.* 19:9 via Jeremiah’s modeling of the Land on Eden. The fact that the unclean people can reenter the camp once purified helps to temper the permanence of Adam’s expulsion; Num 5:2 offers the reader with a glimpse of restoration, which balances Adam’s lack of redemption.

The preponderance of shared terminology in Gen 1-3 and Num 5:2-4 suggests that the writer of Numbers drew on the story of Adam in fashioning the passages on purity, *and* that the rabbis, aware of this terminological and thematic relationship, added the phrase, “command the children of Israel,” in order to highlight the Adam-Israel connection. It is likely that *Gen. R.* 19:9 alludes to the contexts of Lev 24:2 (lamp lighting) and Num 5:2 (camp purity) with its reference to *צו את בני ישראל*.⁴⁰³ The texts from Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers show that the similarities between the stories of nascent creation and national Israel run much deeper than the fact that God “commanded” Adam and Israel.

Gen. R. 19:9 then couples Gen 3:11 with Dan 9:11, and it notes that just as Adam “transgressed [God’s] commandment, ‘Have you eaten of the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?’” (Gen 3:11), Israel has also transgressed God’s commands: “Indeed, all Israel has

⁴⁰³ Midrash halakhah from the Land of Israel that predate *Genesis Rabbah* similarly establish a connection between the commands in Lev 24:2 and Num 5:2. According to *Sifre Num.* 1:2, God’s commands apply immediately after they are given because Num 5:2-4 concludes with “the people of Israel did thusly” (כן עשו בני ישראל). The midrash then notes that God’s commands are also eternal because Lev 24:3 specifies that the lamp is to be lit “throughout your generations” (לדורותיכם). Based on its exegesis of Num 5:2 and Lev 24:2-3, *Sifre* concludes that all of the Torah’s commands are to be viewed as both immediate and lasting. See Jacob Neusner, *Sifre to Numbers: An American Translation, Volume 1* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), 2-3. The rabbis of the 5th – 6th century also read Num 5:2 as God commanding exile: “Just as [a king] of flesh and blood imposes exile, so does the Holy One, blessed be he, impose exile” (*Lev. R.* 18:5).

transgressed your Torah” (Dan 9:11).⁴⁰⁴ These partial citations of Gen 3:11 and Dan 9:11 contain no shared language. However, the whole of Dan 9:11 reads, “Indeed, all Israel has transgressed your Torah and have turned aside, so as not to listen to your voice (לבבתי שמויע בקלך).”

Therefore, a metaleptic reading of what the rabbis put on the page reveals a connection to Eden insofar as Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit because they did not listen to God’s command.

This trope of hearing God’s voice but failing to listen pervades Genesis 3:

And they heard the voice (וישמעו את קול) of the Lord God walking in the garden. . . . And [Adam] said, “I heard your voice (שמעתהי קלך) in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself. . . . And [God] said to Adam, “Because you have listened to your wife’s voice (שמעת לקול אשתך) and have eaten the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you.” (Gen 3:8, 10, 17)

The portions of Scripture that the rabbis cite merely claim that both Adam and Israel “transgressed”; by reading metaleptically, the reader ascertains exactly what that transgression was—namely, failing to listen to God’s voice.

Daniel 9 also contains Daniel’s prayer for Israel’s restoration during the Babylonian exile (see 9:4-19). This prayer, which admits guilt and asks for divine favor for Jerusalem, could just as easily apply to Israel in the rabbinic period. The conclusion of Daniel’s monologue serves as an apt template for the post-Temple situation as the rabbis perceived it, which was that the Romans had destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple because of Israel’s sins. Daniel’s confession of Israel’s sins and deference to God in prayer provides an example of continued worship and repentance:

⁴⁰⁴ *Leviticus Rabbah* also cites Dan 9:11 as the reason for exile and the destruction of the Temple: “Abraham spoke before the Holy One, blessed be he, ‘Sovereign of the Universe, why have you exiled my children and handed them over to the gentile nations who have put them to all kinds of unnatural death and destroyed the Temple, the place where I offered my son Isaac as a burnt offering before you?’ The Holy One, blessed be he, replied to Abraham, ‘Your children sinned and transgressed the whole of the Torah and the twenty-two letters [of the alphabet] in which it is composed; and so it is said: ‘Indeed, all Israel has transgressed your Torah (Dan 9:11)’” (*Lev. R. proem 24*).

Lord, according to all your righteous acts, let your anger and your wrath turn away from your city Jerusalem, your holy hill, because for our sins (כי בהטאינו), and for the iniquities of our ancestors (ובעונות אבותינו), Jerusalem and your people have become a byword among everyone around us. Now, our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, Lord, make your face to shine upon your Temple, which has been made desolate (מקדשך השמם). My God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations (שממחינו), and the city that is called by your name, for we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. Lord, hear; Lord, forgive. Lord, pay attention and act. Do not delay, for your own sake, my God, because your city and your people are called by your name. (Dan 9:16-19)

By drawing attention to Dan 9:11 and its surrounding context, *Genesis Rabbah* admits that Israel has failed to listen to God’s voice and also reminds its reader(s) to pray for the restoration of Jerusalem, just as Daniel did. Despite Israel’s sins, Daniel asks God to act “for your own sake” (למענך), meaning that God is able to override the destructive effects of Israel’s transgressions in order to save his own reputation. Thus, the midrash positions the story of Adam to reflect the sin of corporate Israel. Yet, in a time when the Second Temple “has been made desolate,” *Genesis Rabbah* points to a restoration that will come through the people’s repentance and God’s redemptive response. In reading the story of Adam along with this midrash, one associates Adam with Daniel, so that the midrash not only reminds the reader of the negative consequences of sin (Adam) but also of the need for worship and repentance in the midst of that sin (Daniel).

Genesis Rabbah then connects Gen-3:23a, “Therefore, the Lord God sent him [Adam] out (וישלחהו) from the Garden of Eden,” with Jer 15:1b: “Send [them] out (שלח) from before my face, and let them go.” While these verses share references to being “sent out” (שלח), further similarities exist between Genesis 1-2 and Jer 15:3:

<p style="text-align: center;">Genesis 1:26b; 2:20a</p> <p>And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky (השמים עוף) and over the beasts (בהמה) and over all the earth (הארץ)... The human gave names to all</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Jeremiah 15:3</p> <p>I will appoint over them four kinds of destroyers, declares the Lord: the sword to kill, the dogs to tear, and the birds of the sky (השמים עוף) and the beasts of the earth (בהמת הארץ) to</p>
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the beasts (בהמה) and to the birds of the sky (עוף השמים).	devour (לאכל) and destroy.
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Jeremiah reverses the Edenic picture—instead of describing human dominion over the animals and humanity’s permission to eat freely, Jeremiah gives the animals the power “to devour” (lit. “to eat” לאכל) human beings.⁴⁰⁵ Thus, the situation is worse for Israel than for Adam: while the first man lost the tranquility of Eden when God “sent him out” (ישלחהו), Israel must undergo an undoing of Eden in their own Land before they too are “sent out” (שלח).

The final scriptural pairing in *Gen. R.* 19:9 shows that both Adam and Israel were “driven out” (גרש) via Gen 2:24 and Hos 9:15:

ויגרש את האדם
And he drove out the human. (Gen 2:24a)

מביתי אנרשם
From my house I will drive them out. (Hos 9:15a)

As we have seen with every other verse in this midrash, the contexts of these pieces of Scripture contain further linguistic parallels that show that the negative elements of Adam and Eve’s transgression are recapitulated in Israel’s exile:

Genesis 3:3, 16-17, 19 But God said, “You shall not eat of the fruit (פרי)... lest you die (תמתון)... In pain you shall give birth (תלדי)... And to the human (האדם) he said, “Because you have listened (שמעת) to the voice of your wife... you [will] return to the ground.”	Hosea 9:12, 16-17 There shall not be a human being (אדם) left... They shall bear no fruit (פרי). Although they give birth (ילדין), I will put their beloved [children] to death (המתי). My God will reject them because they have not listened (שמעו) to him.
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These texts correspond in their references to childbirth, fruit, death, and refusal to listen to God: the punishments of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 resurface with reference to Israel as a

⁴⁰⁵ On this reversal in Jeremiah, see Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 721.

whole in Hosea 9. According to the prophet, the death that foreigners will bring into the Land of Israel fulfills the curses in Eden, so that Adam becomes an individual symbol of collective Israel in captivity.⁴⁰⁶ While the midrash refers to being driven out of the Land, the contexts of both Genesis and Hosea describe curses that occur in the Garden and the Land prior to Adam and Israel's expulsion. The rabbis who wrote *Genesis Rabbah* draw on these verses from Genesis and Hosea in order to speak to their own experiences under Christian Rome in the Land despite the fact that they have not been exiled. The disaster that befalls the individuals in Genesis and Hosea are directed to people *before* they are expelled, and the writers of *Genesis Rabbah* have not been expelled.

Throughout *Genesis Rabbah* 19:9, the scriptural contexts of the cited verses highlight the similarities between Adam and biblical Israel and show that the first human experience is prototypical of Israel's collective experience. According to the rabbis, biblical Israel in exile is the negative image of Eden. The rabbis attach concepts such as disobedience, repentance, and restoration to the person of Adam so that he cannot be separated from the life of corporate Israel. Whereas, for the most part, Kugel limits the rabbis' recollections of Scripture to individual verses "independent of any larger exegetical context,"⁴⁰⁷ one is clearly meant to read the entire midrash on Adam and Israel in *Gen. R.* 19:9 along with the contexts of each biblical citation. Metalepsis allows the reader to view fully the rabbinic program of Adamic symbol construction through narrative patterning. Adam comes to symbolize corporate Israel in sin, which teaches

⁴⁰⁶ *Genesis Rabbah* also states that Gen 3:24a is an allusion to the destruction of the Temple. By changing a letter in the opening word, the rabbis equate ויגרש ("and he drove out") with ויגרם ("and he broke") in Lamentations 3:16, which describes the violence of the Babylonian siege: "And he has broken (ויגרם) my teeth with gravel stones." The midrash concludes that Gen 3:24 "intimates that he [God] showed him [Adam] the destruction of the Temple" (*Gen. R.* 21:8).

⁴⁰⁷ Kugel, "Two Introductions," 147.

Israel that they must not follow Adam's sinful ways. If Israel can learn not to follow Adam's example, the people ensure that sin's captivity cannot become any stronger, which will hasten Israel's redemption from Rome.

Jacob as a Symbol of Israel: Gen. R. 68:13

In *Gen. R.* 68:13, Rabbi Joshua b. Levi (3rd century amora of Israel) compares the first leg of Jacob's journey to Haran, and particularly his detour in Bethel (Gen 28:10-13), to the biblical "exiles"—those who were besieged and ultimately expelled to Babylon according to Scripture. In the context of the 5th century CE, this midrash can be read with application to Israel (Jacob) living in Diaspora, which the rabbis call "exile." However, because the majority of the cited verses in *Gen. R.* 68:13 describe Israel being attacked in their Land (that is, before their expulsion), and because they describe Jacob travelling within what would become the Land of Israel, the Jacob-as-Israel symbolism also applies to Jews who reside in the Land of Israel.

Although R. Joshua interprets Gen 28:10-13 with reference to "the exiles," Jacob is *not* in exile: the midrash present the patriarch's experience as being the opposite of what would happen when biblical Israel was expelled from the Land by the Babylonians. The rabbis draw on a text that portrays Jacob positively—both in the Land and a recipient of divine promises. Through metalepsis, we can see that *Gen. R.* 68:13 presents the damage done to the Land in 586 BCE as the inverse of God's Land promise to Jacob in Gen 28:14-15. The midrash juxtaposes Jacob with Israel in order to emphasize divine Land promises, and thereby it provides a declarative symbol that reminds rabbinic Israel of God's promises to Israel and the hope for future fulfillment. Along with being a symbol of biblical Israel, Jacob is also a representative of Jews (like the writers of *Genesis Rabbah*) who live in the Land under Roman rule. To the extent that Jacob's

experience in the Land is an archetypal inverse of exile, he becomes a mimetic symbol for rabbinic Israel in the Land: to emulate Jacob is to *reverse* the effects of the Jewish Diaspora.

Unlike Adam in *Gen.* 19:9, Jacob has not committed the sins of the biblical exiles. However, similarly to how Matthew's Jesus takes on the sin of biblical Israel, Jacob participates in the collective sin of biblical Israel through creative rabbinic exegesis. Jesus suffers exile vicariously for his people, but there is no sense of vicarious suffering in the midrash. While Jacob does not suffer *on behalf* of Israel (as Jesus does), the patriarch does, on some level, suffer *with* Israel. In joining in solidarity with sinful biblical Israel, Jacob becomes a mimetic symbol of the kind of endurance that rabbinic Israel will need in order to stand up under Roman affliction until their oppressors purge them of their sins.

Gen. R. 68:13 reads,

ר' יהושע בן לוי פתר קריא בגליות:
ויצא יעקב כמה דאת אמר שלח מעל פני ויצאו וילך חרנה כמה דאת אמר אשר הונה יי ביום חרון אפו ויפגע במקום עד אפס מקום וילך שם כי בא השמש אומללה יולדת השבעה נפחה נפשה באה שמשא ויקח מאבני המקום תשתכנה אבני קודש וישם מראשותיו של כי ירד מראשותיכם וישב במקום ההוא של נשבבה בבשתנו ויחלם זה חלום נבוכדנצר והנה סולם זה צלמו שלנבוכדנצר הוא סמל הוא סולם מצב ארצה הקימה בבקעת דורא וראשו מגיע השמימה רומיה אמין שיתין והבה מלאכי אלהים זה ואתו חנניה מישאל ועזריה עולים ויורדים בו מעלים בו ומורידים בו אופזים בו קופזים בו סונשים בו די לאלהך לא איתנא פלחין והנה יי נצב עליו עבדוהי די אלהא עילאה פוקו

R. Joshua b. Levi interpreted [Gen 28:10-13] with reference to the exiles:

“And Jacob went out” (Gen 28:10), as it is said, “Cast them out of my sight and let them go” (Jer 15:1). Likewise [between] that which is said, “Toward Haran (חרנה)” [and] “The Lord has afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger (חרון)” (Lam 1:12). Moreover, “And he came to a place” (Gen 28:11)—“Until there is no room” (Isa 5:8). “And stayed there that night because the sun had set”—“She who has borne seven languishes; her spirit droops; her sun is set” (Jer 15:9). “And he took stones from the place”—“The hallowed stones are poured out at the head of every street” (Lam 4:1). “And put it under his head”—“For your beautiful crown has come down from your head” (Jer 13:18). “And laid down in that place to sleep,” as it is said, “Let us lie down in our shame and let our confusion cover us” (Jer 3:25). “And he dreamed” (Gen 28:12)—this [accords with] Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. “Behold, there was a staircase (סלם)”—this [accords with] Nebuchadnezzar’s image (צלם), for “image” (סמל) is [similar to] “staircase” (סלם).⁴⁰⁸ “Set up on the earth” (Gen 28:12)—“He [Nebuchadnezzar]

⁴⁰⁸ Insofar as the words are anagrams.

set it up in the plain of Dura” (Dan 3:1). “And the top of it reached to heaven”— “Whose height was sixty cubits” (Dan 3:1). “And behold the angels of God,” Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, “were ascending and descending on it.” They were raising him up and dragging him down, dancing on him, leaping on him, abusing him: “Be it known to you, King, that we will not serve your gods” (Dan 3:18). “And behold, the Lord stood on it” (Gen 28:13)—“You servants of God, most high, come out and come here” (Dan 3:26).

This passage compares Jacob’s journey to Haran and the theophany at Bethel with the exile and captivity of Israel in Babylon. Since God will eventually change Jacob’s name to “Israel” (Gen 32:28) and Haran is the first of several places to which Jacob will attempt to flee from Esau (Gen 27:43-44), Rabbi Joshua’s interpretation of Jacob as a symbol of biblical Israel in exile is warranted. Yet, according to Gen 28:10-13, Jacob never arrives in Haran; rather, the text describes him coming to Bethel, in the Land of Israel. More, apart from one biblical verse in this midrash (Jer 13:18) whose immediate context describes Judah being “exiled” (הגולה; 13:19), the passage incorporates Scriptures whose contexts speak of destruction to the Land itself rather than exile from it. Again, while R. Joshua applies Gen 28:10-13 “to the [biblical] exiles,” and therefore invites comparison with the plight of Roman Diaspora Jewry, the message is just as applicable to rabbinic Israel inside the Land of Israel.

This passage’s focus on Jacob in the Land is critical for understanding its scriptural exegesis, which highlights divine Land promises through metalepsis. To see this emphasis on Land promise, the midrashic passage must be read metaleptically. *Gen. R.* 68:13 cites all the verses in Genesis leading up to God’s promise to give Jacob the Land of Canaan (Gen 28:1-13), but it stops short of citing that actual promise (28:14-15). In failing to cite the climax of the biblical passage under discussion, the rabbis push the reader both to read beyond the cited verses—that is, metaleptically—and to interpret the whole of *Gen. R.* 68:13 in light of the climactic Land promise that goes uncited:

אני יהוה אלהי אברהם אביך ואלהי יצחק הארץ אשר אתה שכב עליה לך אתננה ולזרעך והיה זרעך כעפר

הארץ ופרצת ימה וקדמה וצפנה ונגבה ונברכו בך כל משפחת האדמה ולזרעך והנה אנכי עמך ושמרתוך בכל אשר תלך והשבתיך אל האדמה הזאת כי לא אעזבך עד אשר אם עשיתי את אשר דברתי לך

I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will return you to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have said to you. (Gen 28:13b-15)

This promise, which the rabbis stop just short of citing in *Gen. R.* 68:13, is the exegetical focus of the midrash on Jacob and Israel. Even though it is not written down, the promise contained in Gen 28:13b-15 informs the theological assumptions of what the rabbis put on the page. In citing verses about exile with reference to this Land promise, *Genesis Rabbah* uses Jacob to address the problem of captivity to sin and slavery to Rome in the rabbinic period and also to remind the reader of God's promise to restore the Land to the people of Israel with whom he remains present.

Gen R. 68:13's initial scriptural juxtaposition draws a parallel between Jacob in Gen 28:10 and the exiles according to Jer 15:1, as both are said to "go out" (יציא):

ויציא יעקב
And Jacob went out. (Gen 28:10a)

שלח מעל פני ויציאו
Send them out from before my face and let them go out. (Jer 15:1b)

The midrash connects these verses by way of the verb "to go out" (יציא), so that Jacob's journey to Haran is reflected in God's decision to make Israel "go out" from the Land in exile. Initially, these verses seem to be cited without regard for their contexts, since the nature of "go out" (יציא) differs in each case: in Jeremiah, the people are also "sent out" (שלח) in exile, while Genesis describes Jacob's voluntary journey. On this midrashic juxtaposition, Maren Niehoff states, "In the prophetic context, this expression [יציא] is not only mentioned in the framework of

God's punishment of exile looming over the sinful nation, but also in connection with שלח, and thus in a distinctly negative tone."⁴⁰⁹ Genesis, on the other hand, describes an individual travelling on his own accord, not the victim of a forcible exile. Thus, according to Niehoff, the midrashic union of Gen 28:10 and Jer 15:1 constitutes an "atomistic approach... [that] focuses on the actual letters of the relevant word [in Gen 28:10, יצא] and disregards both its grammatical form (singular) and its overall meaning (voluntary departure)."⁴¹⁰

Niehoff is correct that if we limit ourselves to the cited texts, the rabbinic use of Scripture appears atomistic. However, the relationship between the contexts of Jeremiah and Genesis is not as atomistic as Niehoff assumes, since the context of Jer 15:1 contains a description of chaos and violence in the Land that stands in contrast to the Land promise of Gen 28:13-15. Specifically, the verses immediately after Jer 15:1—15:3-4a—contain a reversal of Jacob's promise in Genesis. Jeremiah states that God will appoint four "families" (משפחות)—the sword, dogs, birds, and beasts—to destroy the people, and he will make them abhorrent "to all the kingdoms of the earth" (לכל ממלכות הארץ; Jer 15:3-4a). According to Jeremiah, through both human and animal families (i.e., species) destruction comes to the people of Israel; conversely, God tells Jacob that, through him and his offspring, blessing would come to "all families of the earth" (משפחת האדמה) (כל) (Gen 28:14b). Instead of families being blessed through Jacob, Jeremiah envisions "families" attacking the people of Israel. The land curses in Jer 15:1-4 utilize language from Jacob's promise in order to undercut it in light of Israel's captivity.

Whereas Jer 15:3-4 contains curses that reverse the Land promise in Gen 28:14, the passage that immediately precedes Jer 15:1-4 contains a collective acknowledgment of guilt and

⁴⁰⁹ Maren Niehoff, "A Dream Which is Not Interpreted is Like a Letter Which is Not Read," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43 (1992), 76.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

a plea for forgiveness. A metaleptic reading of the rabbinic citation provides a template for the rabbis' own repentance:

Have you completely rejected Judah? Does your very being loathe Zion? Why have you struck us down so that there is no healing for us? We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of healing, but, behold, terror. We acknowledge our wickedness, Lord, and the iniquity of our fathers, for we have sinned against you. Do not spurn us for your name's sake; do not dishonor your glorious throne; remember and do not break your covenant with us. Are there any among the vain [gods] of the nations who can cause rain? Are you not he, Lord our God? And do we not wait for you? For you have made all these things. (Jer 14:19-22)

The entire context of Jer 14:19-15:4 contains both judgments on the land of Judah as well as this prayer of repentance. Thus, these texts become the rabbis a template of continued acknowledgement of sin and the necessity of repentance in the midst of captivity. As with Jesus in Matthew, in the biblical and rabbinic context Jacob has not "sinned," whereas the people in Jer 15:1-4 have. Still, in a symbolic way, the rabbis present Jacob as experiencing the punishment of Israel's sin when they equate the stories in Genesis and Jeremiah. As Jacob's Land promise looms in the background of the midrashic discussion, *Genesis Rabbah* implies that even an Israel in slavery to Rome can rest assured in the same divine care and protection that Jacob received in Bethel.

Gen. R. 68:13 then equates the notice that Jacob "went toward Haran (וַיֵּלֶךְ חֲרֵנָה)" with God's "fierce anger" (חֲרוֹן) against Israel (Lam 1:12). These partial citations of Gen 28:10 and lam 1:12 metaleptically point to a broader shared context. While the Hebrew wordplay between *הָרֵן* and *חֲרוֹן* is the generative element between Gen 28:10 and Lam 1:12 (cf. *Gen R.* 70:10), the context of Lamentations 1 also recalls and reverses God's promise to Jacob to "keep you everywhere you go (תֵּלֶךְ)" (Gen 28:15).⁴¹¹ Lam 1:17b-18 states, "The Lord has commanded to Jacob (יַעֲקֹב) that those around him should be his adversaries; Jerusalem has become as unclean

⁴¹¹ For the same wordplay, see *Sifre Deut.* 43.

among them.... My young women and my young men have gone (הלכו) into captivity.” Here we see that collective “Jacob” has “gone into captivity” (הלכו בשבי) just as the Jacob of Genesis “went into Haran” (וילך חרנה). However, this negative picture of captivity in Lam 1:18 is tempered when it is read in the context of God’s initial promise to Jacob and thus to Israel as a whole to remain with him wherever he goes—even into captivity. The Jacob of Scripture again emerges as a declarative symbol for rabbinic Israel in bondage to sin and Rome: the Jacob-symbol recalls previous divine support and declares to rabbinic Israel that God remains with them.

Genesis Rabbah next links “and he reached a place (מקום)” (Gen 28:11) with “until there is no place (מקום)” (Isa 5:8a), which provides another metaleptic connection between Isaiah’s Land woes and Genesis’ Land promise. As Niehoff notes with reference to this juxtaposition, “the value of the proof-text emerges only from its context, since [Isa 5:8a] appears in the framework of a series of woes on the corrupt upper classes whose sin will cause exile for the whole nation.”⁴¹² Once again, although Jacob does not sin in Gen 28, the rabbis link the patriarch with the sinful nation, whose iniquities result in foreign aggression, and thereby hamper the fulfillment of Jacob’s Land promise.

The context of Isa 5:8a refers to a vacant Land whose desolation unravels God’s promise to Jacob: “Woe to those who join house to house, who lay field to field, until there is no place and you are made to dwell on your own in the midst of the Land (הארץ).... Many houses shall be desolate, the great and the good, without inhabitant” (Isa 5:8-9). This description of an uninhabited Land contradicts God’s description to Jacob of a highly populated land: “Your offspring shall be like the dust of the land (כעפר הארץ)” (Gen 28:14a). At the same time, the

⁴¹² Niehoff, “Dream,” 77.

midrashic juxtaposition of Scripture reminds readers that, long before biblical Israel’s exile, Jacob also dwelt on his own in the midst of the Land, and his lonely sojourn ended with a divine promise. Moreover, whereas biblical Israel found “no place” in the Land, Genesis says that Jacob “reached a place” in Bethel. Therefore, Jacob’s experience in the Land prior to Israel’s exile provides a positive balance to the negative consequences of Israel’s sin. Because God’s Land promise to Jacob both predates biblical Israel’s exile and outlasts it, rabbinic Israel’s affliction in the Land emerges as a temporary problem that is eclipsed by the divine promise in Genesis.

The next verse coupling in *Gen. R.* 68:13 consists of Gen 28:11—“And [Jacob] stayed there that night because the sun had set (בא השמש)”—and Jer 15:9: “She who has borne seven languishes; her spirit droops; her sun is set (בא שמושה).” Along with the shared terminology of a setting sun, once again, the verses that surround Jer 15:9 invert the Land promise in Gen 28:14-15:

Jeremiah 15:7, 12, 19a	Genesis 28:14-15a
I winnow them with a winnowing fork in the gates of the land (הארץ); I have mourned them; I have destroyed my people; they did not return (שוב) from their ways.... Can one break iron, iron from the north (צפון)? [...] If you return (ואשיבך) I will bring you back (ואשיבך).	Your offspring shall be like the dust of the land (הארץ), and you shall spread abroad to the east and to the north (צפון) and to the south.... Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back (והשבתיך) to this land (הארץ הזה).

Gen 28:14-15 describes Jacob’s descendants enjoying the furthest reaches of their Land and stretching out to the east, south, and “north” (צפון). Jer 15:7-19 contains a reversal of Jacob’s promise insofar as the Land becomes a dangerous place and the “north” (צפון) becomes a source of impending doom. However, Jeremiah also repeats the promise of Jacob’s “return” (שוב) to the Land in Genesis, which strengthens the metaleptic link between the Jacob and Israel. Again, Jacob is a declarative symbol for Israel: he is a site for the memory of Israel’s blessed past, and also a lens through which Israel can understand its present and future. Despite the captivities to

Babylon and Rome, the rabbis continue to hear echoes of the divine promise when they commemorate the symbol of Jacob in their midrashic readings of Israel's sacred history.

The next pairing in *Gen. R.* 68:13 reads, “And he took stones (אבני) from the place” (Gen 28:11)—“The hallowed stones (אבני) are poured out at the head of every street” (Lam 4:1).

Genesis Rabbah connects these verses based on their shared reference to “stones.” Insofar as the stones that Jacob took from Bethel are equated with the hallowed stones of a destroyed Jerusalem, the midrash forces the patriarch into participation with biblical Israel's lament. Whereas Matthew uses Lamentations to make Jesus into a symbol of Jerusalem itself, the rabbis fashion Jacob into a symbol of biblical Israel in the midst of Jerusalem. This difference shows that the rabbis' primary aim is not to describe *substitution for* the people (as Matthew's is), but rather *solidarity with* the people.

To be sure, there is an element of solidarity in Matthew's Jesus as well—since his suffering symbolizes the first destruction/exile, as a symbol Jesus stands in solidarity with those who saw the destruction of the second Temple. However, the solidarity element is far more explicit in the midrash, and Jacob's actions in Bethel actually prefigure a *reversal* of the city's destruction. Whereas God abandoned Jerusalem to destruction according to Lamentations (cf. Lam 1:15; 5:20-22), the stone that Jacob takes is the one on which he sleeps when God appears to him in a dream, saying, “I am with you... [and] I will not leave you” (28:15). Jacob then uses that stone as an anointed altar to the Lord the next morning (28:18), so that the stones the midrash equates with the “hallowed stones” of a destroyed Jerusalem are repurposed into a site of worship (i.e., an altar) during Jacob's stopover in Bethel. Thus, Jacob becomes a mimetic symbol that provides an example for rabbinic Israel of continued worship in the midst of

bondage *and* a declarative symbol that reminds rabbinic Israel of God’s continued presence among them.

Lam 4:1 does not share any language with Jacob’s promise (Gen 28:14-15). However, because many other post-70 Jewish texts interpret Lamentations 4 as speaking of the end of suffering under the Romans, it is probable that *Genesis Rabbah* refers to Lam 4:1 in order to emphasize the eventual fall of Rome. The Hebrew of Lam 4:22 states, “The punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, daughter of Zion, [God] will no longer keep you in exile (להגלותך). He will punish your iniquity, daughter of Edom; he will reveal your sins.” Midrash roughly contemporaneous with *Genesis Rabbah* explicitly equates “the daughter of Edom” in this verse with “Caesarea” (Lam. R. 4:22 § 24; *b. Meg.* 6a) and the Targum to Lamentations 4:22 includes a reference to Rome: “The Lord will no longer keep you in exile (לאגלותך). At that time he will requite your iniquity, wicked Rome which is built in Italy (רומי רשיעא דמתבניא באיטליא), and is full of the crowds of the children of Edom.” Also, Matthew alludes to Lamentations multiple times in order to equate Jesus’ death on a Roman cross with Israel’s captivity to Babylon. Since the Targum, Midrash, Talmud, and New Testament all read the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE as a precursor to subjugation under Rome after 70 CE, *Genesis Rabbah* may cite Lam 4:1 in order to establish Jacob’s experience at Bethel as alluding to the demise of Rome.

After *Gen. R.* 68:13 cites Lam 4:1, the midrash returns to Jeremiah (13:18) in light of Jacob’s decision to sleep with his head resting on a stone in Bethel: “And [Jacob] put it under his head”—“For your beautiful crown has come down from your head” (Jer 13:18). While Gen 28:11 describes Jacob voluntarily putting a stone “under his head” (מראשתיו), Jer 13:18 speaks to the kings and queens of Israel and tells them that the crown of glory has forcibly come down

“from your head” (מראשותיכם). The verses that immediately follow Jer 13:18 contain some of the same references to directionality that feature in Genesis 28:14:

Jeremiah 13:19-20a	Genesis 28:14
The cities of the south (הנגב) are shut up, with no one to open them. All Judah is exiled (הגלות), exiled completely. Lift up your eyes and see who comes from the north (צפון).	Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth and you shall spread abroad to the east and to the north (צפונה) and to the south (נגבה).

Whereas Genesis refers to the north and south as part of a promise for a populous Land, Jeremiah uses these directions in its description of a vacant Judah. As is clear from the mention in Jer 13:19 of going into “exile” (הגלות), the rabbis are aware of the Jeremian context as it links the verse to an exegesis of Jacob’s story “with reference to the exiles” (בגלייתו). As *Genesis Rabbah* is concerned with all Israel, both at home and abroad, the context of Jer 13:18 alludes to those of Israel whom the Romans have “exiled completely” and are living in Diaspora. Once again, Jeremiah’s Israel reflects the negative inverse of Genesis’ promise: while Jacob’s offspring peacefully spread to the north and south, Israel’s southern cities are “shut up” and the Israelites are “exiled” by invaders who come from the “north.”

After Jacob puts the stone underneath his head to sleep, *Genesis Rabbah* notes that “‘he laid down (וישכב) in that place to sleep’ (Gen 28:11), as it is said, ‘Let us lie down (נשכבה) in our shame and let our confusion cover us’” (Jer 3:25a). There is a bilateral interaction between these verses insofar as the tranquility of Gen 28:11 shifts to “shame” and “confusion” in light of Jer 3:25, and Gen 28:11 helps to blunt the force of Jer 3:25. The shared references to “lying down” (שכב) also recall God’s promise to Jacob that “the Land on which you lie (שכב) I will give to you and your offspring” (Gen 28:13), which adds to the sense of divine presence in the midst of disorder. Here, the Jacob-symbol makes yet another declaration to rabbinic Israel that God’s

Land promises are stronger than the shame of sin or the confusion of existence under Christian Rome.

Once again, the initial word association between Gen 28:11 and Jer 3:25a is the first of a series between Jacob’s promise and the language that immediately follows the cited portion of Jeremiah:

Jer 3:25-4:1a, 2a	Gen 28:13b, 14b-15a
Let us lie down in our shame and let our confusion cover us for we have sinned against the Lord our God (יהוה אלהינו), we and our fathers (אבותינו)... “If you will return (חשוב), Israel,” declares the Lord, “Return to me (עלי) (חשוב)... Then all the nations will bless themselves (והתברכו) through [God].”	I am the Lord, the God of your father (אֵיבֶךְ... יהוה אלהי), Abraham, and the God of Isaac.... Through you and your offspring all the families of the earth will be blessed (ונברכו). Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will return you (והשבתיך) to this land.

Jeremiah repeats God’s promises in Genesis that the nations of the earth would be blessed through God’s chosen people (cf. Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 27:29). Despite Israel’s sins, the contexts to which the midrashic citations point serve as reminders of Israel’s covenant promises and its destiny as God’s conduit of blessing to the nations. The rabbis use Jacob as a declarative symbol of Israel that reminds them of the divine blessings of their collective past despite the problem of sin in the present.

The final scriptural pairing in *Gen. R.* 68:13 is between Jacob’s dream of the staircase in Gen 28:12-13 and three consecutive references to Daniel 3 (3:1, 18, 26). As with every other citation in this midrash, the reference to Daniel highlights the Land promise to Jacob. By citing Dan 3 in triplicate, the rabbis draw attention to the whole chapter, which details the miraculous survivals of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the midst of a burning furnace (Dan 3:8-26). Upon witnessing this extraordinary event, Nebuchadnezzar makes a declaration that echoes the promise to Jacob that through him and his offspring “all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 28:14):

Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples (לכל עממיה), nations (אמיה), and languages (ולשניה) that dwell in all the earth (בכל ארעה)—peace be multiplied (שלמכון ישנה). It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the most high God has done for me. How great are his signs, how mighty are his wonders. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation. (Dan 3:31-33)

Nebuchadnezzar declares that, thanks to the God of Israel, all the people of the earth receive peace. The Babylonian king's statement parallels God's blessings going to "all the families of the earth" in Gen 28:14. While the Aramaic of Daniel 3 bars the possibility of exact verbal parallels with the Hebrew of Gen 28:14-15, Nebuchadnezzar's declaration and God's promise to Jacob resonate on a thematic level. This juxtaposition signals to the rabbis that just as Jacob's promise was fulfilled in the days of Daniel—insofar as all people of the earth received peace—it can be fulfilled again in their own day.

Genesis Rabbah 68:13 shows that the rabbis believed that captivity to sin and foreign rule deferred the fulfillment of the promise to Jacob. The verses that the rabbis place alongside Gen 28:10-13—all of which metaleptically point to the uncited Land promise of Gen 28:14-15—often repurpose the words and themes in Gen 28:14-15 to describe the negative reality of foreign aggression rather than the positive promises to Jacob and his offspring. However, God's promise to Jacob is more powerful than captivity to Babylon or Rome. Eventually, God will fulfill the promise to bless the world through Jacob's descendants, which will mean the end of Israel's captivity and worldwide acceptance of the God of Israel. *Gen. R.* 68:13 links the experience of the biblical "exiles" with Jacob's time in Bethel (i.e., in the Land), so that Jacob's experiences apply to both Israel in "exile" from the Land (i.e., in Diaspora) and in captivity to Rome within the Land.

Because the midrash returns to God's Land promise at nearly every scriptural turn, Jacob becomes a declarative symbol of the divine promises that come with Israel's collective identity.

Although Jacob went through distress in the Land comparable to that of the exiles outside the Land, God's Land promise still stands—just as it does for rabbinic Israel. The biblical text detailing Jacob's promise (Gen 28:14-15) lies just beyond the perimeter of the midrashic discussion of Gen 28:10-13, but the rabbinic exegesis of the passage metaleptically hinges on the narrative that exists beyond what is on the page. In the context of *Gen. R.* 68:13, Jacob, like rabbinic Israel, remains "covered with shame" (Jer 3:25), besieged by foreigners "from the north" (Jer 13:19; 15:12), and on his "own in the midst of the Land" (Isa 5:8). But the promise of redemption looms just beyond the temporal horizon. Through its interpretation of Scripture, *Genesis Rabbah* establishes Jacob as a symbol who experienced suffering before corporate Israel did, and therefore serves as a reminder of God's continual presence with the Jewish people under foreign rule.

Jacob's Sons as a Symbol of Israel: *Gen. R.* 92:3

My final example of metaleptic symbol making in *Genesis Rabbah* appears at *Gen. R.* 92:3, which presents Jacob's sons as a collective symbol of Israel in captivity. The text comments on Gen 43:14, in which Jacob blesses his sons before they travel to Egypt to petition Joseph for the release of their brother, Simeon, and to present to Joseph their youngest brother, Benjamin.⁴¹³ While Jacob expresses anxiety over the safety of his children, he ultimately states, "May God Almighty give you mercy before the man [Joseph], that he may release to you your brothers—the other [brother, Simeon] and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved [of my children], I am bereaved." The interpretation of this verse in *Gen. R.* 92:3 locates God in the place of Joseph, and the rest of Jacob's sons represent the exiles of biblical Israel. The rabbis

⁴¹³ On Joseph in *Genesis Rabbah*, see Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-biblical Jewish Literature* (Lieden: Brill, 1992), 111-141.

also note that although Genesis states that Jacob is bereaved of his children, Scripture actually means that he grieves the losses of the First and Second Temples:

ר' יהושע בן לוי פתר קריה בגלויות:
 ואל שדי יתן לכם רחמים ויתן אותם לרחמים לפני כל שביהם לפני האיש זה הקב"ה שני יי איש
 מלחמה ושלה לכם את אחיכם אילו עשרת השבטים אחר ואת בנימן זה שבט יהודה ובנימן ואני כאשר
 שכלתי בחרבן ראשון שכלית בחרבן שיני כאשר שכלתי בחרבן השני לא אשכל עוד

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi interpreted [Gen 43:14] with reference to the exiles:

“And God Almighty give you mercy (רחמים) [with respect to], “He gave them to be pitied (לרחמים) before all of their captors” (Ps 106:46). “Before the man (איש),” this is the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says, “The Lord is a man of war (איש מלחמה) (Exod 15:3). “That he may release to your brother”—these are the ten tribes [of Israel]; “the other and Benjamin”—this is the tribe of Judah and Benjamin. “And as for me, as I am bereaved of my children” in the destruction of the first [Temple], “I am bereaved” in the destruction of the second [Temple]; “though I am bereaved of my children” in the second destruction, “I will not be bereaved continually.”

At first glance, this text appears to connect Gen 43:14 to citations from Ps 106:46 and Exod 15:3 based on the single word associations of רחמים and איש, respectively. However, reading metaleptically, the contexts of Psalm 106 and Exodus 15 reveal a more complex correlation among the citations. While nothing in Exod 15:3 parallels Psalm 106:46, the verses’ broader narratives share several points of linguistic contact. Both texts contain an almost verbatim rehearsal of Israel’s exodus from Egyptian slavery, with references to the parting of the Sea of Reeds and the destruction of the Egyptians.

<p>Exodus 15:4-6, 13 Pharaoh’s chariots and his host he has cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Sea of Reeds (בַּיַם סוּף). The depths (תְּהוֹמוֹת) covered (יִכְסִימוּ) them; they went down into the deep like a stone. Your right hand, Lord, glorious in power; your right hand, Lord, shatters the enemy (אֹיֵב). . . . You have led in your steadfast love (בַּחֲסֶדְךָ) the people whom you have redeemed (גָּאֵלְתָּ).</p>	<p>Psalm 106:7, 9-11 Our fathers . . . did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love (חֲסִדֶיךָ), but rebelled at the sea—the Sea of Reeds (בַּיַם סוּף). . . . He rebuked the Sea of Reeds and it became dry, and he led them through the depths (בְּתֵהוֹמוֹת) as through a desert. So he saved them from the hand of the foe and redeemed (וַיִּגְאֹלֵם) them from the power of the enemy (אֹיֵב). And the water covered (וַיִּכְסֹוּ) their adversaries.</p>
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Rather than taking verses out of context for the purposes of showing surface word associations with Gen 43:14, *Gen. R.* 92:3 puts the whole of Exodus 15 and Psalm 106 into contact with the whole of Genesis 43 precisely because of the wider thematic context that all three passages share: release from slavery/captivity in Egypt. In Genesis, Simeon and Benjamin are in captivity to Joseph, and biblical Israel would later become enslaved to Pharaoh in Exodus and Psalms. As, according to the biblical narrative, Jacob predicts that “the man” (Joseph) will “release” (lit. “send out” שלח) his sons, the midrash uses its co-texts to recall Israel’s Exodus in which the people of Israel demand to be “sent out” (שלח) from Egypt.⁴¹⁴

Gen. R. 93:2 juxtaposes the Exodus imagery in Exod 15:3/Ps 106:46 with Gen 43:14 because the rabbis see Simeon and Benjamin’s captivity to Joseph in Egypt as a precursor to the nation’s future captivity to a Pharaoh who “did not know Joseph” (Exod 1:8). Psalm 106 not only describes redemption from Egypt (echoing Exodus 15), but it also petitions God for redemption from the powers over Israel in the post-exilic period in which the psalmist wrote.⁴¹⁵

[The Lord] gave [the Israelites] into the hand of the nations, so that those who hated them ruled over them (וימשלו בהם). Their enemies oppressed them (וילחצום) and they were subjugated under their hand (ויכנעו תחת ידם)... Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress when he heard their cry. For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love. He caused them to be pitied before all their captors. Save us (הושיעני), Lord our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise. (Ps 106: 41-42, 44-47)

The same psalm that reviews the exodus from Egypt goes on to note that biblical Israel also suffered under other nations who ruled over them. The psalm also petitions the Lord to gather “from the nations” (מן־הגוים) those who live apart from the Land. This reference to Jews outside

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Exod 3:20; 4:21, 23; 5:1-2; 6:1, 11; 7:2, 14, 16, 26-27; 8:25, 28; 9:1-2, 7, 13, 17, 28, 35; 10:3-4, 7, 10, 20, 27; 11:1, 10; 12:33; 13:15, 17; 14:5.

⁴¹⁵ On Ps 106 as a post-exilic psalm, see Alec J. Lucas, *Evocations of the Calf?: Romans 1:18-2:11 and the Substructure of Psalm 106(105)* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 52.

the Land is appropriate in light of the rabbis' knowledge that many Jews live in Diaspora (what they call "the Exile"). The context of Psalm 106 serves as a reminder for rabbinic Israel— under Rome in the Land and in Diaspora—that the people have long endured enslavement at the hands of the nations, and that God has rescued them in the past. Therefore, this psalmic context contributes to the creation of the patriarchs as a collective symbol for rabbinic Israel. In light of *Gen. R.* 92:3, every time that Jacob's sons are commemorated in a reading of the Torah they are linked with both biblical and rabbinic Israel.

The rabbis choose scriptures that recall biblical Israel's deliverances from slavery and oppression to prove that although rabbinic Israel is subjected to a foreign nation, Jews under Christian Rome will not be bereaved forever—God will deliver his people from their captivity to the nations. The deliverance texts (Exodus 15 and Psalm 106) that *Genesis Rabbah* uses to support this assertion reminds the rabbis of their divinely led destiny under the God of Israel. Jacob's sons who stand before Joseph encapsulate rabbinic Israel before God as they wait for the divine mercy that will eventuate the release from slavery under the Roman Empire.

Through carefully selected biblical verses, *Gen. R.* 92:3 presents a continuum of captivity that extends from Jacob's sons in Egypt, to the Israelites under Pharaoh, to the Jews under Babylon, which culminates, according to the rabbis, in Jacob's bereavement over "the destruction of the First [Temple]." After establishing this continuum via contextual biblical exegesis, the rabbis include a reference to their own post-70 CE situation. The midrash has Jacob declare, "I am bereaved in the destruction of the Second [Temple]; though I am bereaved of my children in the second destruction, I will not be bereaved continually." While the biblical context has Jacob mourning for his sons, the midrash asserts that Jacob actually mourned for the destroyed Temple (cf. *Gen. R.* 93:6). In doing this, *Genesis Rabbah* establishes an analogy

between the biblical narrative and the rabbinic period: just as Jacob mourns for his sons, Jews mourn for the Temple. The midrash is explicit that Simeon and Benjamin symbolize the ten northern tribes and the two southern tribes, respectively; Jacob's sons are symbols of Israel, not of the Temples. Rather, in applying Jacob's mourning to the Temples, the rabbis make a comparison regarding grief then and now.

The rabbis are aware that Jacob will not be "bereaved forever"; according to the biblical narrative, Joseph and Jacob's other sons are reconciled (Gen 50:1-21) and Jacob has the opportunity to gather all of his sons together and bless them before his death (Genesis 49). The gathering and reconciliation of Jacob and his sons in the Torah is proof that the Temple will, one day, be restored—a conviction expressed throughout *Genesis Rabbah* (e.g., *Gen. R.* 2:5; 8:2; 56:10). While the timeline for Temple reconstruction is uncertain, the symbolic usage of the patriarchs in *Gen. R.* 92:3 serves as assurance that, as surely as Jacob was reunited with his sons, the Temple will be rebuilt.

Conclusion

Genesis Rabbah uses Adam, Jacob, and Jacob's sons as symbols of biblical Israel that function as sites of commemoration for rabbinic Israel. Through the midrashic treatments of these biblical characters, the rabbis afford their Israel with a lens through which to view current circumstances. While Adam is a negative mimetic symbol that displays sinful behavior, the midrash is still able to allude, through metalepsis, to declarations of biblical Israel's repentance and endurance under the nations. Jacob is a symbol that participates in the life of biblical Israel in exile. This participation provides the rabbis with a positive archetype for divine trust in promises despite uncertainties. The message of Jacob's time in Bethel (Gen 28:10-13) is dependent upon a metaleptic reading of both the midrashic discussion and the biblical citations,

which reveals an emphasis on the divine Land promises onto which the rabbis still hold. Jacob's sons are a collective symbol of Israel both in the biblical and rabbinic periods, and their metaleptic treatment in the midrash reveals a message of redemption from slavery. Also, Jacob mourns over the destroyed First and Second Temples. When the midrash is read in light of the biblical story of reconciliation between the patriarchs, Joseph, and Jacob, the rabbis remind the reader that the Temple will be rebuilt. Thus, through metaleptic treatments of the patriarchs, *Genesis Rabbah* emphasizes a reminder of the coming salvation from Christian Rome.

VIII. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are commemorative narratives of Israel's past that respond to Israel's present and future. The Gospel and Midrash offer readers an opportunity to remember sacred history together and strengthen their contemporary collective identities. One of the ways that Matthew and the rabbis do this is through the use of symbols. Matthew, through narrative patterning between the commemorative narrative (Gospel) and the master commemorative narrative (Israel's Scriptures), presents Jesus as a symbol of biblical Israel. Specifically, in his arrest, trials, and crucifixion, Jesus symbolizes a captive, defeated, and exiled Israel. The commemorative narrative of *Genesis Rabbah* also likens the experiences of figures in Genesis to biblical Israel's captivity and exile, and thus makes Israel symbols out of Adam, Jacob, and Jacob's sons. The symbols in both narratives are loci of information that carry messages to the readership—they function as mimetic examples for the group, and as declarative embodiments of the values and characteristics of Israel as they are reflected in Scripture.

My comparison between Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* also offers ways to view the Gospel as a text that offers a positive view of Israel and is not opposed to Jews or Judaism. Returning to the verse with which I began this study will provide a suitable test case for viewing Matthew in this way. Mt 2:15b explicitly cites Hos 11:1b: "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'" As I argued in my Introduction, this verse constitutes a Matthean metaleptic technique for establishing a close relationship between Jesus and Israel, since the whole of Hos 11:1 reads, "When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Reading this context of Hos 11:1 in light of Matthean theology, John P. Meier concludes, "Hosea 11:1 in its original context obviously refers to the people of Israel in its exodus from Egypt. Matthew therefore sees Jesus as the new and true Israel,

recapitulating in himself the experience of the Israel of old.”⁴¹⁶ In a footnote to this comment, Meier adds: “‘Israel’ in Matthew always refers to the people tied to the Old Testament and Judaism. What Israel was has now been absorbed into the person of Jesus.”⁴¹⁷ In identifying Jesus with Israel, Meier not only dissolves the nation into the individual Jesus, but also does the same with all of Israel’s Scriptures and Judaism.

In my own analysis of Matthew, in conversation with rabbinic Judaism, I offer evidence for why Meier’s claim is both unwarranted and inaccurate. Matthew is greatly concerned with Israel as a people apart from Jesus; indeed, Jesus’ entire mission is dedicated to saving his people—the lost sheep of the house of Israel—from their sins. If Matthew absorbs Israel into the person of Jesus by the time the reader gets to Mt 2:15—as this is the point at which, according to Meier, “Israel has *now* been absorbed into the person of Jesus” (my emphasis)—then the evangelist undermines the message and purpose of the Gospel. Matthew’s goal is to show how Jesus relates to and recapitulates biblical Israel in order to convey a commemorative message about the fact that “all the people” have been saved from their sins. Biblical Israel supports and explains Jesus’ own story, and also imbues it with meaning. A Jesus who absorbs Israel is antithetical to Matthew’s Jesus insofar as the Gospel has its protagonist suffering on behalf of Israel.

A look at rabbinic literature might also curb the tendency of New Testament scholars to conflate Jesus and Israel in Matthew. *Genesis Rabbah* builds vast and complex scriptural networks in order to tighten the relational bonds between the people of Israel and Adam, Jacob, and Jacob’s sons. In the text from *Genesis Rabbah* that I offered at the outset of this study, the rabbis claim, “everything that was written about Abraham was also written about his children”

⁴¹⁶ John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 55.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 19.

(*Gen. R.* 40:6). However, these rabbis would never say that Abraham, or Adam or Jacob, *are* Israel. To do so would be to undermine all of the exegetical creativity and theological insight that the midrashic *juxtaposition* of these individuals with Israel generates. Matthew would agree with the rabbis on this point, and understanding the evangelist's narrative in this way avoids the supersessionist conclusion that Jesus absorbs "the people of Israel" (both in the first-century and now), the "Old Testament," and/or "Judaism."

Chapter 2 provides the foundation for the attention to biblical exegesis in Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah*. While the atomistic understanding of rabbinic exegesis has led to the denigration of rabbinic scriptural approaches in some Christian circles, my study has shown that Matthew and the rabbis share an interest in the context of their biblical citations. Rather than being concerned with single letters or words—a method of narrow exegesis of which the rabbis are often accused—*Genesis Rabbah* is very much aware of the Tanakh's broader story, and it utilizes that story in order to make complex theological and soteriological claims via partial citations of Scripture. Because of the brevity with which the rabbis present *the text itself*, scholars have mistakenly assumed that rabbinic exegetical project must be equally narrow. This study has worked to dispel this oversimplification and to show that Matthew is a pre-rabbinic example of the kind of metaleptic biblical exegesis that the rabbis would extol—if not from a theological perspective, then certainly from an exegetical one.

The whole of chapter 4 challenges the theory that Matthew has the Israel of the Gospel narrative in "exile." The "Israel in exile" argument is becoming more and more accepted in New Testament studies. However, neither Matthew's narrative setting (the Land of Israel) nor Matthew's use of Scripture supports the idea that the evangelist understood Israel to be in exile, either literally or metaphorically. Neither Matthew's genealogy (Mt 1:1-17) nor Matthew's initial

fulfillment citations (Mt 1:23-4:16) support the idea of ongoing exile. A metaleptic reading of Matthew's citations shows that the biblical text from which the Gospel draws say nothing about a people "in exile." Instead, Matthew uses precedent texts whose contexts describe affliction and salvation within the Land of Israel. Thus, Matthew's objective is not to show the first-century people in an exile from which Jesus saves them; rather, the evangelist shows that Jesus will save his people from their sins in the Land much like God and David saved biblical Israel from foreign aggressors in their Land.

Chapter 5 shows that both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* are deeply concerned with the destiny of the Jewish people. Matthew and the rabbis would disagree on the efficacy of Jesus' sacrifice as a ransom for Israel's sins, but both of the texts seek to explain how sin can be forgiven in a post-70 world. While the Matthean and rabbinic answers differ on specifics, they share the assumption that suffering atones for sin in the sense that it purges sin away. The difference is that Matthew asserts that one person made that atonement on Israel's behalf, while the rabbis argue that sins are forgiven, in part, through collective endurance under suffering. Matthew clearly believes that Jesus suffers *for* his people, but the rabbis also suggest that individuals like Jacob and his sons suffer *with* their descendants and provide templates for endurance under such suffering.

In chapter 6, my treatment of Matthew focuses on the scriptural connections between Jesus and Israel in the Passion Narrative. While others have also contributed studies of the relationship between Jesus and Israel, they have either focused on different Matthean passages,⁴¹⁸ or have missed the extent to which Matthew's Jesus recapitulates the biblical story in his passion.⁴¹⁹ I

⁴¹⁸ Kennedy, *Recapitulation*; Piotrowski, *New David*.

⁴¹⁹ Richardson, "Israel-idea"; Kynes, *Christology*; Allison, *New Moses*.

have shown that Matthew implicitly cites and/or alludes to the scriptural narrative of Israel's captivity and exile no fewer than seven times in the Passion Narrative (cf. Mt 26:39, 50, 59-60, 75; 27:2; 39, 51). My analysis of the Passion Narrative has shown that the Jesus-as-Israel idea is very much present in Jesus' final hours, and that Matthew's use of Scripture in Mt 26:36-27:51 presents the complete story of biblical Israel in Jesus' experiences—that is, Israel's exile in his passion and Israel's return from exile in his resurrection.

In my analysis of the Matthew's Vineyard Parable, I show that the parable foreshadows Jesus' passion and death as the exilic event that the Passion Narrative describes. In particular, my comparison between Matthew and the Isaiah Targum's Vineyard Parable highlights an aspect of both texts that previous comparative studies between the two have missed: Matthew has the parabolic son “cast out” (ἐκβάλλω) of the vineyard, and the Targum the entire people “cast out” (טלטל) of their vineyard, which is a targumic metaphor Israel's exile. While this similarity allows for initial contact between the Gospel and the Targum, the difference between the two illuminates Matthew's Christology: Jesus is cast out as a representative of the whole people, and therefore stands as a substitute who gives his life in exchange for the lives of his people.

Like Matthew, the Targum to Jeremiah 23:2 also describes Israel's corrupt leaders “casting out” (טלטל) the whole people and being punished for it. Thus, as with the Isaiah Targum, the Aramaic version of Jeremiah provides an analogue to Jesus cast out of Matthew's vineyard, and the tenants (the chief priests and Pharisees [21:45]) being punished as a result. My reading of Matthew's Vineyard Parable in light of the Targums supports an understanding of the Passion Narrative as an exilic punishment that Jesus undergoes in order to save his people from their sins” (1:21).

In my evaluation of *Genesis Rabbah* in chapter 7, I argue against the prevailing theory that

the rabbis' approach to Scripture is atomistic. To the contrary, every one of the biblical verses that the rabbis cite in *Gen. R.* 19:9, 68:13, and 92:3 are dependent on their original contexts. In particular, I show that applying the literary device of metalepsis—reading the original context of the verse beyond the cited text—highlights *Genesis Rabbah's*, as well as Matthew's, contextual use of Israel's Scriptures.

Both Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* utilize Scripture in similar ways, and although the theological statements they make are quite different, the ends are alike. Matthew applies Scripture to Jesus in order to present him as a ransom for the people. The Vineyard Parable (Mt 21:33-46) alludes to the exilic nature of Jesus' Passion Narrative. Matthew consistently, in both the Vineyard Parable and the Passion Narrative, inserts Jesus into the place of Israel as it is described in Scripture. However, the evangelist does not do this to replace Israel as an entity; rather, it is a way to show how the individual stands in as a ransom for the forgiveness of Israel's sin-debt. *Genesis Rabbah* also puts individuals in the place of collective Israel, but not in a substitutionary way. Instead, the rabbis present individuals as case studies for how the collective should or, in Adam's case, should not act in the present. While Matthew and *Genesis Rabbah* differ in the content and function of their respective symbols, both texts offer ways for their readers to know that God grants forgiveness, and that the life of the collective remains a divine priority.

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