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THE LIFE OF PSALMS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Abraham Jacob Berkovitz

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The *Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity* is a literary biography that tells the story of how Jews and Christians encountered, read and made meaning of the book of Psalms in Late Antiquity. It draws from and contributes to the fields of book history, history of reading and biblical reception. It opens with a discussion of the materiality upon which reading was enacted and how late antique Jews and Christians made sense of and crafted the material medium of the Psalter (chapter 1). It then connects materiality to reading by examining scenes of reading, narratives in which an agent reads from a physical Psalter. This analysis highlights the interplay between materiality and the various sociological transcripts that undergird the activity of reading (chapter 2). Not all forms of reading, however, can be traced back to its material reality. The narrative continues with an exploration of the most expected form of late ancient reading: scholastic reading; namely, reading the Psalter as an exegetical activity (chapter 3). The discussion will examine not only the products of interpretive reading, but also the very assumptions that underpin scholastic reading. Exegesis, however, was not the exclusive – or even the most common – form of reading the book of Psalms in Late Antiquity. The narrative then broadens our horizons of expectations by exploring the reading of Psalms in liturgy (chapter 4) and as magical and pietistic practice (chapter 5). These chapters offer windows into the life and practices of non-elite Jews and Christians. They also establish the popularity and pervasiveness of Psalms, which allows the story to then recurve back to exegesis, this time, however, with a focus on identity and religious competition. The narrative continues with an exploration of how the shared late antique psalmscape fostered both Jewish and Christian polemical exchange (chapter 6), and even irenic exegetical interaction (chapter 7). The narrative ends (conclusion) with the acknowledgement that this dissertation merely scratches the surface of

late antique psalm reading, but nonetheless offers a foundation upon which other stories about the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity can be built.

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Technical Notes and Abbreviations

For purposes of style and reference, I have hewn closely to the guidelines offered in the second edition of *The SBL Handbook of Style*. I differ, however, on a few important points

1) I follow neither the academic or general-purpose style of transliteration. I have only indicated *alephs* and *ayins* the occur in the middle of a word, and not at its beginning or end. I transliterate *shin* with "sh," *waw* with "v," *tzade* with "tz," *ḥet* with "ḥ"; and *ṭet* with "ṭ." I also distinguish between fricative and plosives "b" and "v"; and "p" and "f." *Sheva* is transliterated with an "e."
2) I have abbreviated rabbinic sources in accordance with the handbook, except where I felt the handbook's suggestion was awkward. For instance, I have abbreviated Babylonian Talmud Shevuot as b. Shev. and not b. Šebu. Anyone working with the handbook should not find difficulty in discerning the unabbreviated form of a reference.
3) I have capitalized Late Antiquity throughout the dissertation.

Some notes on the use of Hebrew. All translations of Hebrew in this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted, except for biblical translations, which are from the NRSV. All Hebrew in the body of the dissertation has been transliterated. The footnotes contain a mix of transliterated and untransliterated Hebrew, depending on which style was more useful for the argument at hand. Additionally, I have translated the titles of all modern Hebrew scholarly publications into English. Readers may determine which cited works are originally in Hebrew by consulting the bibliography. Additionally, I have anglicized the names of rabbinic figures where a suitable equivalent exists, except for R. Yoḥanan.

Some notes on Psalms. Throughout this dissertation, I have cited the Psalms according to their Masoretic enumeration, even when discussing sources that employ the Septuagintal numbering system. I have not, however, reworked the language of primary sources. Thus, when a figure like Origen is talking about Psalm 44, he really is discussing Psalm 45. I make this clear, however, when it occurs. Further, I *do not* follow the NRSV verse numbering system when it comes to Psalms. The NRSV treats the Psalm superscriptions as true paratexts, existing outside the numbering system. I follow the NJPS, which treats the titles as an integral part of versification, and thus as a complete first verse when it stands alone, such as in Psalm 12.

Abbreviations for Books and Journals

AGJU - Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums

AJEC – Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity

ANF – Ante Nicean Fathers

AOAT - Alter Orient und Altes Testament

ASNU - Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis

BJS – Brown Judaic Studies

BRLJ – The Brill Reference Library of Judaism

BZAW - Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CIIP - Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae

CRINT: Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum

CSCO - Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium

DCLY - Deuterocanonical and Cognate literature yearbook

DJD – Discoveries in the Judean Desert

DSD - Dead Sea Discoveries

ESJM - Études sur le judaïsme médiéval

HdO – Handbuch der Oerientalistik

HSS - Hellenic Studies Series

HTR – Harvard Theological Review

HUCA – Hebrew Union College Annual

IEJ - Israel Exploration Journal

IJS – IJS Studies in Judaica

JAJ – Journal of Ancient Judaism

JAJSupp – Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements

JANESCU - Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University

JBL - Journal of Biblical Literature

JCP – Jewish and Christian Perspectives

JECS - Journal of Early Christian Studies

JJS - Journal of Jewish Studies

JQR – Jewish Quarterly Review

JSOTSupp – Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series

JSJ – Journal for the Study of Judaism

JSP - Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha

JTS - Journal of Theological Studies

LCJP - Library of Contemporary Jewish Philosophers

LSTS- Library of Second Temple Studies

MHUC – Monographs of the Hebrew Union College

MRLA - Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity

$NPNF^2$ – Nicean and Post-Nicene Fathers, series 2.

NovTSupp - Supplements to Novum Testamentum

NTSupp – Supplements to Novum Testamentum

OECS - Oxford Early Christian studies

OTL - Old Testament Library

REJ - Revue des études juive

RevQ- Revue de Qumran

RGRW – Religions in the Graeco-Roman World,

RVV - Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten

SBEC – Studies in Bible and Early Christianity

SBLEJL – Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and its Literature

SBLMS – Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series

SFC - Selections from the Fathers of the Church

SHK - Schriften des Historischen Kollegs

SJ – Studia Judaica

SLFCS – Studies in Literacy, Family, Culture and the State

SNTSM – Society for New Testament Studies Monographs

STAC - Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum

STDJ – Studies on the Texts of the Judean Desert

STT - Studia Traditionis Theologiae

TCH – Transformation of the Classical Heritage

TSAJ - Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism

TTH - Translated texts for historians

VCSup – Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae

VT – Vetus Testamentum

VTSupp – Supplements to Vetus Testamentum

WGRW- Writings from the Greco-Roman World

WUNT - Wissenchaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Introduction: The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity

The seven chapters and several hundred pages of this dissertation seek to answer one deceptively simple-sounding question: How did Jews and Christians read the Psalter in Late Antiquity? Reading is an inescapable feature of modern life, and forms the core of humanistic studies. By scanning these words with your eyes, you are engaged in the activity of reading. While the words in front of you will not change, your process of deciphering, contextualizing and making meaning of them will be influenced by a range of factors. Some will no doubt read this dissertation on a computer, scrolling for access and information. Others will peruse a hard copy – perhaps with pen in hand – flipping back and forth between pages to see if my argument coheres. Each will find his or her attention drawn to different parts of the arguments contained herein, likely under the influence of previous interests. All, I hope, will read this dissertation with an eye towards its validity as an academic enterprise and not engage with it as a pietistic practice. While the words of this text remain the same, your reading process and its results will differ from that of your colleague. In short, as historians of reading have long informed us: the activity of reading is materially, historically, culturally and socially contingent.[1]

[1] The history of reading is a somewhat new, but rapidly developing, field. For some, but certainly not all, of the insightful studies that have influenced my own thinking on the subject see: Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," *Past & Present* 129 (1990): 30–78; Robert Darnton, "First Steps Towards a History of Reading," in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990), 154–88; Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991); Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); Elizabeth A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Robert Darnton, *The Devil in the Holy Water or the Art of Slander from Louis XIV to Napoleon*, Material Texts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); William A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities*, Classical Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Yaacob Dweck, *The Scandal of Kabbalah: Leon Modena, Jewish Mysticism, Early Modern Venice*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work: How States Shaped Literature* (New York: Norton, 2014); Daniel Stolzenberg, *Egyptian Oedipus: Athanasius Kircher and the Secrets of Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Renée J. Raphael, *Reading Galileo: Scribal Technologies and the Two New Sciences* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017).

This dissertation seeks to understand the reading practices of the Jews and Christians who lived during Late Antiquity, and sits at the crossroads of several major humanistic disciplines, including: book history, history of reading, biblical reception, intellectual history, cultural history and history of religions. Before examining how this dissertation interacts with and contributes to each field, let me first unpack the title of this dissertation: *The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity*.

Why Psalms?

A history of Jewish and Christian reading could – and should – be written from a variety of vantages. The book of Psalms, however, provides a unique window into the reading experience and practices of late antique Jews and Christians. It would be no exaggeration to claim that the Psalter was the most cherished text among all the books of the Jewish and Christian Bible in Late Antiquity. Jews and Christians quoted it more often than other biblical books, including those that are larger in size, such as Kings, Chronicles, Samuel, Jeremiah and Genesis.[2] They accorded the Psalms pride of place within a diverse set of religious practices, such as interpretation, magic, liturgy, piety and polemic. The centrality and versatility of the book of Psalms makes it a powerful magnifying glass through which to view in full detail the activity of reading and the impact it had upon the life of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity. In fact, the drawback of selecting the Psalter as my guide through Late Antiquity is the many nooks and crannies I could not explore in the pages that follow. To tell the life of the book of Psalms and its readers is a project that cannot be

[2] According to biblindex.info, between the years 1-650 one finds 53,179 Psalm quotations in Christian literature. Matthew yields 47,089, Genesis 35,639 and Song of Songs 4052. Exact numbers are harder to provide for rabbinic literature. Aaron Hyman's *The Written and Transmitted Torah* (3 Vols.; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1936-9) contains 112 pages of reference to Psalm quotation. Genesis has 93 and Song of Songs 11.

completed in one dissertation alone. My readers should understand this dissertation, therefore, as a prolegomenon, as an invitation to further study.

Why Late Antiquity?

Even a prolegomenon must start and end somewhere. I have chosen to limit the scope of this dissertation to Late Antiquity, defined here as the period between the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) and the Muslim conquest (ca. 622 CE).[3] These boundaries are porous, and I will occasionally make use of sources that antedate the destruction of the Second Temple and postdate the Muslim conquest. In fact, this particular inflection of Late Antiquity is guided by the centrality of classical rabbinic literature – the Mishnah, Tosefta, Tannaitic Midrash, Amoraic Midrash, Palestinian Talmud and Babylonian Talmud – to this study. These sources preserve traditions that may date to the end of the Second Temple period and, for the most part, contain traditions that do not postdate the Arab conquest.[4] My decision to begin Late Antiquity in the first century as opposed to the second rests with the fact that Late Antiquity is characterized as a time of transformation and innovation. The destruction of the Second Temple and the slow coalescence of the rabbinic movement thereby qualify as late antique from the perspective of my sources.[5]

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[3] For the classic periodization of Late Antiquity see Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750* (New York: Norton, 1989). For a review of the term see Edward James, "The Rise and Function of the Concept 'Late Antiquity,'" *Journal of Late Antiquity* (2008): 20–30.

[4] I am, of course, speaking in broad terms. Significant portions of classical rabbinic literature – such as the Babylonian Talmud – were no doubt undergoing the process of redaction during the Islamic period. The traditions preserved in classical rabbinic literature, however, rarely give direct evidence of an Islamic setting and are best contextualized in a Sassanian or Greco-Roman context. For a recent discussion of the dating and redaction of the Babylonian Talmud see scholarship of and that cited by Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 45–50. For the Greco-Roman context of rabbinic literature see Peter Schäfer, ed., *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, 3 vols., TSAJ 71, 79, 93 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998-2002). For the Sassanian context of the Babylonian Talmud see Shai Secunda, *The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in Its Sasanian Context*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[5] On the slow coalescence of the rabbinic movement and its accumulation of power see Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*, Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine,*

It is an unavoidable fact that the majority of the available evidence for describing late antique Palestinian and Babylonian Judaism comes from the literature created and preserved by the rabbis and their followers. At the same time, however, the words "Jewish" or "rabbinic" do not appear in the title of this dissertation. I omit them for two reasons: first, to stress the fact that I do not examine rabbinic sources alone or in isolation; second, to emphasize the fact that Judaism – like Christianity – was an integral part of Late Antiquity, especially if we focus our attention on the regions of Palestine, Babylonia and its environs. Non-rabbinic and Christian sources fill the pages of this dissertation, and rabbinic Judaism is best situated in conversation with them. To add the word Jewish into the title of this dissertation and thus limit the scope of this project would be to absolve the generalist reader of scholarship on Late Antiquity from taking seriously – or even encountering – the arguments contained herein, arguments that I hope affect our broader understanding of the practice of reading in Late Antiquity.

But, why Late Antiquity? Late Antiquity witnesses the rise of three conditions that allow for the life of Psalms to be told in rich detail. First, a canonical Psalter with a relatively stable text and order indisputably exists in the beginning of Late Antiquity.[6] In Late Antiquity, unlike the during the Second Temple period, the Psalter no doubt exists as a "book," or better yet, a specific set of scrolls. Thus, when I speak of the Psalms in this dissertation I refer to the canonical 150-psalm Psalter, acknowledging, of course, minor variation where it occurs. Second, only from Late Antiquity onwards do we get enough information about the Psalter from actual readers –

100-400 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 66 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997).

[6] The state of the Psalter in the Second Temple period is more complicated. For a recent study that attempts to displace the notion of a canonical Psalter, or even Psalms as a book, in the Second Temple period see Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). For a perspective that acknowledges variation but still maintains the Psalter as a unit of meaning see Peter W. Flint, "Unrolling the Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 229–50.

individuals who stand outside the text and claim to describe what it means.[7] A history of reading is on more stable ground when we do not need to infer readers from the text of a psalm, but have readily available a reader's reaction to or use of a particular psalm. Third, Late Antiquity also witnesses the rise of psalm-reading strategies to which sources from earlier periods only obliquely attest, such as pietistic, liturgical and polemical reading. A nuanced portrait of the life of Psalms must begin with Late Antiquity.

Why Life?

The word "life" in the title of this dissertation performs a specific methodological task. Perhaps the expected word for the study of a biblical book in the periods after it was written and redacted is "reception."[8] While many may classify this project as one of reception history – and I argue below that this dissertation has something to contribute to that field – I shun the use of the word "reception." In addition to biasing research towards a history of interpretation, a tendency of reception history I will critique below, the word "reception" does not fully capture the vitality of the Psalter.[9] The word "reception" places the theoretical weight on those who are given a text and transform it in the process of transmission. It privileges the impact a reader has upon a text without enough consideration of how a text – including embedded reading cues and its material reality – may have an impact upon the reader.[10]

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[7] Some clear examples of Second Temple readers that stood outside the text include *Pesher Psalms* (1Q16, 4Q171, 4Q173) and *4QFlorilegium* (4Q174). These works are fragmentary. The work of outside readers also eventually became incorporated into the Psalter itself through collection and redaction. See most recently David Willgren, *The Formation of the "Book" of Psalms: Reconsidering the Transmission and Canonization of Psalmody in Light of Material Culture and the Poetics of Anthologies*, Forschungen zum Alten Testament. 2. Reihe 88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). This evidence, however, differs in both quality and quantity from that available during Late Antiquity.

[8] Hence the title of an important collection of essays on the history of the Psalter: Peter W. Flint et al., *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, VTSupp 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

[9] My use of the word "vitality" is inspired by Hindy Najman, "The Vitality of Scripture Within and Beyond the 'Canon,'" *JSJ* 43 (2012): 497–518.

[10] See especially the first two chapters of this dissertation for the developed version of this claim.

In seeking an appropriate word to describe the multifarious processes discussed in this dissertation I sought inspiration from the German near-equivalent of reception: *Nachleben*, literally translatable as "afterlife."[11] Afterlife, however, does not suffice. While it places more focus on the role of a literary work, it assumes a fixed point in time after which a text merely reverberates. It loses its initial vitality and haunts the readers of the present from a defined moment in the past.[12] The chapters of this dissertation do not examine themes and motifs found in the Psalms and recast elsewhere – ideas that would merely echo throughout Jewish and Christian literature and history; rather, the Jews and Christians found within these pages read the Psalter – in its various material instantiations – with constantly renewed vigor, building on older traditions and crafting new ones. There is no "after." I thus settled on the word "life," a term that captures the continued vitality of the Psalter and does not frame its history as one of mere survival.

The "life of" formula also brings this dissertation into the realm of biography. Literary biographies, of course, cannot perform exactly the same tasks as the traditional biographical genre.[13] They cannot trace the steady year-by-year development of a narrowly defined subject. Nonetheless, literary biographies – this dissertation included – can more readily acknowledge a fact that the labels "reception" and "*Nachleben*" occlude: readers and texts constantly shape and reshape each other. In other words, *The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity*, as literary biography, tells

[11] This term was cemented into scholarly discourse by Aby Warburg, who built a library with his father's inheritance for the purposes of studying *Das Nachleben der Antike*. For an accessible introduction to Aby Warburg see E. H. Gombrich and Fritz Saxl, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1970). Warbrug's attention to "afterlife" was mostly centered around art. The term, however, has moved to literary and cultural studies.
[12] On Warburg's concept of time and chronology see Georges Didi-Huberman, "Artistic Survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time," trans. Vivian Rehberg and Boris Belay, *Common Knowledge* 9 (2003): 273–85. Note that *Nachleben* eschews periodization, but still must take as a beginning the pure instance of a certain theme or motif.
[13] I must note that by literary biography I do not mean the biography of writers and artists. I mean the life of a text itself. See, for example, the *Lives of Great Religious Books* series by Princeton University Press (http://press.princeton.edu/catalogs/series/lives-of-great-religious-books.html).

the story of how the Psalter both shaped the Judaism and Christianity of Late Antiquity, and was, in turn, shaped by its Jewish and Christian users.

Book History

As mentioned above, this dissertation draws from and contributes to several fields of humanistic inquiry. The study of book history, for example, has left an indelible mark on the analysis below. Historians of the book emphasize the interconnectivity between material, text and reader.[14] Materiality and meaning cannot be separated from one another and exist in a dialectic relationship. This dissertation adopts the methodological perspective of the book historian in telling the story of the Psalter. It demands an account of history that connects materiality, textuality and reading practices. In the chapters below, I will examine at least three different types of material realities and how they affected the reading, use and conceptualization of the Psalter: scrolls, codices and inscriptions. In doing so, I highlight the material dimensions of biblical interpretation and engagement – aspects of reception that have yet to receive their fair share of scholarly attention.

Furthermore, attention to materiality and its role in shaping reading helps us revise a deep-seated scholarly preference for understanding and analyzing the rabbis as an oral-dominant culture. Rabbinic interpretation of Psalms – as will be discussed below – is indebted to the material reality of the Psalter. Even the rabbis themselves acknowledge the centrality of writing to Scripture. Scholars should accord the same respect to writteness that is usually reserved for orality.

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[14] In addition to studies cited in the first footnote, see: D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Robert Darnton, "What Is the History of Books?," in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990); Anthony Grafton and Megan H. Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book: Origen, Eusebius, and the Library of Caesarea* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Megan H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Analysis of late antique materiality also directly affects the field of book history. With several notable exceptions, historians of the book overwhelmingly favor the study of books after the rise of the printing press.[15] My examination of the material Psalter in Late Antiquity is thus a call for book historians to investigate the book before the rise of print and to give the material realities of scrolls, codices, inscriptions and manuscripts the attention they deserve. I further argue that historians of the book should not set their scope of inquiry upon the physical object of a book alone, but also upon the literary and visual representations of the book. What Late Antiquity lacks in terms of physical scrolls, manuscripts and inscriptions it more than makes up for in literary sources that describe the book and "think with" the book. By analyzing the physical Psalter along with its literary representations I am attempting to take steps towards building a book history that includes the study of ancient Jewish and early Christian *materiality* and *material imagination*.

History of Reading

Related to book history is the history of reading. As mentioned above, historians of reading complicate the process of reading by situating it at the intersection of particular historical, material and sociocultural contingencies. Adopting this methodological stance, which defies any unified notion of reading, is very useful for understanding the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity. It allows

[15] As an example, the journal *Book History* began in 1988 and publishes about 13 articles per volume. As of its 19th volume, it has published only four essays that deal with the Middle Ages or earlier: R. W. McCutcheon, "Silent Reading in Antiquity and the Future History of the Book," *Book History* 18 (2015): 1–32; Anthony McGrath, "Using Religious Art as Pictorial Evidence for Medieval Book History," *Book History* 18 (2015): 33–47; Eva Mroczek, "Thinking Digitally About the Dead Sea Scrolls: Book History Before and Beyond the Book," *Book History* 14 (2011): 241–69; Joanne Filippone Overty, "The Cost of Doing Scribal Business: Prices of Manuscript Books in England, 1300–1483," *Book History* 11 (2008): 1–32. A similar situation prevails in the extremely insightful collection of essays in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006). Likewise, David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, *An Introduction to Book History* (New York: Routledge, 2005) devote minimal attention to the era before print. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose, eds., *A Companion to the History of the Book*, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture 48 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), contains some studies before the rise of print. The bulk of the volume is devoted to post-print books.

us to separate the many strands tied together in the simple word "reading" and to appreciate and examine the process and results of each strand on its own terms.

It also allows us to avoid the dichotomy of "Jewish reading" and "Christian reading" by examining the process of reading and not just its actors. As I will demonstrate in the chapters below – and especially in chapters 5-7 – Jews and Christians belonged to the same sociocultural world of Late Antiquity and relied on similar reading practices, even when the content differed. The categories of "Jew" and "Christian," while no doubt important and operative, must be viewed as only one datum within a larger social matrix. In short, attention to reading encourages us to pay attention to not just "who" reads, but "how" they read, opening up the possibility of appreciating the similar "hows" of very different – but contextually adjacent – "whos."

Additionally, attention to the varieties of reading corrects for a deeply entrenched bias in the study of rabbinic Judaism. Scholarship on rabbinic – or even Jewish – engagement with Scripture almost naturally focuses on *interpretation*, often describing the activity and results of reading with the catch-all term "midrash."[16] To be sure, scholars then nuance and categorize the various different types of midrash.[17] Midrash, however, in whatever format, remains the archetype for Jewish reading. It is not my goal in this dissertation to historicize, contextualize and critique the current use of the word "midrash."[18] And, in some sense, the focus on midrash and biblical interpretation is natural and obvious. The vast majority of rabbinic literature is interpretive. What

[16] Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in talmudic Culture*, The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 9 calls midrash "the hermeneutic system of rabbinic Judaism." Burton L. Visotzky, ed., *The Midrash on Proverbs*, Yale Judaica Series 27 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 1 says, "The term Midrash designates a vast body of literature as well as a process of textual exegesis." For further on the definition of midrash see the insightful essay of and summary of scholarship in Carol Bakhos, "Method(ological) Matters in the Study of Midrash," in *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*, ed. Carol Bakhos, JSJSup 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 161–78.

[17] See the classic work of Isaac Heinemann, *The Methods of Aggadah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1970).

[18] For the most recent attempt to do so see Paul D. Mandel, *The Origins of Midrash: From Teaching to Text*, JSJSup 180 (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

attention to a history of reading teaches us, however, is that midrash – if we wish to use it as a descriptive category at all – was but one of many *types* of reading strategies available to Jews in Late Antiquity. To best understand the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity we must move beyond midrash as a catch-all category of Jewish reading and focus our attention on other ways Jews encountered Scripture. I do so in the pages below by examining non-interpretive forms of a reading, such as liturgical reading, pietistic reading, affective reading and magical reading. The literature created and preserved by the rabbis may highlight and privilege one kind of engagement with Scripture, but historians of Late Antiquity must paint reading in as many vibrant colors as possible.

Reception History and Intellectual History

The study of rabbinic Judaism is not alone in lavishing attention on exegetical modes of scriptural reading. The field of reception history in general – and the reception of Psalms in particular – also favors examining biblical interpretation over any other form of scriptural interaction.[19] Scholars of biblical reception tend to view the Bible as an object of learned discourse, a text that interpreters read, decode and then contextualize within a particular ideological

[19] The exegetical bias does not de-value reception history. It rather means there is much room for it to expand. For some very important books and collection of essays written in the exegetical tradition with respect to Psalms see: Flint et al., *The Book of Psalms*; Susan E. Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Susan E. Gillingham, ed., *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); William P. Brown, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Brian E. Daley and Paul R. Kolbet, eds., *The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014); Gerhard Bodendorfer, "Zur Historisierung des Psalters in der rabbinischen Literatur," in *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*, ed. Erich Zenger and Norbert Lohfink, Herders biblische Studien 18 (Freiburg: Herder, 1998), 215–34; Marie-Anne Vannier, ed., *Judaïsme et christianisme dans les commentaires patristiques des Psaumes*, Christianismes anciens 3 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015). Some of these collected essays do contain an article or two on liturgy, an obvious use of Psalms in various periods. Worth noting as well is that when reception scholars do examine material evidence – such as visual representations of the Bible – it is often with an eye towards exegesis, asking questions such as: "How does this artistic representation *interpret* the biblical text it draws upon?"

framework. Scholars of reception then collect these interpretations and frame them as a history of exegesis. This activity is aided by the fact that the most readily available sources are themselves framed as biblical interpretation. The focus on interpretation, however, yields access to just a fraction of the discourses that surround and constitute the Bible. What makes the Psalter so compelling to study is that evidence exists for exploring its role in more than just interpretation. And this dissertation will examine non-interpretive forms of reading, such as pietistic reading, affective reading and leisure reading. Thus, the attention lavished on exegesis, especially for Psalms, is driven more by the questions scholars ask of their sources than the sources at hand. In this dissertation, I seek to reframe reception by changing the basic question asked of our late antique evidence. Instead of asking, "What meaning did Jews and Christians produce from the Bible?" which privileges interpretation, I ask, "How did Jews and Christians read and use the Bible?" which opens up the possibility of reconstructing non-interpretive modes of scriptural reading.

A history of reading modifies the interpretation-focused stance of reception history in another important way. My critique of interpretation is meant to decenter it as an object of analysis, not remove it completely. A life of Psalms in Late Antiquity could not be told without attention to Jewish and Christian scriptural interpretation. Instead of just collecting and analyzing the results of reading and their ideological implications, however, I attempt to analyze the process and mechanics of interpretation itself. I am thus interested in both the meaning produced by Jews and Christians and how they generated that meaning in the first place. To best account for both of these factors, I will pay attention to the classic concerns of the intellectual historian: In what intellectual contexts do readings of particular psalms take shape and operate? Where, how and why do

particular readings travel? What are the intellectual ancestors and descendants of particular hermeneutical strategies?

This dissertation is distinctive in another manner. In addition to being the first book-length study of the reception of Psalms by Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity, it operates with a vastly different source-base than previous studies. Previous scholarship on psalm reception in Jewish Late Antiquity is either entirely cursory, or deals almost exclusively with Targum Psalms and Midrash Psalms.[20] I intentionally do not accord either a central role in this dissertation. The Targum is written in a dialect of Aramaic that pushes it to the close of Late Antiquity, if not after. It also seems to be aware of the Hungarians, an anachronism from the vantage of Jewish Late Antiquity.[21] Midrash Psalms, which has received the lion's share of attention, is just as problematic. The focus on Midrash Psalms makes sense – it claims to be a rabbinic compilation that interprets the entire book of Psalms. It also exists in English translation.[22] Alas, it is a post-Amoraic midrash that contains both Babylonian and Palestinian traditions, and may include material from the late

[20] Esther M. Menn, "Praying King and Sanctuary of Prayer, Part I: David and the Temple's Origins in Rabbinic Psalms Commentary (Midrash Tehillim)," *JJS* 52 (2001): 1–26; Esther Menn and David Sandmel, "Psalm 29 in Jewish Psalms Commentary (Midrash Tehillim): King David's Instructions for Synagogue Prayer," in *Psalm 29 through Time and Tradition*, ed. Lowell K. Handy (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2011); Esther M. Menn, "Sweet Singer of Israel: David and the Psalms in Early Judaism," in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler, Symposium 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 61–75; Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Esther, Jesus, and Psalm 22," *CBQ* 70 (2008): 709–728; Miriam Benedikt, "The Letter That Lives: Mid. Ps. 29 as a Case Study of Anti-Christological Polemic," *JTS* 67 (2015): 38–76; Moshe Bernstein, "A Jewish Reading of Psalms: Some Observations on the Method of the Aramaic Targum," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint et al., VTSupp 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Bodendorfer, "Zur Historisierung des Psalters in der rabbinischen Literatur"; Gerhard Bodendorfer, "Die Spannung von Gerechtigkeit und Barmherzigkeit in der rabbinischen Auslegung mit Schwerpunkt auf der Psalmeninterpretation," in *Das Drama der Barmherzigkeit Gottes; Studien zur biblischen Gottesrede und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte in Judentum und Christentum*, ed. Ruth Scoralick (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000), 157–92; Isaac Kalimi, "Theologies and Methodologies in Classical Jewish Interpretation: A Study of Midrash Psalms and Its View of God," in *Fighting over the Bible: Jewish Interpretation, Sectarianism and Polemic from Temple to Talmud and beyond*, BRLJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 72–89.

[21] On the Aramaic of the Targum see most recently Barak Dan, "The Aramaic Targum to Psalms: A Morphological Description" (PhD diss., Hebrew University, 2008). For Hungarians see Tg. Pg. 83:7, although, this translation may simply be a case of an earlier text being updated. It also contains demonstrably late traditions, such as the one in which a spider closes the cave David is hiding in. It appears in Tg. Ps. 57:3 and the Alphabet of Ben Sira B 24 (Venice).

[22] William G. Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

anonymous layer of the Babylonian Talmud.[23] At the very least, contemporary scholarship acknowledges its lengthy development and the fact it was the work of multiple redactors.[24] While it certainly contains earlier traditions, we cannot assume any particular one to accurately be the product of late antique Judaism. To reconstruct late antique psalm reception on the basis of Midrash Psalms in the absence of a proper critical edition,[25] source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism, is to build a castle on a cloud. In sum, Midrash Psalms *cannot* be used as an intellectual shortcut into the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity. Thus, instead of working with a text that *may* contain late antique traditions, this dissertation works with those that *certainly* do. It combs late antique rabbinic literature for puzzle pieces with which to fill out a larger portrait. In this dissertation, I use Midrash Psalms only in an ancillary manner, and only where it confirms a trend already extant in a definitively late antique source. I look forward to the day when Midrash Psalms receives a full and systematic study. Only then can it be incorporated into a life of Psalms in Late Antiquity. It is my hope that this dissertation can, as a prolegomenon, begin to provide that foundation.

Cultural History

All good intellectual history incorporates cultural history. It not only describes the development and movement of intellectual trends, but contextualizes them within a lived

[23] One clear example is Midrash Psalms 78:12, which mirrors b. Giṭ 68a and preserves the line: "'I got myself male and female singers' (Ecc 2:8), these are types of instruments. 'As well as the luxuries of commoners,' these are pools of water and baths. '*Shiddah veShiddot,*' here (Babylonia) they translate it as male and female demons. In the west (Palestine) they say a box." Midrash Psalms is presumably a Palestinian Midrash.

[24] See Hermann L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 322–23. For the most recent summary of scholarship on the dating of Midrash Psalms, see Miriam Benedikt, "The Poetics of The Midrash on Psalms: Elements of Dialogical and Polemical Interactivity in Refracted Hermeneutics" (PhD diss., Monash University, 2015), 35–38.

[25] Buber's edition was finished in 1891 and was a vast improvement upon the previous printed edition. His edition, however, cannot be used uncritically as a starting point for any discussion on Midrash Psalms.

environment. Biblical interpretation is a site of cultural struggle, an arena for the construction and dissemination of particular kinds of ideologies and social formations. In this dissertation, I will pay particular attention to the role of psalm interpretation in the creation, maintenance and policing of boundaries between Jewish and Christian identities. All borders, however, are also bridges.[26] I will show throughout this dissertation, but particularly in chapters 6 and 7, that the differences in meaning that Jews and Christians produced from interpreting the Psalter need to be seen in the context of shared reading practices.

Interpretation, as mentioned earlier, is but one type of reading, one site of meaning-making. By examining many kinds of reading, this dissertation builds upon and contributes to a cultural history of Late Antiquity in at least three manners: first, by paying attention to the role of practice and performance as an analytical category; second, by examining the culture of the non-elite; and third, by redefining our expectations of elite culture.

Unlike interpretive reading – which I call scholastic reading and which I will unpack in chapter 2 of this dissertation – the purpose of other types of reading was not primarily to produce a definitive exegesis of a particular text. Examining liturgical reading, pietistic reading and magical reading through the lens of interpretation provides only a partial picture. In addition to exploring what late antique Jews and Christians thought, a life of Psalms must also detail what they "do"; namely, it must pay attention to the categories of performance and practice.[27] In the chapters that follow, I seek to answer questions such as: To what extent can we reconstruct how the Psalter was

[26] Thus the aptly named Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). See especially the wheelbarrow tale on page 1.

[27] My understanding of practice and performance has been heavily influenced by Catherine M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Elisheva Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety in Medieval Ashkenaz: Men, Women, and Everyday Religious Observance* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly, eds., *The Practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages: Production, Reception & Performance in Western Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

used in daily life? In what ways do Jews and Christians perform Psalms similarly and differently? How are these practices imagined by the citizens of Late Antiquity?

Attention to non-scholastic reading also allows for the exploration of the cultures of non-elite Jews and Christians. While the majority of the available sources for reconstructing the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity comes from the church fathers and rabbis – the elite men of Late Antiquity – asking questions about practice and non-scholastic reading allows for and encourages the use of a wider range of sources, such as magic amulets, magic bowls, inscriptions and material Psalters. Collectively, these sources offer us a tiny glimpse into the world of the non-elite, the people of Late Antiquity who did not have their voices preserved by centuries of transmission. These sources will inform us that the Psalter was a wildly popular book in Late Antiquity, and that interpretation was not the most common way that many ancient Jews and early Christians encountered and accessed it.

Material evidence not only sheds light on non-elite psalm cultures, but also on those of the rabbinic and patristic elite. Attention to representations and discussions of liturgical, magical and pietistic psalm reading in rabbinic and patristic literature will demonstrate that the rabbis and church fathers did not set themselves against psalm piety, but were among its chief promoters and proponents.[28] In this sense, this dissertation builds upon the current trend of historiography that refuses to paint the rabbis and church fathers as 19th century German rationalists.[29] I will directly contribute to this scholarly conversation by showing that the "self-evident" division between liturgy/piety and magic provides a poor analytic for studying Late Antiquity. Attention to psalm

[28] For setting rabbis against psalm piety see Günter Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie und Predigt in der rabbinischen Zeit," in *Judaica Minora: Teil I: Biblische Traditionen im rabbinischen Judentum*, TSAJ 133 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 233; Adiel Kadari, "Between the Sages and Widespread Congregation in the Times of the Geonim: On the Origins of the Development of the Custom of Reading and Study before Prayer," *Sidra* 19 (2004): 137–60.

[29] This new historiography is the most pronounced in reading rabbinic and magical texts together. See most recently Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic Before the Rise of Kabbalah*, trans. Batya Stein, Raphael Patai Series in Jewish Folklore and Anthropology (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017).

reception highlights the constant conceptual blurring of liturgy, piety and magic in the cultural domains of both the elite and non-elite. Both elite and non-elite were comfortable citizens of Late Antiquity, a distant country with modes of thought that do not completely parallel our own.

History of Religion: Jews and Christians in Conversation

The elite and non-elite voices that fill these pages come from both Jews and Christians. As is evident from the discussion above, a primary goal of this dissertation is to put Jewish psalm use and Christian psalm use into conversation with each other. While I mostly focus on Jewish sources, I do not ignore Christian ones. I maintain throughout that Jewish texts are most comprehensible when read in light of and, sometimes, as a response to, Christian ones. The life of Psalms in Late Antiquity was a shared – if contentious – existence.

In telling the story of the Psalms in both Jewish and Christian Late Antiquity this dissertation also contributes to the history of Jewish and Christian religious interaction in at least three manners: first, by distinguishing the categories of "readers" and "reading" from one another; second, by expanding the field of Jewish and Christian interaction beyond interpretation and into practice; and third, by arguing that the evidence provided by psalm interpretation allows for the creation of a network of channels of transmissions.

The first two contributions have been alluded to above. First, I have already discussed how a history of reading forces us to examine the agents of reading – Jews and Christians – as only one aspect of reading. Reading is a multi-factor process, an activity bound by reader, materiality and sociocultural contexts. This redefinition allows us to examine how identity shapes reading without reducing the process or outcomes of reading to identity. In other words, it allows us to tell a history

of interaction that respects the differences between Jews and Christians without turning those identity markers into the sum total of meaningful exchange.

The second and third contributions are distinctive, if not unique, to the subject of this dissertation: the book of Psalms. Scholars have spent much time and energy unpacking the exegetical, historical and ideological relationships between Jews and Christians. They often do so by comparing shared beliefs, modes of thought, literary parallels, religious rituals and interpretations of biblical texts. The Psalter, in addition to offering a wellspring of evidence for exegetical interaction, provides us with the ability to move beyond interpretation and into the realms of piety, magic, liturgy and affective reading – dimensions of practice that encompass, as mentioned above, both elite and non-elite Jews and Christians. The book of Psalms allows us to study a fuller range of actors. As I will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, by viewing Late Antiquity through the lens of psalm-based practices, we can observe a world less beset by the religious struggle than if we were to adopt the lens of comparative exegesis alone.

Even within the realm of exegesis the book of Psalms is distinctive. As mentioned earlier, it is the most cited biblical book in late antique Jewish and Christian literature. Given its role in interpretation, magic, liturgy and piety it would no doubt also exist as a lodestone of polemical activity. Jews and Christians, as evidenced in these pages by rabbis and church fathers, would clash over its meaning – especially in attempt to distance two groups that shared fundamentally similar reading practices. More importantly, the popularity of Psalms and its ubiquity in daily life made it into a potent carrier of inter-religious exchange. Magic, liturgy, piety and interpretation crafted the Psalter into a potent vehicle of communication, one that extended beyond rabbi and church father, and one that can allow us to describe Jewish and Christian interaction in the most detailed and, in my opinion, persuasive manner possible; namely, by paying attention to channels

of transmission. In other words, attention to the life of Psalms will allow us not only to describe specific hermeneutical strategies, but also how the products of reading traveled both within and between religious groups.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation tells the story of the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity in seven chapters. Chapter 1 will explore the materiality of the late antique Psalter as well as the textual imagination of the ancient Jews and Christians who encountered it. It will begin with an exploration of the extant physical remnants of the Hebrew Psalter from Qumran through the Middle Ages. This evidence will allow us to speculate about the possible lengths and layouts of psalm scrolls in Late Antiquity. Textual imagination must be read in light of material reality. The chapter will then turn to literary sources. It will explore how rabbis represent the physical Psalter as well as the impact materiality has on those discussions. In particular, it will examine rabbinic textuality from both a macro and a micro perspective. On the macro level it will analyze the interplay between materiality and textuality with regards to questions about the length and divisibility of the Psalter. These conversations will be read alongside a parallel Christian debate about the divisibility of the Psalter and nature of the codex. On a micro level it will explore the tensions produced by discourses about lineation and erasure. Altogether, this chapter will demonstrate the richness of contextualizing rabbinic and patristic culture within the quotidian reality of the material condition.

Chapter 2 will bridge the gap betwen materiality and reading. It will focus on scenes of reading, narratives that depict reading in action. An analysis of these stories will highlight at least three styles of late antique reading: 1) scholastic reading, 2) leisure reading and 3) affective reading. Each, I will argue, has its own sociological transcript. This chapter will also examine a

scene of reading that underscores the anxiety scribes evoke for readers of sacred texts. It will continue to correlate material reality with reading by examining the impact the physical psalm scroll had on rabbinic hermeneutics. In particular, it will show how the physical act of reading linearly across a text undergirded certain forms of rabbinic interpretation. It will continue to argue, in line with the first chapter, that reading is best understood when examined in its material contexts. The chapter will conclude by exploring the social and symbolic wealth attached to the physical Psalter. Overall, chapter 2 will argue that we must pay attention to scriptural reading as a performative and community-defining activity, an act that produces more than the correct exegesis of a particular verse. It will encourage scholars to ask the question: What can we learn about Late Antiquity by widening the scope of what reading may accomplish?

Chapter 3 will turn to the best represented form of late antique reading: scholastic reading. It will ask: What does scholastic reading look like in Jewish Late Antiquity? and will answer it through a detailed analysis of Psalm 29 in early rabbinic interpretation. It will demonstrate that the psalm was a site of heated conversation about revelation and its boundaries, with the place of gentiles during Sinaitic revelation a particularly contentious point of discourse. This chapter will do more than examine and historically contextualize the products of scholastic reading. It will also detail its very process. This chapter will challenge scholars of reception history to examine closely the fissures within a seemingly well-packaged discourse and to move beyond stamp collecting; namely, the process of gathering together independent traditions related to a particular biblical text without articulating exactly how and why these texts relate to one another beyond the fact that they comment on the same biblical text. This chapter will also question a regnant assumption of scholars of midrash, who tend to imagine the rabbis as atomistic readers of Scripture with little interest in interpreting more than a verse or two at a time. It will argue that scholars should examine rabbinic

scholastic reading as a holistic enterprise, a form of reading that simultaneously splits apart and interprets single verses while nonetheless creating and building upon a macro-theme. By acknowledging the complexities of the reading process, this chapter will not only build upon the previous one, but will also encourage the examination of scholastic reading practices in other periods and literatures.

Chapter 4 will answer the call to move beyond scholastic reading. It will examine how some ancient Jews encountered the book of Psalms liturgically by answering a group of related questions: When, how and why did Psalms become part of rabbinic daily liturgy? The chapter will begin by offering a corrective to the widespread assumption that ancient Jewish liturgy must have included psalmody. It will demonstrate that daily psalmody outside the Second Temple was very limited, and was in fact nonexistent in early rabbinic liturgy; only after the times of the talmudic rabbis does one find psalm verses and chapters present in almost every major Jewish prayer. This chapter will then describe how dearth becomes fecundity. It will trace the rise and growth of daily liturgical psalmody in the liturgy of the Amoraic rabbis, and will argue that the inclusion of daily psalmody into liturgy did not occur in one meteoric moment, but rather in fits and starts. The chapter will then examine the contexts that best explain this historical process. It will suggest several possibilities: the justification of liturgical innovation by appealing to Psalms; the use of Psalms in rabbinic sermons; the reconceptualization of the synagogue as a place of prayer; the increased analogizing between synagogue and temple; the use of Psalms in liturgy by non-rabbinic Jews; and the rise of liturgical psalmody in Christianity. Only an amalgam of these factors can provide an adequate background upon which the messy and non-linear historical process of daily psalmody may be examined. By paying attention to multiple historical factors, this chapter will acknowledge the fact that religious developments do not occur in a vacuum or with regards to a

single point of reference. Center/periphery, elite/non-elite as well as Jew/Christian must be viewed in light of one another. More particularly, the chapter wil demonstrate that rabbinic Jews were enmeshed in a religio-cultural matrix that wove together the development of their own traditions, the practices of non-rabbis and the socio-religious ambiance created by the tangible presence of Christians. Daily rabbinic psalmody developed within this matrix, and thus provides a small window into an important form of non-scholastic reading.

Chapter 5 will continue the conversation about non-scholastic forms of reading by reconstructing how Jews and Christians interacted with the Psalter during the quotidian reality of life. It will examine material evidence and literary source in tandem and demonstrate that psalm piety was a central and inescapable feature of life in Late Antiquity. Both Jews and Christians practiced various forms of psalm piety and took part in its shared cultural system. They both engaged in practices such as midnight piety, bedtime piety, death piety, mantra-like repetition of psalms and communal piety. An examination of these activities will highlight not only the shared mechanics of psalm piety, but also distinctive Jewish and Christian performative nuances. Jews and Christians shared the same tools, but employed them towards distinctive goals. Furthermore, by placing literary and textual sources in conversation, this chapter will also demonstrate that many of the practices that characterize psalm piety are not particular to the non-elite. It is all too easy to artificially segregate rabbis and church fathers from average Jews and Christians, to posit that psalm piety was the province of the uninformed and ill-educated masses, and to assert that the intellectualism of the elite would naturally force them to oppose and resist psalm piety. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rabbis and church fathers not only advocated, but also practiced, psalm piety. In addition to collapsing the border between elite and non-elite psalm piety, this chapter will examine the blurred boundaries between protective magic and piety. Contrary to what

one might suppose, ancient Jews and early Christians did not neatly divide these areas into independent epistemological concepts and then play one off the other, scorning the former and lauding the latter. Finally, as reconstructive project, this chapter will attempt to weave a portrait of Jewish and Christian scriptural encounter rarely depicted in scholarship, one that situates the Bible as an object of lived reality. The sources examined in this chapter will demonstrate that the book of Psalms was important not because of "what it means" (i.e. how one interprets the Psalter) but rather because of "how it means" (i.e. how one uses the book of Psalms to create meaning). In other words, attention to psalm piety allows us to view the Bible beyond interpretation, and reconstruct it as an object of practice, a text renewed with life and vigor through constant use.

The aforementioned chapters will demonstrate that the sounds of psalm liturgy, piety and magic constantly reverberated in the lives of late antique Jews and Christians, facilitating both shared and contested social interactions. Chapters 6 and 7 will draw out the implications of living in this psalm-suffused atmosphere for Jewish and Christian exegetical exchange. They will demonstrate that the interpretation of Psalms built an intellectual and cultural bridge between Jews and Christians as well as the checkpoints to police it. Chapter 6 focuses on polemic, and examines the interpretation of Psalm 45 as a case study. The chapter will detail the creation of a Christian anti-Jewish polemic and the development of a rabbinic response. It will show that nearly every Christian exegete read Psalm 45 in light of Jesus' life, death or resurrection and that this popular interpretive trend found a home in Christian anti-Jewish polemic. The chapter will then examine how a rabbinic interpretive trend that begins in Amoraic Palestine and grows throughout Late Antiquity holistically reads the entirety of Psalm 45 as pertaining to the life of Abraham and responds to the reading of Psalm 45 as Jesus. When faced with Jesus, rabbis, and perhaps even non-rabbinic Jews, responded with Abraham. In addition to illuminating an important piece of

cultural and exegetical history, this chapter will also highlight an important aspect of Jewish and Christian interaction often left murky in scholarship: channels of transmissions. Discerning channels of transmission helps us understand the social contexts of knowledge transfer, and this chapter will attempt to provide an exemplar of how to reconstruct such networks of communication. It will conclude by arguing three points. First, scholars can build more plausible cases of Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction by focusing on the popularity and pervasiveness of an *exegetical trend* as opposed to one very specific motif or piece of interpretation. Second, any literary connection must be set into historical context, one that demonstrates the likelihood of a Jew encountering a Christian claim. Third, perhaps particular to the book of Psalms, we must also focus on units of texts larger than a single verse. As seen above, a whole psalm could be a carrier of a particular historically – and geographically – contingent meaning.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, will also highlight channels of transmission, but turns its focus to an example of irenic interaction, an instance of shared exegesis not developed under the aegis of polemic. It will examine the reading of Psalm 1 in b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b and in contemporary East Syrian psalm interpretation. The chapter will demonstrate that b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b functions as a self-contained treatment of much of Psalm 1 that reads the psalm as a guidebook on the production of a rabbinic sage. It makes Psalm 1 answer questions such as: How does one become a sage? What must one avoid? What does rabbinic education look like? The chapter then argues that this long talmudic discussion makes the most sense in light of a widespread East Syrian Christian interpretation of Psalm 1, which reads it as a psalm about the crafting of a moral and educated Christian. The chapter will focus on channels of transmission by discussing the place of the Psalms in Syriac Christianity in general, psalm education in East Syrian sources and then the

commanding role of Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on Psalm 1. It will argue that the rabbinic redactors of b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b were inspired by the Christian reading of Psalm 1 and produced something similar. In addition to providing a case study of non-polemical Jewish-Christian scriptural interaction and another example of how to reconstruct channels of transmission, this chapter will also advocate a couple of additional methodological points. First, it will suggest that one could productively look for Jewish-Christian interaction not only within select sources or stories, but also large redacted units, such as a full talmudic discourse. Second, it seeks to read this contact within one of the redactors' immediate cultural contexts – East Syrian Christianity. It will argue that while the seeds of a particular reading strategy may rest internally, the choice to develop a particular reading as well as its implications are best understood comparatively. Ultimately, both Babylonian Jews and East Syrian Christians were interested in reading Psalm 1 as a compact guide on the crafting of the ideal individual, and their attempts to do so receive sharper focus when we read these sources in light of one another.

Chapter 1: The Material Condition, the Scrolls of Psalms in Late Antiquity

> Of anything beyond these, my child, beware. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.
> - *Ecclesiastes 12:12*

Ecclesiastes' warning appears timeless. The constant publication of books was a strain on the scholar in antiquity as it is today. Yet at least one key difference separates the world of Ecclesiastes from modernity. The "books" he imagined were not the printed and bound tomes of today. They were, rather, scrolls – a better translation of the Hebrew *sefer*. For ancient Jews, scrolls provided the primary means of access to textualized knowledge. This dissertation, which examines how the Psalter was read in Late Antiquity, begins with an exploration of its material condition. In this chapter, as well as the one that follows, I will ask and examine three questions that have largely been ignored by modern scholarship but are essential for understanding the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity.[1] First, what would a tangible scroll(s)[2] of Psalms look like in Late Antiquity? Second, how do ancient Jews discuss and represent the material dimensions of the Psalter? Third, what impact did the physical form of the Psalms have on ancient Jewish reading practices? This chapter explores questions one and two. The following chapter explores the third.

Together, these two chapters will collect, organize and examine nearly every instance in which classical rabbinic literature refers to the "book of Psalms," which in this period refers to psalm scrolls.[3] It will situate these sources within the matrix of late antique discourses on

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[1] The classic and most wide-ranging study of the material Bible in Jewish Late Antiquity remains Ludwig Blau, *Studien zum althebräischen Buchwesen und zur biblischen Litteraturgeschichte* (Strassberg: Karl J. Trübner, 1902). See also Samuel Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Gustav Fock, 1912), 131–98.

[2] As we will explore below, a complete copy of the Psalter often existed as a collection of multiple scrolls.

[3] תילים/ן and ספר תילים/ן. Any instance not discussed in these chapter will receive treatment in another. I do not treat the narrative of R. Ḥiyya who scans his eyes over ספר תילים אגדה in y. Kil. 9:4 32b. This is not a physical scroll of

materiality and reading, and attempt to paint a portrait of how ancient rabbis encountered Scripture. But our exploration, while focused on the book of Psalms, will have wider ramifications. First, these chapters will shed more light on a relatively underexplored dimension of ancient Jewish life: the physical text of the Bible and its impact on rabbinic thought, reading practices and legal interpretation. The physical book of Psalms serves as merely one piece in a much larger mosaic. Second, these chapters will attempt to reframe the characterization of rabbinic Judaism as an oral-dominated culture. Scholars of ancient Judaism have spent much energy defining, categorizing and discussing aspects of rabbinic oral, and now aural, production.[4] This focus has much explanatory power. Nonetheless, it often minimizes the fact that rabbinic literature offers an abundant amount of information on books, reading and writing.[5] Additionally, numerous legal

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Psalms. See Shlomo Naeh, "The Structure and Division of 'Torat Kohanim' (A): Scrolls," *Tarbitz* 66 (1997): 468 n.16; Shlomo Naeh, "The Art of Memory, Memory Structures and Patterns of Text in Rabbinic Literature," in *Studies in Talmud 3*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 555–56; Yaakov Sussman, "Oral Torah Simplicter: The Power of the Yod's Tittle," in *Studies on the Talmud 3*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 264 n. 21; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*, 2nd ed., 2002, 538 rightly read this phrase as "I passed my eyes over the whole book of aggadah (homilies) on Psalms" and not the book of Psalms itself. It bears the same syntactical construction as ספר איוב תרגום, which means a translation of the book of Job in b. Shab. 115a. Furthermore, Gen. Rab. 33:3, a parallel to y. Kil. 9:4 32b, reads מסתכל הייתי באגדת תהלים, "I was looking at an *aggadah* of Psalms."

[4] Such studies include: Elizabeth S. Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Yaakov Elman, "Orality and Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud," *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999): 52–99; Sussman, "Oral Torah"; Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE-400 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity*, trans. Eric J. Sharpe, ASNU 22 (Lund: Gleerup, 1961); Israel J. Yuval, "The Orality of Jewish Oral Law: From Pedagogy to Ideology," in *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Course of History: Exchange and Conflicts*, ed. Lothar Gall and Ditmar Willoweit, SHK 82 (Oldenbourg: Wissenschaftsverlag, 2011), 237–60; David Stern, "The First Jewish Books and the Early History of Jewish Reading," *JQR* 96 (2008): esp. 176-87. See also Stern's somewhat updated discussion in David Stern, *Jewish Literary Cultures: Volume 1: The Ancient Period* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015), 170-78.

[5] This is not, of course, the first study that pays attention rabbinic writing. Some studies include: Blau, *Studien zum althebräischen Buchwesen*; Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Lawrence H. Schiffman, "Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 1 (71b-72a) - 'of the Making of Books': Rabbinic Scribal Arts in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls.," in *Talmuda de-Eretz Israel: Archaeology and the Rabbis in Late Antique Palestine*, ed. Steven Fine and Aaron Koller, SJ 73 (Boston: de Gruyter, 2014), 97–109; Menahem Haran, "The Codex, the Pinax and the Wooden Slats," *Tarbitz* 57 (1987): 151–64; Menahem Haran, "Bible Scrolls in Eastern and Western Jewish Communities from Qumran to the High Middle Ages," *HUCA* 56 (1985): 21–62; Yonatan Moss, "Noblest Obelus: Rabbinic Appropriations of Late Ancient Literary Criticism," in *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters*, ed. Maren Niehoff (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 45–68; Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 20–46; Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 3:131–

discussions and anecdotal narratives highlight the fact that rabbis read and wrote physical documents. By focusing on materiality and its implications for rabbinic thought and culture, these chapters will begin to revise the regnant emphasis on orality.[6]

I begin this process by examining the materiality and textuality of psalm scrolls and their representations in rabbinic literature. By materiality, I mean the physical apparatus of a psalm scroll, including the text contained therein. By textuality, I mean the discourses and mental architecture[7] that frame interaction with and understanding of the material psalm scroll. In simpler terms, materiality is "real" while textuality is "imagined." Materiality and textuality are distinct, but intimately related, analytical categories.

This chapter opens our discussion of rabbinic materiality and textuality with an exploration of the extant physical remnants of the Psalter from Qumran through the Middle Ages. This evidence will allow us to speculate about the possible lengths and layouts of psalm scrolls in Late Antiquity. The chapter then turns to literary sources. It explores how rabbis represent the physical Psalter and the role that materiality had in shaping those representations. It examines rabbinic

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98. For recent interest in the text of the Hebrew bible in rabbinic literature as presented by the rabbis, see Elvira Martín-Contreras and Lorena Miralles-Maciá, eds., *The Text of the Hebrew Bible: From the Rabbis to the Masoretes*, JAJSupp 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014). Much more attention has been paid to the materiality of the Hebrew Bible in earlier periods. See especially Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); William M. Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Menahem Haran, "Archives, Libraries, and the Order of the Biblical Books," *JANESCU* 22 (1993): 51–61; Menahem Haran, "Book-size and the Thematic Cycles in the Pentateuch," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Christian Erhard, Ekkehard Stegemann, and Erhard Blum (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 165–76; Haran, "Bible Scrolls in Eastern and Western"; Menahem Haran, "Book-Scrolls at the Beginning of the Second Temple Period: The Transition from Papyrus to Skins.," *HUCA* (1983): 111–22; Menahem Haran, "Book-Scrolls in Israel in Pre-Exilic Times.," *JJS* 33 (1982): 161–73. In many respects I view this chapter as a continuation and revision of Haran's project.

[6] It must further be acknowledged that I do not mean to set materiality as a strict binary to orality. The oral/written dichotomy is a patently false one, especially when dealing with a culture that comfortably cycles between both poles. For the classic expression of this dichotomy see Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, New Accents (London: Methuen, 1982); Jack Goody, *The Interface between the Written and the Oral*, SLFCS (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

[7] I borrow this turn of phrase from Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 6. For a great study of the interplay between rabbinic textual imagination and their memory practices see Naeh, "The Art of Memory."

textuality from both a macro and a micro perspective. On the macro level, this chapter analyzes the interplay between materiality and textuality with regards to questions about the length and divisibility of the Psalter. On a micro level, it explores the tensions produced by discourses about lineation and erasure. Altogether, this chapter demonstrates the richness of contextualizing rabbinic culture within the quotidian reality of the material condition.

The Material Scroll of Psalms: Size and Length

As mentioned above, the scroll form mediated the Jewish encounter with material Scripture from Antiquity until the beginnings of the Middle Ages.[8] As scholars of book history often remind us, medium and message are inextricably related.[9] The material dimensions of a scroll will necessarily have an impact on the way one reads it. We must, therefore, examine our material sources before discussing our literary ones. Unfortunately, Late Antiquity contains but a few scraps of physical evidence that shed light on the Hebrew scroll.[10] We may nevertheless reconstruct the ancient Jewish scroll by expanding our scope of inquiry, looking backwards to Qumran and

[8] Jews seem to have adopted the codex for Hebrew and Aramaic works only in the eighth century. See Naeh, "Structure and Division (A)," 501 n.86 and 502. n89; Stern, "The First Jewish Books," 163–65. Contrast this with Christians, who seem to adopt the codex form for their sacred works much earlier than the Jews, and may even be part of the innovating force behind the development of the codex. See Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 42–81.

[9] McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 9–30; Frederic G. Kenyon, *Books and Readers in Ancient Greece and Rome*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 40. See also Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 42–81. See especially pg. 43.

[10] Malachi Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts of East and West: Towards a Comparative Codicology* (London: British Library, 1993), 9-11 suggests that earliest reference to a codex form of Jewish literature comes from the end of eighth or beginning of ninth century. He also posits that the *rotulus* was the transitional material form between scroll and codex**.** For a discussion of a burnt late antique scroll found in a synagogue at En-Gedi that likely dates between the third and fourth centuries see Michael Segal et al., "An Early Leviticus Scroll from En-Gedi: Preliminary Publication," *Textus* (2016): 29–42. The scribal conventions this scroll exhibits are not dissimilar to those found at Qumran. For portions of an extant Exodus scroll from the seventh to eighth centuries that also follows MT and is in congruence with rabbinic legislation see Edna Engel and Mordechai Mishor, "An Ancient Scroll of the Book of Exodus: The Reunion of Two Separate Fragments," *Israel Museum Studies in Archeology* 7 (2015): 1–38. For additional fragments Segal et al., "Early Leviticus Scroll," 13.

forwards towards the beginning of the Middle Ages.[11] In doing so, this section will sketch some of the possibilities for the length of late antique psalm scrolls, a feature that informs and is reflected in many of the rabbinic sources we will explore below. This section will also map the tension generated when convenience clashes with scribal convention.

How long was a psalm scroll? Ancient scrolls were not uniform; they varied by scribe and purpose of text.[12] Thus, no two Psalters were exactly identical.[13] We may, nevertheless, appreciate the material culture of ancient Jews by attending to its variety of expressions. The best evidence for ancient Jewish scrolls comes from the scrolls and fragments preserved in the caves of Qumran. The majority of them, and likely the psalm scrolls of Late Antiquity, were written on leather in some kind of black ink.[14] They vary, however, in orthography, quality of writing and length. Let us pay close attention to those scrolls containing text from Psalms.[15] A reconstructed 4QPs^{g},

[11] I will not examine the state of the Hebrew scroll before Qumran as the evidence is even more sparse. For attempts to explore the materiality of the scroll in this period see the works of Haran cited above.

[12] Even the ready-made blank rolls of 20 papyrus sheets were meant to be cut up and used in different ways. See Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 52; T. C. Skeat, "The Length of the Standard Papyrus Roll and the Cost-Advantage of the Codex," in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*, ed. J. K. Elliott, NovTSupp 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 65–66. For the physical features of a papyrus roll in general see Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 40–74; Richard B. Parkinson and Stephen Quirke, *Papyrus*, Egyptian Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995) 9-48. For 20-sheet long papyri see pg. 16. For further on papyrus text and its accompanying reading culture see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 17–31; William A. Johnson, *Bookrolls and Scribes in Oxyrhynchus*, Studies in Book and Print Culture (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 85–230. For further on papyrus in rabbinic literature see Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 131–36.

[13] Even the same literary composition at Qumran could be of differing lengths. See Table 12 in Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert*, STDJ 54 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[14] Ibid., 50. For a detailed exposition on leather and its preparation see Haran, "Bible Scrolls in Eastern and Western." For rabbinic demand to use blank ink in writing biblical text see the large scribal sugya in y. Meg. 1:11 71b-72a.

[15] The Qumran community may not have made a scribal distinction between what we now call biblical and non-biblical texts. See Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 6, 237. Although some features, such as wide margins (pg. 120) and poetic division (pg. 158), are found almost exclusively in texts now considered biblical. The rabbis, however, did dwell on the ideal physical features of biblical texts as distinct from other texts. Lurking in the background of extrapolating from the Psalms at Qumran is the question of whether the psalm scrolls at Qumran are indicative of a true book of Psalms or something else entirely. This claim ultimately traces back to a larger debate about canon. For the claim that there was an authoritative book of Psalms at Qumran see Klaus Seybold, "The Psalter as a Book," in *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms*, ed. Susan Gillingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 168–81. For the argument against see Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 19–50; Mika S. Pajunen, "Perspectives on the Existence of a Particular Authoritative Book of Psalms in the Late Second Temple Period," *JSOT* 39 (2014): 139–63. The literature is vast. I am less interested in reconstructing Psalms at Qumran than using Qumran material for imagining what Psalms may have looked like in Late Antiquity, when the notion of a canonical book of Psalms certainly existed.

assumed to contain only Psalm 119, measures at 2.08 meters (6.82 feet).[16] This falls into the smaller range of scrolls, with .7 meters (2.2 feet) being the smallest. 11QPs[a], the Psalm Scroll, falls into the mid-range length of scrolls, measuring a preserved 4.11 meters (13.5 feet) and a reconstructed 5 meters (16.4 feet). The two largest extant Qumran scrolls are the Great Isaiah Scroll (7.34 meters; 24 feet) and the Temple Scroll (reconstructed at 8.75 meters; 28.7 feet).[17] Harmut Stegemann has speculated that 4QPs[a], due to its small script and large columns, contained the entire Psalter on a roll of 7.6 meters (24.9 feet).[18] Ultimately, we must remember that the length of a scroll was directly related to the measurements of its columns.[19] Longer and wider columns means larger scrolls. Furthermore, less text on a column would require more sheets, just as smaller orthography and more text per-column would render a larger work unto smaller scroll. At Qumran, despite all of this variation, wide top and bottom margins with large print characterize scrolls of books that eventually make it into the rabbinic canon.[20] Perhaps this format underscores their fiscal, social and spiritual significance. Large format Psalters certainly existed during the times of the rabbis, many of whom prescribed wide margins for biblical rolls and were well aware of the socio-cultural dimensions of materiality.[21]

Scroll sizes were, nevertheless, limited by convenience and scribal convention. As artistic representations depict,[22] a reader of a scroll would stand with the book-roll in one hand and unfurl

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[16] Ps 119 has about 4,800 characters without spaces.
[17] For these reconstructed scroll lengths see Table 11 in Tov, *Scribal Practices*.
[18] Eugene C. Ulrich et al., eds., *Qumran Cave 4.XI: Psalms to Chronicles*, DJD 16 (Clarendon: Oxford, 2000), 7.
[19] Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 70–73.
[20] Ibid., 120. This was also characteristic of Greek and Latin luxury editions. See E. G. Turner, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*, ed. P. J. Parsons, 2nd ed., Bulletin Supplement 46 (London: University of London, 1987), 7.
[21] The large scribal sugya in y. Meg. 1:11 71b-72a places numerous demands on a scribe: he must write on leather with ink; leave the width of a line between two lines; leave two fingerbreadths of space in the top margin and three in the bottom margin of a scroll; the sheets must have no fewer than three columns and no more than eight; and more than four errors disqualify a liturgical scroll. I will discuss the socio-cultural dimensions of materiality in rabbinic imagination below and in the following chapter.
[22] See, for example, the image identified variously as Ezra or Moses in Dura Europas holding a scroll. For discussion see Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue*, Augmented ed. (New York: Ktav, 1979), 323–29.

it with the other, reading linearly across the text and down the column.[23] Managing a scroll over 20 feet long would be difficult.[24] Dividing a lengthy work into multiple scrolls would thus facilitate its reading. As noted above, the typical length for a Qumran scroll was under 20 feet. Something similar may be said of Greek and Roman literary rolls from Antiquity through Late Antiquity, which typically do not exceed 20 feet.[25] In fact, extremely large scrolls were often monumental objects meant to be buried with the dead or for veneration.[26] Reading from them was highly impractical without recourse to a liturgical reading desk.[27] The size of a complete Torah scroll, along with its reading apparatus and synagogue setting, no doubt further reified the scroll as holy object of awe and ritual power. For our purposes, this means that a complete Psalter, unless written in very small script, would have been difficult to handle.[28] In contrast, small and medium size rolls

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[23] On the fascinating question of whether re-rolling scrolls was an annoying process see T. C. Skeat, "Two Notes on Papyrus," in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*, ed. J. K. Elliott, NovTSupp 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 60–63. Through his own arts-and-crafts project, Skeat convincingly argues that it was not burdensome. See also T. C. Skeat, "Roll Versus Codex - A New Approach?," in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*, ed. J. K. Elliott, NovTSupp 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 71.

[24] Writing desks were not around to assist reading. Scribes would either write standing or while resting the scroll on his knee. Egyptian scribes would sit on the floor. For the classic treatment, which argues that the writing desk emerges in the eighth or ninth centuries see Bruce M. Metzger, "When Did Scribes Begin to Use Writing Desks?," in *Historical and Literary Studies: Pagan, Jewish and Christian* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 123–37. See also George M. Parássoglou, "ΔΕΞΙΑ ΧΕΙΡ ΚΑΙ ΓΟΝΥ Some Thoughts on the Postures of the Ancient Greeks and Romans When Writing on Papyrus Rolls," *Scrittura E Civiltà* 3 (1979): 5–21; Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 5–6. Turner speculates that the hard reed pen would demand some further support for the scroll lest it be punctured. For the image of reading a scroll on one's knees in rabbinic literature see Avot R. Nat. A 8. For further examples see Menahem Haran, "Books of Torah and Bible in the First Christian Centuries," *Shnaton* 10 (1986): 99 n.15. For the claim that m. Kel. 24:6 points to evidence of a writing desk, see Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 3:158. He is incorrect. The word used is בסיס, and the context is that of מדרס impurity. It is more likely that בסיס is a small box upon which the scribe sits, not writes.

[25] See John van Sickle, "The Book-Roll and Some Conventions of the Poetic Book," *Arethusa* 13 (1980): 6–8; T. C. Skeat, "The Origin of the Christian Codex," in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*, ed. J. K. Elliott, NovTSupp 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 80; Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 53–5, 64–5 argues that the "extreme limit" of Greek literary rolls was 35 feet. Most are within the 20 range. Skeat, "The Length of the Standard Papyrus Roll and the Cost-Advantage of the Codex," 66 observes that the standard 20-page roll would measure between 320-360 cm. This equals 10.5-11.8 feet.

[26] A great example is the Book of the Dead. See Rita Lucarelli, "Making the Book of the Dead," in *Journey through the Afterlife: Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 264–87.

[27] For liturgical reading desks see y. Meg. 3:1 73d: "the reading table (אנגלין) does not have the sanctity of the Ark, but has the sanctity on account of the synagogue." On whether the *bimah* was a reading table see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 343–47.

[28] On the physical limitations of scrolls during the First Temple period such that larger books would have been contained in multiple scrolls see Haran, "Book Scrolls," 114–17. I disagree with Haran about D being a single book, and wonder if *sefer* in addition to "scroll" may also mean "work" in an editorial sense; namely, "a mental construct

would provide a more pleasant reading experience. Although an imperfect analogy, consider the difference between reading from a Loeb library version of a classical text versus a larger edition of that same work. The Loeb version is both more transportable and less cumbersome to read. One could read from it using one hand alone. In fact, in the ancient world, Greek poetical works often appear in rolls of small height.[29] Could we say something similar about Psalms in Late Antiquity, an indisputable work of poetry often lauded as the best of its genre?[30] The correlation of small scrolls with convenience also exists for travel and study editions of lengthy Greek and Hebrew works.[31]

Scribal convention could also dictate the length and division of a particular work, as it did in Greco-Roman literary culture. As van Sickle notes, Alexandrian scholars preferred a range of

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that can be known only through its physical forms and the effects they create or allow." Peter L. Shillingsburg, "Text as Matter, Concept, and Action," *Studies in Bibliography* 44 (1991): 48. Thus, *sefer* could be the abstract designation of a work that was contained in multiple independent scrolls. There may also be a constant tug-o-war between scribal convention and reality, in which convention indicates one scroll per work but reality and context oftentimes required more. As we will explore below, by the rabbinic period there clearly exists a convention of one scroll and five scrolls for both Psalms and Torah, each of which likely reflects reality. I further disagree with Haran, "Book-Size and the Thematic Cycles," 166 about Psalms necessarily existing as one scroll in the biblical period. In addition to the fluid content of the early Psalter, a written version of the 150 Masoretic Psalms would have pushed the upper limit of scroll size. If P could exist as multiple rolls, so could various psalm collections. Indeed, the doxology of Psalm 72:20, "the prayers of David son of Jesse have ended" may indicate the close of an original scroll. Additionally, it is important to note that the psalm materials from Qumran do not portray the five-fold division expected in rabbinic literature. This convention is first named in Late Antiquity. Furthermore, the psalm texts from Qumran may not have been full scrolls of Psalms. See Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 26. Pajunen, "Perspectives on the Existence," 143 also argues that a 150 MT prose psalm scroll would have been about 10 meters, and rightly notes that Psalms would have been multipurpose at Qumran. That said, it is not too far-fetched to imagine that a lengthy psalm scroll (or scroll of poetry) existed as a liturgical roll.

[29] Wilma O. Stern and Danae H. Thimme, *Kenchreai: Eastern Port of Corinth: VI. Ivory, Bone, and Related Wood Finds* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 285–86 n. 40.

[30] On the understanding of Psalms in light of Greek poetry in the ancient world see Josephus, *Ant*. 7.305; Eusebius, *Praep. ev*. 5.5.5; Jerome, *Epist*. 30. Jerome lauds the Psalms as the best of poetry: "David, who is our Simonides, Pindar, and Alcæus, our Horace, our Catullus, and our Serenus all in one, sings of Christ to his lyre; and on a psaltery with ten strings calls him from the lower world to rise again" *Epist*. 53:8 (NPNF^2 6:100). For further on Psalms as poetry in Greco-Roman world see F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 60–63.

[31] On smaller editions for study and travel see Thedor Brit, *Kritik und Hermeneutik nebst Abriss des Antiken Buchwesens* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1913), 349; Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 51. Evidence for shorter study editions may also be reflected in Jewish literature. It may explain the use of *ḥumashin* to describe Pentateuch rolls in b. Ketub. 103b, where R. Ḥiyya declares that he would produce *ḥumashin* and teach children so that Torah is not forgotten in Israel. Perhaps it also undergirds the prescription of R. Ḥelbo in y. Meg. 2:3 73b, who declares that one may not read from *ḥumashin* in public. While many of the biblical texts from Qumran are larger rolls, could we also imagine smaller study editions of books like Psalms?

1000-2000 lines per scroll.[32] Nonetheless, they divided Homeric works into episodic books of unequal length. Quite a bit of variation exists between the longest and shortest books. The shortest book of the Iliad contains 424 lines (book 19), and the Odyssey 331 (book 6). The longest book of the Iliad contains 909 lines (book 5), and the Odyssey 847 (book 5). Long books of a large work could be more than double in length when compared to the smaller books of that same work.[33] This cultural analog, which highlights the importance and tenacity of scribal convention, has an impact on our analysis of the Psalter in Jewish Late Antiquity in at least two manners, both of which we will explore in-depth below. First, it makes possible the physical division of the Psalter into five separate scrolls, a factor also accounted for by convenience. Second, it explains the potential uneven division of Psalms into five distinct books in Late Antiquity, the first of which, Psalms 1-41, is much larger than the fourth, Psalms 90-106.

How long could a full psalm scroll or a set of five individual psalm scrolls in Late Antiquity measure? In the following chart I extrapolate and speculate based on evidence from the Qumran texts containing Psalms and the Leningrad codex, the earliest extant text to contain a complete copy Hebrew Bible. I omit rabbinic literature – the best potential evidence for Late Antiquity – because it provides little indication for the desired length of a scroll.[34] We must remember, however, that variety is the rule:[35]

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[32] van Sickle, "The Book-Roll," 7–12.

[33] Division by convention exceeds the bounds of Alexandrian scribal practice. Much scholarship points to a relationship between ancient Jewish scribes and those in Alexandria. See the pioneering work of Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*. For further see Moss, "Noblest Obelus." Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 23, acknowledges the impact of Alexandrian scribal practices on texts found at Qumran.

[34] For the most part, the scribal sugyot and Sof. discuss the desired *height* of a column and the required spacing in the margins. I have been unable to locate any statements that legislate a particular *width* of a column. Things are further complicated if viewed through Sof 2:11. After it offers various options for number of lines per column, it concludes with the caveat, "All according to writing."

[35] See this principle in operation on page 44 below**.** The table below is based on character count. It cannot fully account for all the *vacats* and other large spaces in a Qumran scroll, and thus the estimates in the chart are *minimalist*. The measurements here should not be considered true measurements for the Dead Sea Scrolls, but rather an imaginative exercise as to what the late antique psalm scrolls could have looked like. The count is rounded to nearest whole number. It compares characters per column for each Qumran text in relationship to the number of characters for a MT

	Full Psalms	Book 1 (1-41)	Book 2 (42-72)	Book 3 (74-89)	Book 4 (90-106)	Book 5 (107-150)
11QPs[a]	81 Feet	20.9	16.36	13	9.8	20.5
4QPs[b] (hemistich)	55	14	11	8.7	6.6	13.7
4QPs[g] (two hemistiches)	127.6	33.2	25.8	20.5	15.5	32.4
4QPs[l] (hemistich)	73	18.9	14.7	11.6	9.7	18.5
Leningrad Codex	44.7	11.5	9.4	6.5	5.8	11.5

The Material Scroll of Psalms: Layout

The various layouts of a physical psalm scroll will also have an impact on how to read many of the rabbinic sources discussed in this chapter and the next. The best material evidence,

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Psalter. It then extrapolates how many columns would be necessary to complete the entire Psalter or book of the Psalter and multiples that by the measurements for a single column within that particular Qumran text. A full Psalter contains about 80,544 characters without spaces (w/o), and about 102,625 characters with spaces (w). The first book contains 20,508 (w/o) and 26,726 (w). The second book contains 16,291 (w/o) and 20,755 (w). The third book contains 12,978 (w/o) and 16,511 (w). The fourth book contains 9,816 (w/o) and 12,512 (w). The fifth book contains 20,551 (w/o) and 26,120 (w). For the reconstruction of number of lines per column, I use the table in Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 79–84. Thus, 11QPs[a] contains approximately 26 lines per column. Column 16 will be used as an example. It contains roughly 45 characters with spaces per line. Thus a full column could contain 720 characters. James A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs[a])*, DJD 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 4 claims this column length is 15.3 cm. Thus, a full MT Psalter written with the characteristics of Col 16 of 11QPs[a] would need approximately 143 columns. If each column measures 15.3 + 2 (for margin between columns) then a full MT Psalter would equal 2473.9 cm (=24.73 meters/81 feet). 4QPs[b] averages about 17 lines per column. In single spaced, the average is 22 spaces per line; thus, 374 characters with spaces per column. 275 columns are needed for an entire Psalter. Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 78 claims a column is 3.7-4.5 cm. The margins seem to be about ½ the size of a line. Thus, I will go with the total measure of 2 cm per margin and 4.1 cm per column. A column width of 8.3 cm and inter-column distance of 1.4 is presented for 4QPs[g] in Ulrich et al., *Qumran Cave 4.XI: Psalms to Chronicles*, 108. Each column contains 8 lines with approximately 32 spaces per line = 256 characters per column. 401 columns would be needed for a full Psalter. For 4QPs[l] the measurements in Ibid., 127 indicate that each column contained 15 lines with an average of 17 letter spaces per line. This leaves 255 spaces per column. The approximate width is 4.3 cm and an inter-columnar margin of 1.2 cm. A full Psalter would require 403 columns. The dimensions of the Leningrad codex are 30 x 27 cm for the page and 20.5 x 22 cm for the text. I have used the text measurement with full knowledge that a full Psalter would be larger. Dimensions from David N. Freedman, Astrid B. Beck, and James A. Sanders, *The Leningrad Codex: A Facsimile Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), xxi. Shira Schmidtman, whose son read the entire Psalms from parchment for his Bar Mitzvah, informed me in a personal communication that the scroll was about 1/3rd the size of a modern Torah scroll.

once again, comes from Qumran, where poetic (stichographic) division[36] occurs almost exclusively in texts that would later become part of the rabbinic canon.[37] In light of the fact that, overall, Qumran scribes tend to make little distinction between texts that would become biblical and those that would not, it is possible that the use of stichographic division for certain poetic texts may actually represent a larger scribal culture, one that that the Hebrew scribes of Late Antiquity would inherit.[38] Line division and spacing, as we will explore below, affects size, reading and counting.

The psalm scrolls at Qumran preserve several layout options.[39] I will use Psalm 19:8 as the key example throughout, as its clauses are short and well-balanced. The most common format of Psalms has the text run in a linear fashion across the column as if it were a normal prose text.[40] Thus, if this page were a column, the line would look like this:

Perfect is the Lord's law, it restores the soul. The Lord's testimony is sure, making wise the simple.

Some poetic texts at Qumran exhibit alternative layouts. Instead of running straight across a column, the text may be divided into stiches, poetic sense units confined to their own space. This

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[36] On stichographic arrangement at Qumran and useful charts see Emanuel Tov, "The Background of the Stichometric Arrangements of Poetry in the Desert Scrolls," in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner, Ken M. Penner, and Cecilia Wassen, STDJ 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 409–20. This is an updated discussion of Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 153–67, 238. The information for which scrolls contain poetic divisions in the footnotes below comes from Tov. For additional information regarding spacing in various Psalm texts from Qumran see the data in Silviu Tatu, "Graphic Devices Used by the Editors of Ancient and Mediaeval Manuscripts to Mark Verse-Lines in Classical Hebrew Poetry," in *Method in Unit Delimitation*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel, Josef M. Oesch, and Stanley E. Porter, Pericope 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 99–103, 110. The most wide-ranging survey of ancient stichometric counting remains James R. Harris, *Stichometry* (London: C. J. Clay and Sons, 1893). Unfortunately, he does not discuss Hebrew evidence. For a discussion of Hebrew stichography see Ludwig Blau, "Massoretic Studies. IV. The Division into Verses (Continued)," *JQR* 9 (1897): 474–77.

[37] For the purposes of this discussion my use of rabbinic canon also includes Ben Sira, which does appear in stichographic division (2QSir and MasSir). Rabbinic literature does cite it with canonical authority, albeit it is also explicitly contested. On Ben Sira in rabbinic literature see Jenny R. Labendz, "The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature," *AJS Review* 30 (2006): 347–92.

[38] Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 6.

[39] I will not discuss here the variety of ways of writing psalm titles. For this see Ibid., 165–66.

[40] These include 1QPs^{a} (except Ps 119); 1QPs^{b}; 1QPs^{c}; 3QPs; 4QPs^{a}; 4QPs^{d} (from col. 3 line 5 and on); 4QPs^{e}; 4QPs^{f}; 4QPs^{j}; 4QPs^{k}; 4QPs^{m}; 4QPs^{n}; 4QPs^{o}; 4QPs^{p}; 4QPs^{q}; 4QPs^{r}; 4QPs^{r}; 4QPs^{s}; 4QPs^{u}; 4Q522; 6QpapPs?; 11QPs^{a} (except Ps 119); 11QPs^{b}; 11QPs^{c}; 11QPs^{d}.

division may have facilitated reading and interpretation. Several variations exist. A scroll may contain only one sense unit per line:[41]

Perfect is the Lord's law
it restores the soul.
The Lord's testimony is true
making wise the simple.

Alternatively, a column may contain two sense units per line:[42]

Perfect is the Lord's law *it restores the soul.*
The Lord's testimony is true *making wise the simple.*

Some Qumran scrolls that contain psalms lack this middle space, but nonetheless confine one line to two sense units:[43]

Perfect is the Lord's law, it restores the soul
The Lord's testimony is true, making the wise the simple.

It is important to remember that at Qumran multiple styles of poetic division exist within a single scroll, and even within a single psalm.[44] Variety is the rule.[45] Nevertheless, as Emanuel Tov notes, the stichographic arrangement of poetic units was not restricted to Qumran but was part of a larger scribal culture that predated Qumran by centuries.[46]

It also postdates Qumran by centuries. Rabbinic legal statements, although prescriptive, exhibit both continuation and innovation in poetic layout. No rabbinic legislation demands a particular poetic verse division for Psalms, although the statement in Sifre Deuteronomy 36 that

[41] Such as 4QPs^{b} cols. 1-33, 4QPs^{d} from col. 3 line 5 onwards, and 4QPs^{l}.
[42] 1QPs^{a} (for Ps 119); 4QPs^{c}; 5QPs; 8QPs; 11QPs^{b} (for Ps 119); 5/6 HevPs; MasPs^{a}. It is worth noting as well that Origen, in a scholium to Psalm 119:1 notes that Hebrew poetry is composed of two stiches. See George B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915), 12.
[43] 4QPs^{b} Col 34-5; 4QPs^{g}; 4QPs^{h}; 11QPs^{a} (Ps 119 and a few other instances).
[44] For example, 4QPs^{b} contains one hemistich per line in columns 1-33, but two hemistiches per line without space for columns 34-5. Additionally, 1QPs^{a}, 11QPs^{a} and 11QPs^{b} only have Psalm 119 in poetic layout while the remaining psalms are prose. 4QPs^{d} 3:13 and onwards are in poetic layout while the earlier columns are prose.
[45] I have not discussed the irregular poetic arrangement such as clusters of 2-3 words separated by uneven spaces. One finds such an arrangement for MasPs^{b}. See further Tov, "The Background of the Stichometric," 417. For this sentiment see also page 41 above.
[46] Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 258–59. See also Tov, "The Background of the Stichometric," 419–20 where he argues that scribes employing the stichometric systems were writing in a proto–Masoretic tradition.

prohibits writing a "song" (*shirah*) in a prose layout may include the book of Psalms.[47] Because psalms were considered poetic, it is possible that at least one of three versification systems may have been prescribed and expected. Each layout contains two (or three) stiches per line with blank spaces between each stich. The first continues displaying a text at two sense units per line with a space in between. The second, called in b. Meg. 16b: "Half brick over half brick and whole brick over whole brick," is prescribed for the layout of the text containing the kings of Canaan (Josh 12:8-24) and the sons of Haman (Esth 9:7-9).[48] Psalm 19:8 in this style would look like this:

Perfect is the Lord's law it restores the soul
The Lord's testimony is true making the simple wise

Or:

Perfect is the Lord's law it restores the soul
The Lord's testimony is true making the simple wise

The third style of layout is imagined as a "half brick over a whole brick and whole brick over a half brick." It was prescribed for texts like the Song of the Sea (Exod 15). Psalm 19:8 would look like this:[49]

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[47] While שירה undoubtedly can refer to Exodus 15 or Deuteronomy 32 there is no need to limit it to these texts. שירה in rabbinic literature can also refer to a psalm. See, for example, t. Pesḥ 4:11; t. Sot. 6:5; Mekh. R. Ishmael, Shirata 1; Sifra Millu'im 1:2; y. Ber. 2:3 4d; y. Ḥag. 2:1 77a; y. Sanh. 10:2 29a. This list is merely a sampling.

[48] On the term "half-brick" and "whole brick" and a history of their interpretation see Eliezer Segal, *The Babylonian Esther Midrash: A Critical Commentary*, vol. 3, 3 vols., BJS 293 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 160–63 nn. 71-3. What is certain is that the words were not entirely clear, and multiple possible textual formations were possible. I merely depict two possibilities. Segal does not talk about Psalms. Kugel reconstructs these terms in James L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 121–23.

[49] Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 163–4 interpret the evidence in b. Meg. 16b as referring to "all songs contained in non–poetical books." I disagree. The text simply reads, "Every song is written half brick over whole brick and whole brick over half brick, except for this song, which is half brick over half brick and whole brick over whole brick." This statement could have included psalms, which are often called שירה. See note 47 above. Y. Meg. 3:6 74b does claim: "The Song of the Sea and the Song of Debora are written half brick over a whole brick and whole brick over a half brick. The ten children of Haman and the kings of Canaan are written half brick over half brick and whole brick over whole brick." This is a list containing specific examples and may not be exhaustive. Reading the Palestinian Talmud into the Babylonian Talmud is methodologically problematic. Kugel additionally points out that the interlocking system used for the Song of the Sea is replicated for Psalm 18 or the entire Psalter in some Medieval manuscripts. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry*, 123–24. Overall, Kugel's argument that stichography does not equal parallelism is compelling.

Perfect *is the Lord's Law* *it*
restores the soul. *The Lord's testimony*
is *true making the simple* *wise*

Or:[50]

Perfect is the Lord's law *It restores the soul*
the Lord's testimony
is true making *the simple wise*

Our discussion about variety is relevant because the only explicit statement about psalm versification appears in Tractate Soferim, a post-talmudic compilation.[51] After detailing the number of lines and stichography required for poetic works such as the Song of Moses (Deut 32), the Song of the Sea (Exod 15), and the Song of Deborah (Jud 5), Tractate Soferim turns its attention to Psalms:

> But for the song of David in Samuel and in Psalms the Sages did not give a fixed measure. Nonetheless, an expert copyist (*lavlar*) will place them in rows with openings (*petiḥot*),[52]

[50] There are several other possible variations that I will not list. For the full range of poetic divisions see Mordechai Breuer, *The Aleppo Codex and the Accepted Text of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Mosad HaRav Kook, 1976), 149–89.
[51] On the date of this text see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 228.
[52] Unfortunately, Sof. 12:12 appears to be the only place where the word פתיחות appears with a technical scribal meaning. It is likely akin to the semantically similar phrase ראש פסוק, which means the opening clause of a verse. See Gen. Rab 36:8. Elsewhere in rabbinic literature, the word פתיחה means an opening, often of a legal discussion or homily.

> middle [textual] pauses (*etnaḥyata*),[53] and end of verses (*sofe pasuq*).[54] This should be for all of Psalms, Job and Proverbs (Sof. 12:12).[55]

This passage clearly displays the fact that variety in psalm layout was not only *de facto* but also *de jure*. Nonetheless, a clear preference emerges. The expert scribe will adopt a system of lineation that contains two clauses (*petiḥah* + *sof pasuq*) separated by a blank middle space (*etnaḥta*).

The material remains of expert copyists attest to the reality of this prescription. The Aleppo Codex, a tenth-century manuscript of the Hebrew Bible created in the tradition of a meticulous scribal family, mostly divides each psalm verse in half with a space division between them.[56] This type of division is also found with some degrees of variation in the Leningrad Codex and numerous Genizah fragments.[57] Ultimately, these line divisions shape both the reading experience and, as we will see below, how a text is counted.

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[53] This is the only place in Sof. that the word אתנחתא appears. It appears once more in its technical sense in Gen. Rab. 36:8 in the clause אילו ההכרעות והאתנחתא. Sokoloff, *Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, 81 rightly translates this as "these are the decisions (concerning the juxtaposition of the words) and the pauses." The word אתנחתא is uncertain within the manuscript tradition of Genesis Rabbah. Nonetheless, it appears in Vat. 30, the recognized best manuscript of Genesis Rabbah. That it means a textual pause and not the accent also called אתנחתא is evident from the context of Genesis Rabbah. R. Ḥiyya, whose statement this is, offers an alternative interpretation of Neh 8:8 ויבינו במקרא "so that the people understood the reading," which R. Yudan had previously interpreted to mean "beginning of verses." The phrase before that, ושום שכל "they gave sense" is interpreted as "these are the musical notes" without dispute. An interpretation that highlights both musical notes and אתנחתא as a musical note would be strange. That אתנחתא in Tractate Soferim means pause between stiches and not a cantillation mark was already noticed by Joel Müller, *Masechet Soferim: Der talmudische Tractat der Schreiber* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1879), 172–73. See also there for a discussion on the alterative reading of במפתחות באותיות בסוף, in which את is an earlier form of אתנחתא.

[54] This is the only place in Sof. that סוף פסוק occurs. It does not appear in classical rabbinic literature. In late rabbinic literature it often means the final clause of a verse.

[55] The text I cite is from Oxford 370. On the variety of manuscripts and printed editions see Debra Reed Blank, "It's Time to Take Another Look at 'Our Little Sister' Soferim: A Bibliographical Essay," *JQR* 90 (1999): 1–26.

[56] The left of the two columns in the Aleppo codex are at times jagged, and there are at least 13 different patterns for line division. For the most part, the scribe kept to stichographic divisions. For a detailed study see Paul Sanders, "The Colometric Layout of Psalms 1 to 14 in the Aleppo Codex," in *Studies in Scriptural Unit Division*, ed. Marjo C. A. Korpel and Josef M. Oesch, Pericope 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 226–57. For a rabbinic discussion on the struggles of reading sense units, see Mordechai Breuer, "Biblical Verses of Undecided Syntactical Adhesion," *Lěšonénu* 58 (1994): 189–99. Could the struggle Breuer analyzes be tethered to the materiality of a scroll? For further on the Aleppo Codex see Tatu, "Graphic Devices Used," 123–25. Overall, Aleppo favors division into two columns, even if the balance between stiches are not always even. On the Aleppo Codex overall and its textual features in particular see also Breuer, *The Aleppo Codex*.

[57] Some fragments include, but are not limited to: T-S A13.2; T-S A13.3, T-S A13.4. For what seems to be a pocket Psalter (?) see T-S A13.1. T-S A32.52 also appears to be a personal Psalter. Fragment 1v seems to have a stichography

The Materiality of Psalms in Rabbinic Culture

We now turn from physical remnants to literary sources. The remainder of this chapter will examine the impact materiality has on interpreting rabbinic discussions that invoke the book of Psalms. It will begin by examining the macro features of the Psalter such as its length and divisibility, and conclude with a discussion of its micro features such as the beginnings and ends of textual units and how to spell particular words. In total, it will demonstrate that rabbinic discourses about the Psalter were informed by and reflect the physical reality of scrolls. We cannot ignore the material backdrop of Jewish daily life and reduce rabbinic interaction with Scripture to orality.

A legal discourse in y. B. Bat. 1:7 13a that cautions against dismantling preexisting scroll collections will set the stage. We will first examine m. B. Bat. 1:6, the text that prompts the Palestinian Talmud's discussion. The Mishnah begins by listing various items that inheritors cannot divide amongst themselves. Either one person attains the entire object, or two such items must exist for equal division. These include: a courtyard, dining hall, storage room, dovecoat,[58] bathhouse and olive press. These items are all landed-property, and likely expensive. After enumerating the list, the Mishnah states its generating principle: "This is the rule: anything that retains its name when divided may be divided, and if not, it may not be divided." The items above,

similar to that used for the kings of Canaan. T-S A32.11 and T-S A32.55 contain psalms running in a linear fashion without pause. There are over 3200 fragments of Psalms in the Genizah. A full study is a desideratum, but one that falls outside the scope of this chapter. For additional fragments from other Genizot see Tatu, "Graphic Devices Used," 118–22. For some divisions in Masoretic manuscripts see Breuer, *The Aleppo Codex*, 175–79.

[58] Our printed edition and early manuscripts list a cloak *(ṭallit)* here. It does not belong. For manuscript evidence and further argument see J. N. Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah: The Text of the Mishnah and Its Development from the Days of the First Amoraim until the Print Copy of R. Yom Tov Lipmann-Heller*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1947), 963. See, however, the qualifying discussion in Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Kefshuto: Parts 9-10: Seder Nezekin* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 2000), 309–10. For my purposes, the final statement, which is without textuality difficulty, is important.

according to the Mishnah, would lose their name and thus are indivisible. The Mishnah then qualifies this rule by adding an exception: "When does this apply? When they both do not want [to divide the property]; but if both want, they may divide it even if it is yet smaller." Ultimately, property law falls under the agreement of the inheritors. The Mishnah's initial ruling is meant to preserve the maximum worth of inherited property. At the conclusion of this discussion, the Mishnah appears to tack on an important side note: "But sacred writings, even if both want to [divide] they may not divide." The Mishnah here is unclear if this prohibition means that one cannot divide a single scroll into two or a collection of scrolls into smaller units. Albeck suggests the former, likely on the basis of Samuel's interpretation in b. B. Bat. 13b.[59] I think the latter is more plausible. Scrolls containing single biblical books were likely still the scribal norm. Additionally, while "divide" (*ḥalaq*) can literally mean split in two, in the context of inheritance it more often indicates the division of separate objects amongst inheritors.[60] For the Mishnah, the scrolls of the Hebrew Bible are indivisible. They must be kept together, and are treated as items more valuable than landed property. Is it possible that the Mishnah thinks that "sacred writings" do not retain that name when divided amongst inheritors? Are they, too, more valuable as a set? Or, perhaps, is the Mishnah's addendum about sacred Scripture merely a product of an oral process seeking to link various comments on the topic of division?

Regardless, y. B. Bat. 1:7 13a attempts to elucidate this final Mishnaic line by citing two conflicting rabbinic opinions:

[a] "But sacred writings, even if both want to [divide] they may not divide."

[59] Chanoch Albeck, *Seder Nezekin* (Jerusalem: Biyalik, 1959), 119.

[60] For חלק as dividing a scroll see m. Kelim 13:1, where dividing a book can literally mean cut it in half. For חלק as divide property see m. Ket. 8:2; 8:6. It is further clear from the rest of m. B. Bat. that what inheritors do is "divide" property. It need not literally be dividing a scroll.

> [b] R. Hoshaya said: "Such as Psalms and Chronicles,[61] but Psalms by Psalms one may divide" [i.e. dividing a psalm scroll into multiple smaller scrolls; or, more likely, breaking up a collection of several psalm scrolls].
> [c] R. Uqva[62] said: "Even Psalms by Psalms one may not divide. And since they do not divide, these will come and read these, and these will come and read these."

Each sage attempts to define the Mishnah's blanket statement that sacred writings may not be divided. For R. Hoshaya, the issue revolves around breaking up sets. Scripture ought to be understood as and kept together as a collection. It has meaning as a library. If the deceased had only one biblical book, such as Psalms, the inheritors may divide it amongst themselves.[63] R. Uqva posits that even Psalms may not be divided. For him, the Mishnah prohibits splitting readers, not breaking up sets. By being held as common property, the scrolls encourage each inheritor to read the maximum amount of sacred Scripture. Scripture engenders community. Regardless, each tradition implicitly demonstrates that the book of Psalms could actually consist of a collection of several individual scrolls. In light of our initial discussion about scroll-length, the division of Psalms into several scrolls makes physical sense.

Psalm Scroll: Length

The Palestinian Talmud uses Psalms and Chronicles as illustrative examples. Two factors govern this choice: perceived length for Psalms and Chronicles, and divisibility for Psalms. Let us explore the contexts for each of these dimensions. We begin with length.

Several rabbinic traditions privilege counting verses as opposed to textual space in determining what constitutes a long book. This conditions Psalms to be imagined as one of the

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[61] It is very unlikely that Psalms and Chronicles would have existed together in one continuous scroll.
[62] The identity of this person is uncertain. For a full discussion, see Geoffrey Herman, *A Prince without a Kingdom: The Exilarch in the Sasanian Era*, TSAJ 150 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 309–15.
[63] Note that one book does not necessarily mean one scroll. See, however, the parallel to this discussion in b. B. Bat. 13b, where Samuel says that our Mishnaic rule only applies if the whole was in one scroll, but if there were two scrolls one may divide it. For him the problem seems to be the actual division of the scroll. It would be improper, however, to read the Babylonian Talmud back into the Palestinian Talmud.

largest books of the Hebrew Bible, containing 2527 verses. Chronicles counts to 1765 verses. Numerous other biblical books, however, would take up more scroll space than Psalms. The word count of Kings is 39,145, Samuel 38,007, and Jeremiah 33,002. Psalms, in contrast, contains 30,147 words. Unlike the 2527 verses of Psalms, however, Samuel contains 1506, Kings 1534 and Jeremiah 1364. We must remember that ancient Jews did not divide in half the books of Chronicles, Kings and Samuel.[64]

The only work to exceed Psalms and Chronicles in word or verse count, of course, is the Pentateuch when conceived of as a single text.[65] One rabbinic tradition in b. Qidd. 30a, however, imagines Psalms in relationship to Chronicles and the Pentateuch, and declares Psalms to be the larger book: "Our rabbis taught: 'There are 5,888 verse in the Pentateuch. Psalms has eight more verses while Chronicles eight less'." These numbers are inaccurate by modern counting for Psalms and Chronicles. The Pentateuch contains 5845 verses, which is close to the rabbinic figure.[66] Additionally, our tradition seems to have a proclivity towards the number eight.

Furthermore, we must remember that the unit of a "verse" was not necessarily our Masoretic unit, and that verse count could differ from scroll to scroll and by region.[67] The passage in b. Qidd. 30a immediately preceding the one above gives voice to this diversity. R. Joseph inquires as to whether *vehitgalaḥ* (Lev 13:33), the halfway point of verses for the Pentateuch, belongs to the first half or second half of the Torah. The rabbis instruct him to take a scroll and count. The anonymous voice of the Babylonian Talmud problematizes this solution by citing a

[64] Even Jerome is aware of this lack of division among Jews. In his famous "helmeted introduction" to Samuel and Kings he writes: "Then comes Samuel, which we call First and Second Kings. The fourth is Malachim, that is, Kings, which is contained in the third and fourth volumes of Kings" *Preface to Samuel and Kings* (NPNF^2 6:490).
[65] Genesis alone contains more words than Psalms, coming in at 32,046.
[66] For an attempt to bridge the gap between this tradition and the Masoretic counting see Blau, "Massoretic Studies. IV," 483–84.
[67] Cf. Ludwig Blau, "Massoretic Studies. III. The Division into Verses," *JQR* 9 (1896): 127–31. He argues that there was a fixed verse division. His reading of פסוק is too expansive.

tradition name of R. Aḥa b. Ada: "In the west [Palestine] they would divide (*pasqe*) this verse (*leha'i qera*) into three divisions (*pasuqe*): 'And the Lord said to Moses behold I am coming to you in the thickness of a cloud / that the people may hear when I speak with you, and that they may believe you forever. / And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord' (Exod 19:9)." In Palestine, Exodus 19:9 was actually three independent verses, rendering a true middle impossible to calculate.[68] This example demonstrates that verse division could be unstable, and that some rabbis acknowledged it.[69]

We can, nevertheless, make sense of the tradition that maintains that Psalms contains 5894 verses. It likely counts a division (*pasuq*) for Psalms as one poetic stich. This would more than double the 2527 verses of a Masoretic Psalter, especially as several psalm verses contain three stiches.[70] In fact, the number 5894 was likely facilitated by the layout of a psalm scroll that contained two stiches per line, likely separated by a space in between each stich.[71]

The enumeration of 5880 verses for Chronicles also makes sense if viewed in light of the material reality of textual layout. The number likely derives from counting a text divided in the style of *per cola et commata*.[72] In this type of layout, each line of text begins with a new verse, clause or sense unit. A large verse was thus divided into smaller units of meaning, which aided reading and interpretation. Jerome, for example, justifies his choice to render his translation of the

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[68] For another example of contested divisions see b. Tan. 27b. This source exhibits anxiety about textual division and its use in a school setting! On the division of "verse" units at Qumran see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 127–39.

[69] For the opposite conclusion see Blau, "Massoretic Studies. III," 142. The evidence throughout, however, demonstrates diversity. Blau fundamentally wants to read the Masorah as an early system with internal consistency and stability as opposed to one that emerged slowly in fits and starts. Ultimately, I agree with Blau's critics.

[70] This idea was proposed as early as Blau, "Massoretic Studies. IV," 475. See here for some examples of stichographic counting of Psalms. His attempts to justify the Masorah are not as convincing. It is worth further noting that the Cheltenham List marks 5000 lines for Psalms in Latin. It is unlikely, however, that the Hebrew and Latin were being counted the same way.

[71] Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 133 n.190.

[72] See Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 229–30. Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 23–25. Cf. Blau, "Massoretic Studies. IV," 476. Blau thinks the Chronicles count is also stich. This makes less sense than *per cola*. Our tradition seems to be showcasing the various ways of counting a biblical text.

Prophets in the style of *per cola et commata* by appealing to its utility in facilitating reading. He further underscores his use of a poetic style of division for a prose text by noting that scribes have been copying the prose works of Cicero and Demosthenes in *per cola et commata*.[73] Subsequently, this style was adopted in laying out many other biblical books.[74] The number 5880, I suggest, may reflect a Hebrew scroll of Chronicles laid out in the *per cola et commata* style. This suggestion best explains how the 1765 Masoretic verse count becomes 5880.

Let us now examine the tradition in b. Qidd. 30a as a whole. What function did it serve? I suggest that it may be a fragment of a Jewish scribal stichometric list. Such documents exist for contemporary Greek, Latin and Syriac literature, and were used both to authenticate texts and pay scribes.[75] It would not be difficult to imagine Hebrew scribes working with a similar tool, especially before the days of Masoretic manuals. Regardless, the tradition in b. Qidd. 30a clearly demonstrates that counting verses was the primary way to imagine the size of books in rabbinic culture. Attention to verses ultimately constructs Psalms, the Pentateuch and Chronicles as the largest books of the Hebrew Bible.

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[73] "Let no one who has seen the Prophets written down in stichs (Lat. *versibus*) judge them to be in verse (Lat. *metro*) among the Hebrews and at all similar to Psalms or the works of Solomon. But, because it is customary to write Demosthenes and Cicero *per cola et commata* (even though both of them wrote prose and not verse [Lat. *versibus*, lit. "in verses, stichs"]), we too (out of concern for a usable text for readers) have used the new style of writing to make divisions in the new translation." Translation from Dobbs-Allsopp, *On Biblical Poetry*, 24. This form of division may derive from an earlier system of points and stops employed in Alexandria to aid the correct division of a text into sense units. See Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 9.

[74] See Malcolm B. Parkes, *Pause and Effect: An Introduction to the History of Punctuation in the West* (Hants: Scolar, 1992), 16. For a visual example of this kind of division with regards to Psalm 1 see pp. 178-9.

[75] The numbers are oftentimes ideal and actually at odds with the manuscript itself. It was either a mnemonic (which is likely the case for the tradition in b. Qidd. 30b), or copied over from another manuscript. See Harris, *Stichometry*, 18. On the payment of scribes by line see Ibid., 26–29; Kurt Ohly, *Stichometrische Untersuchungen*, Zentralblatt für Bibliothekwesen, Beiheft 61 (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1928), 86–90. See Ohly in general for a detailed collection of stichographic evidence. In many ways, the stichographic lists resembles the work of the Masoretic scholars. In nearly every surviving biblical manuscript, the Masorah does not completely agree with the text it accompanies. See Stern, "The First Jewish Books," 169.

Psalm Scroll: Divisibility

Let us move back to the passage in y. B. Bat. 1:7 13a and answer our second question: Why do the Palestinian sages select Psalms as an example of a work that inheritors may or may not divide? Any lengthy biblical text, such as Kings or Samuel, could exist in multiple independent scrolls. The answer may lie in the context of a larger debate about the material and conceptual unity of the Psalter, one that echoes in both ancient Jewish and early Christian settings. Is Psalms one "book" or five "books?" Both answers are given, and both may reflect material reality. We ought not ignore, however, the tension between the two positions. In this section we will explore how questions of unity and divisibility affect rabbinic conceptualization, reference to and interpretation of the Psalter.

Questions of unity and divisibility into five lie behind the special relationship between Psalms and the Pentateuch in rabbinic literature. One example, explored above, was the tradition that linked Psalms and Pentateuch for verse count.[76] A tradition in b. Qidd. 30a prior to that implicitly demonstrates that even if both works consist of five independent books they measure as one unified whole:

> [a] Therefore, the early ones were called Scribes (= Counters), because they used to count each letter in the Torah[77] and said that
> [b] the *waw* of *gaḥon* (*gḥwn)* (Lev 11:42) is the halfway point for all the letters in the Pentateuch. *Darosh darash* (Lev 10:16) is the halfway point for words, and *vehitgalaḥ* (Lev 13:33) is [the halfway point] for verses.[78]
> [c] "The boar out of the woods (*yʿr*) will ravage" (Ps 80:14). The *ayin* of *yʿr* is the middle [for all the letters] of Psalms.[79] "And he is merciful and will atone iniquity" (Ps 78:38) is half of the verses.[80]

[76] This is the weakest example of the phenomenon, however, because the inclusion of Chronicles. Could this be an admission of the multiple scrolls of Chronicles?
[77] The Hebrew for "scribe" (*sofer*) shares the same root as "count," namely ספר.
[78] This exegetical remark likely accounts for the elongated *waw* in Lev 11:42, and the extended *gimmel* in Lev 13:33 of the Leningrad Codex. However, this is not the halfway point of modern Bibles.
[79] The scribes of Leningrad write this *ayin* above the line.
[80] The actual half, according to Leningrad, is verse 36.

The attention lavished on the book of Psalms and the Pentateuch was not random. The tradition – perhaps another early scribal mnemonic –underscores that although each text can consist of multiple separate books, they contain a holistic middle for letters, words and verses.[81] Both are characterized by an overarching unity in light of theoretical and physical divisibility.[82]

This unity did not prevent ancient Jews, however, from viewing the Psalms and the Pentateuch as each composed of five discreet books.[83] According to Midrash Psalms, a post-talmudic compilation, David's actions mirror those of Moses. Just as Moses gave five book of Torah to Israel so too David wrote five books of Psalms. The midrash then continues by listing the incipits of each of the five books of Psalms.[84]

Earlier rabbinic sources also attest the five-fold division of Psalms. This partition affects rabbinic references to the Psalter as well as its interpretation. When discussing the proper etiquette of rising before others – even within a bathhouse – b. Qidd. 33a cites a story involving R. Ḥiyya:

> R. Ḥiyya was sitting in a bathhouse. R. Simon b. R. Judah passed by him and he [R. Ḥiyya] did not stand before him. He [R. Simon] was offended and went and said to his father: "I taught him two-fifths (*shne ḥumashin*) of the book of Psalms[85] and he did not stand before me!"

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[81] Worth noting about this tradition is its lack of symmetry. The Pentateuch section treats letters, words and verses. The Psalm section only lists letters and verses. Could this tradition be an example of garbled oral transmission?

[82] The Leviticus scroll of En Gedi, for example, was clearly both liturgical and not part of a complete Pentateuch. See Segal et al., "Early Leviticus Scroll," 5–6. Another example of theoretical unity may be the canon sugya in b. B. Bat. 15a, which reads: "David wrote the book of Psalms (ספר תהלים)."

[83] On the question of the division of the Torah into five scrolls see b. Giṭ 60a. On the historical dimensions of this division in our period see Haran, "Books of Torah." He argues that the Pentateuch was composed of five separate scrolls at least until late into the Tannaitic period, and that it was the most common form of Torah division until the end of the talmudic period. See also b. Giṭ 60a and Sof. 5:9 on the question of dividing biblical books into small units of independent scrolls.

[84] See Mid. Ps. 1:1. The incipits appear in full in JTS Mic. 5529/1; Plut. II.13, Vat 81; Cambridge Trinity 49 and partially in Cambridge Ms. OR. 786. It is firmly attested across Sephardic manuscript family and perhaps also in the Ashenazic family. I thank Rabbi Mordecai Silverstein for generously providing me with the manuscript information for this passage. Worth noting as well is that the final incipit is listed as Ps 107:2, יאמרו גואלי יי and not הדו ליי כי טוב. I suspect this was due to the fact that these words also open Ps 106, although Ps 106 begins with הללויה. Alternatively, the Sefardi family may be quoting a Psalter that does not have Ps 107:1. For an exploration of conflating David with Moses in Mid. Ps. see Menn, "Praying King and Sanctuary of Prayer, Part I: David and the Temple's Origins in Rabbinic Psalms Commentary (Midrash Tehillim)," esp. pg. 14.

[85] שני חומשין. Ms Munich 95 lacks Psalms. However, two-fifths can only either be Psalms or Pentateuch. Genizah fragments and the remainder of the manuscripts read "book of Psalms." There is no reason to think of two-fifths in terms of textual space, especially as there was a convention for the fivefold division for Psalms.

R. Ḥiyya violates rabbinic social etiquette.[86] He offends R. Simon, who claims to have taught him two-fifths of the book of Psalms, by not standing in his presence.[87] This narrative teaches us about more than rabbinic social expectations. It attests to one mental – and perhaps physical – framing of the Psalter. R. Simon invokes the language of a five-fold division (*ḥumashin*),[88] and not that of chapter (*pereq*), section (*seder*), or sense unit (*pasuq*).[89] The division of Psalms into five was apparently convenient and in use. Our source further highlights the plasticity of this conceptual partition. It simultaneously acknowledges the Psalter's division into five, but still maintains it as a single "book of Psalms." The word *sefer* in this passage (and others) best translates as "work" and not "scroll."[90] In terms contemporary to the rabbis, reading two-fifths of the Psalter would be akin to reading three-twenty-fourths of the Iliad, where Iliad is the "work" consisting of 24 independent

[86] This narrative is a parallel to a story about R. Ḥiyya in y. Ketub. 12:3 35a. For an explanation as to where these differences matter see Naeh, "Structure and Division (A)," 486 n.16. For analysis of textual variants see Shamma Friedman, "Historical Aggadah in the Babylonian Talmud," in *Saul Lieberman Memorial Volume*, ed. Shamma Friedman (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993), 142–43. In some ways, it is ironic that this narrative ends with a legal ruling by Rabba b. Rav Ḥanah, who says that thinking in a bathhouse is prohibited.

[87] I disagree with Naeh, "Structure and Division," 486–87, who claims that this means teaching him two-fifths of a Midrash Psalms, and that this midrash was already divided into five books. We have no evidence to support this final claim. Furthermore, there is no reason to claim that 2/3rds refers to a Midrash Psalms as opposed to the biblical book. The scenario one ought to imagine should be similar to what we will explore in the next chapter with regards to b. Avod. Zar. 19a. R. Simon was likely reading from a physical book of Psalms *and simultaneously expounding*. This would account the word *shn'*, which Naeh points to as a marker for oral learning. That this could mean *reading and expounding* seems evident from an example he cites in footnote 20 to prove a different point: "When a person goes to learn Torah for the first time he has no idea what to do until he studies (*shn'*) two portions (*sedarim*) or two books (*sefarim*)" (Sifre Deuteronomy 303). Portions (*sedarim*) are characteristic of Mishnah, while books (*sefarim*) usually indicate the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that "books" here means anything other than physical books. The scene likely imagines reading from and expounding on Scripture, an activity that does take the verb "study" (*shn'*). For *shn'* as reading Oral Torah, along with some exceptions, see also Sussman, "Oral Torah," 1:252–53 nn.30–33.

[88] It is further worth noting that this term refers to independent books of the Pentateuch in the vast majority of its occurrences.

[89] I have translated these terms for point of reference. Each of these words is used as a countable unit in rabbinic literature. Their exact delimitation varies greatly even within rabbinic literature, and requires further study. For initial reference see Blau, "Massoretic Studies. III"; Blau, "Massoretic Studies. IV"; Shlomo Naeh, "The Structure and the Division of Torat Kohanin (B): Parashot, Perakim, Halakhot," *Tarbitz* 69 (1999): 59–104. Granted, *pereq* may not be used of Bible (pg. 62).

[90] Haran, "Books of Torah," demonstrates this to be the case with regards to use of *sefer Torah*, which in many rabbinic sources clearly indicates only one of the books of Pentateuch.

"scrolls." Ultimately, our source also likely reflects the material situation of a single work of Psalms consisting of multiple scrolls.

The following source also clearly imagines Psalms as five distinct books. It demonstrates the exegetical relevance of this mental, and perhaps material, division. Genesis Rabbah 75:1 cites a tradition in the name of R. Pinḥas who cites R. Reuben:

> "Jacob sent messengers" (Gen 32:3). R. Pinḥas in the name of R. Reuben began a homily: "Rise up, O Lord! Confront them" (Ps 17:13). David asks God to arise five times in the first book of Psalms: "Rise up, O Lord! Deliver me, O my God" (Ps 3:8); "Rise up, O Lord, in your anger" (Ps 7:7); "Rise up, O Lord; O God lift up your hand" (Ps 10:12); "Rise up, O Lord! Do not let mortals prevail" (Ps 9:20); "Rise up, O Lord! Confront them" (Ps 17:13). God said to him, "David, my son, even if you ask me to arise 1000 times I will not arise. When will I arise? When you see the poor oppressed and the needy sighing, as it is written, 'From the oppression of the poor ones and the sighing of the needy, *now* I will arise, said the Lord (Ps 12:6).'"

The homilist argues that God does not arise at the request of kings, but rather at cries of the suffering poor. R. Pinḥas fortifies his argument by contrasting the five times the Psalmist – David in the eyes of our exegete – commands God to act with an instance in which God declares that he would.

This homily falls at one end of the spectrum we are exploring. It imagines the Psalter as an anthology of discreet books that are collectively called "Psalms."[91] The divisions between books become boundary markers and points of reference that shape interpretation. The above example limits the scope of relevant material cited by directly signaling the "first book of Psalms."

One question, however, remains: why does the exegete constrain himself to examples contained in the first book of Psalms?[92] Why not cite "Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting

[91] All manuscripts use the phrase "first book of Psalms," except for Ms Munich, which reads "first book of the book of Psalms" (ספר הראשון שבספר תלים).

[92] I do not think the exegete limits himself to the first book of Psalms for literary effect. Such argument would unfold as follows: the exegete desires an ordered reading in which each successive attempt to call God to action fails, finally succeeding in Psalm 12, not at David's behest, but at the cries of the poor. The placement of Psalm 10 before 9 challenges this. The use of Psalm 17 is fatal. Indeed, if the goal were to highlight Psalm 12:6 why not make that the proem instead of Psalm 17:13.

place" (Ps 132:8), or "Rise up, O God, judge the earth" (Ps 82:8), or "Rise up, O God, plead your case" (Ps 74:22)? These latter two examples may be dismissed on the grounds they use *Elohim* as God's name rather than the Tetragrammaton. Psalm 132:8, however, uses YHWH. Indeed, the scribe of the London British Museum manuscript of Genesis Rabbah adds this verse into the body of the passage for sake of completion. Why was it not part of the original homily?

I offer two independent suggestions, the first more likely than the second. It is possible that R. Reuben operates within a tradition that stresses the affinity between Psalms and the Pentateuch. He restricts himself to the first book of Psalms because he is interpreting the first book of the Pentateuch.[93] The precise correlation of Genesis and Psalms is quite rare in rabbinic literature. Genesis Rabbah, as a whole, does not privilege psalm verses from the first book of Psalms. The limitation to the first book of Psalms nevertheless highlights the impact that mental framing has on interpretation.

Alternatively, I suggest that R. Reuben only had the first book of Psalms – as a physical scroll – available to him. This fully accords with the material reality of Jewish Late Antiquity. Throughout this chapter, I have marshalled much evidence for the existence and use of physical psalm scrolls, as well as their mental categorization as five separate books. It is not a leap of imagination to suggest that this conceptual partitioning of Psalms into five books reflects a material division in which each "book" would be contained in a separate scroll.

If my interpretation that R. Reuben had only a copy of the first book of Psalms available to him is correct, we may begin to question an unstated assumption prevalent in the study of rabbinic literature. We tend to take for granted that all rabbis had the entirety of the rabbinic tradition – or at least the entire Bible – memorized. While the memorization of large sets of texts

[93] I thank Dr. Richard Hidary for this suggestion, which took the form as a question on an oral version of this section at the AJS, 2016.

was not impossible, and perhaps even a cultural ideal that rabbis were instructed to strive towards, we must still remain grounded in reality. In a collection of many rabbis, there were likely a few – if not even a great majority – who were not gifted with precise recall or consistently trained in memory techniques.[94] These sages would likely refer to scrolls and other physical media for access to text and interpretation.[95] R. Pinḥas and R. Reuben, who are not among the best known and most-cited sages, may fall into this category, explaining their attention to only the first book of the Psalter.

Reference to specific sections of the Psalter by book number, while rare, is not unique to the Genesis Rabbah. Mid. Ps. 14:6 cites a homily that lists all of the great things that comes from Zion. It continues: "You find that the phrase 'who shall give from Zion' is written twice in the book of Psalms, once in the first book and another in the second." The homilist refers, of course, to the verse "O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion! When the Lord (Ps 14; Ps 53: God) restores the fortunes of his people, Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad. Who shall give from Zion the salvation of Israel" that appears in the parallel Psalms 14 and 53. First, our midrash underscores that these parallel psalms are indeed distinct entities; and second, that the Psalter may be considered one work that contains multiple distinct individual book.[96]

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[94] We cannot deny, though, that complete memorization was still an ideal that rabbis were told to aspire towards. On memory technique in rabbinic literature Shlomo Naeh, "Make Your Heart into Many Rooms: An Additional Inquiry into the Words of the Sages on Disagreement," in *Renewing Jewish Commitment: On the World on Thought of David Hartman*, ed. Avi Sagi and Zvi Zohar, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Hartman Institute; Kibbutz HaMeyuhad, 2001), 851–75; Naeh, "The Art of Memory, Memory Structures and Patterns of Text in Rabbinic Literature." Even Sussman, the champion of widespread orality, admits that even within an oral environment people with perfect memory are the exception. Sussman, "Oral Torah," 1:243 n.59. Later, however, he continues to stress that many people knew at least the Mishnah by heart and that "it is known to us that not a few Amoraim knew all of Scripture by heart." See pg. 347 n.77.

[95] There is, of course, evidence for material recourse with regards to legal literature. Take note, for example, of the use of writing in forms of notes an *aide-mémoire*. See Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 87. For an example that combines law and homily see Gen. Rab. 81:1.

[96] Note also the end of the midrash, which further enmeshes the characters of David and Moses.

The Psalm Codex: Psalm Divisibility in Christian Perspective

Early Christian sources amplify the muted conversation about the divisibility of the Psalms that appears in rabbinic literature. The amplification occurs, in part, due to the megaphone of polemic. We will focus on two soaring voices: Jerome for the Eastern Roman empire and Augustine for the West. Jerome denounces those who imagine the Psalter as anything other than one unified composition. Augustine, while preferring to view Psalms as a single work, adopts a more conciliatory stance. At stake, perhaps, was the ability to discern and impart a unified meaning to the entire opus. Elite readers were educated and socialized to examine a text with an eye towards unity. Lucian, in his parody about the faux-elite Syrian book collector, satirizes him as, *inter alia*, unable to perceive the "sense of the whole" of a book.[97] Furthermore, underpinning the imagination of Jerome and Augustine may have been the physical apparatus of a codex. This new and popular technology could, unlike scrolls, more easily contain a portable text of the entire Psalter.

Jerome deals with the unity of Psalms in two places: the preface to his translation of Samuel-Kings and his Prologue to the Psalms.[98] He wrote both between the years 389-92,[99] and argues, *inter alia*, that the Psalms is one unified book. We will first explore his famous "Helmeted Introduction" to Scripture, the prologue to his translation of Samuel-Kings. Jerome does more than introduce Samuel-Kings in this text; he summarizes his understanding of the entire Hebrew canon. After introducing his operating numerological principle that the twenty-two Hebrew books mirror the twenty-two Hebrew letters,[100] he lists and briefly describes each biblical book, often

[97] For a translation of this passage and its elite context see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 160. Indeed, further extrapolating from the passage, differing styles could indicate spurious authorship – a fact that both Jerome and Augustine would not be willing to entertain.
[98] The Latin texts in this section come from the *Corpus Corporum* website: http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/. Jerome also talks about the canon in his *Epist*. 53, but not about its textuality. It is worth noting that Psalms is simply understood as David. Although, in this letter each book is read in light of one unifying character.
[99] For the chronology of Jerome's work see Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 275–301.
[100] Jerome considers Lamentations in conjunction with Jeremiah, and Ruth as part of Judges.

demonstrating during the course of his examination his knowledge of Hebrew and Judaism.[101] Jerome's language is careful and studied. When turning to the Hagiographa, he begins his exposition by noting that "the first book begins with Job" (*et primus liber incipit ab Iob*). He then continues with what we call Psalms by saying, "the second with David" (*secundus a David*), identifying the work with the name of the author – a marker neither uncommon nor unprecedented. This form of identification continues with the Wisdom books, about which he says: "The third is Solomon, in three books" (*tertius est Salomon, tres libros habens*). Afterwards, he names each of these books in both Latin and Hebrew. A collection of books or a single book may take on the name of its author. While "Solomon" may indicate multiple books (*libros*), "David" is decidedly not. After noting that the "second (book? collection?) is David," he clarifies with: "Whose writings they divide into five parts and comprise in one volume of Psalms" (*quem quinque incisionibus et uno Psalmorum volumine conprehendunt*). There are five divisions (*incisionibus*) and one volume (*volumine*), but not five books. For Jerome, Psalms is one unified work that contains multiple distinct parts. This contrasts with his treatment of the Pentateuch. Each section is a proper book (*liber*). His final statement about the Pentateuch adds further dimensions to the contrasts with Psalms: "These are the five books of Moses, which they properly call Torah, that is, 'Law'" (*hii sunt quinque libri Mosi, quos proprie Thorath, id est Legem appellan*t). The collection is "Moses," but there are five distinct *books*. Indeed, Jerome uses the word "division" (*incisionibus*) only once more in this prologue during a discussion of how the Hebrew alphabet can form a poetic acrostic that splits full poems into smaller sections.

[101] Jerome was likely drawing his division of the Hebrew canon from Origen. Origen's list is cited by Eusebius in his *Hist. eccl.* 6.25. Origen calls the Psalter the "Book of Psalms" and not "David." It is worth noting that Eusebius claims that Origen provides this list when expounding the first psalm. Eusebius, like Jerome, also calls the books of Psalms and Proverbs "David" and "Solomon," respectively. Origen, in the prologue to his psalm commentary, is also aware of the Jewish division of Psalms into five books, but does not contest it. For text of the prologue see Walter Rietz, *De Origenis Prologis in Psalterium Quaestiones Selectae* (Jena: H. Pohle, 1914).

The matter-of-fact presentation of the Psalms in his prologue to Samuel-Kings becomes polemical invective in his introduction to the Psalter. This preface was attached to a Psalter translation Jerome renders on behalf of a certain Sophronius, whose letter of request is no longer extant. From Jerome's response, however, we catch a glimpse of that initial plea. First, Sophronius consistently loses his disputations with Jews. When he attempts to prove that Jesus is the messiah from the Psalter, his Jewish interlocutors merely retort that his citations do not reflect the Hebrew. We will examine this section of the prologue in the sixth chapter of this dissertation. Second, he was informed that the Psalms are five distinct books and would like to know Jerome's opinion.[102] Perhaps responding in order of importance or questions posed, Jerome begins with the issue of divisibility. The views earlier attributed to the Jews are revealed to be none other than that of Jerome.

He begins by acknowledging that some claim that the Psalter consists of five independent "books" (*Psalterium in quinque libros esse divisum*) because of the concluding doxologies "*amen amen*" found at the end of Psalms 41, 72, 89 and 106. He disputes this logic on several grounds. First, the Apostles always call the work the "book of Psalms" (*Psalmorum librum nominant*), and therefore it is one volume (*unum volumen*).[103] He picks up this argumentative strand at the end of his prologue, where he notes that the title of the book in Hebrew is *Sefer Tehillim*; namely "Scroll of Songs" (*volumen hymnorum*) and thus "not many books, but one volume" (*non plures libros, sed unum volumen*). His second argument undermines *amen* as a concluding doxology by noting that *amen* often occurs in the middle of books. At stake, so Jerome claims, is the numerological importance of the number twenty-two, the "mystery of the same number" (*mysterium eiusdem*

[102] The third part of the letter, about translation of work into Greek, will not be discussed here.
[103] On the technical term *volumen* see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 264 n.4. *Liber* is sometimes used synonymously with *volumen*, as it appears to be in this passage. *Liber* may also be used to indicate a literary unit of a larger work. *Volumen* tends to denote the book as a physical object.

numeri) between the Hebrew alphabet and the books of the Bible.[104] More important than disputation with Jews is the defense of sacred numerology.

Augustine, Jerome's contemporary and interlocutor, also defends the unity of the Psalter. He uses the space in his final homily on the Psalms to make sense of the number of psalms and order of the Psalter. Like Jerome, he begins by acknowledging that some divide Psalms into five book on the basis of the concluding doxologies. He rejects this, in part, by appealing to the fact that the New Testament refers to the book in singular. Unlike Jerome, he dismisses the doxology argument by noting that the final Psalm does not contain one, and that the books themselves are uneven in number of psalms they contain. It would be appropriate for each of the five books to contain thirty psalms. Furthermore, he does not appeal to numerology. Perhaps most distinctively, however, he attempts to synthesize the five-book and one-book claim, all the while expressing his preference for the unity theory. Instead of appealing to the Hebrew title to firmly establish the Psalter as one book – as Jerome did – Augustine appeals to "Hebrew literary custom" (*consuetudine litterarum hebraearum*) to establish the fact that what is called one book may really consist of five. To buttress the claim, he points to a linguistic pattern in which the many may be referred to by the singular, and thus "books of Psalms" with the singular word "Psalm." He immediately rejects this argument, and claims to be convinced only in the case of the Twelve Prophets, which Acts 7:42 cites as "the Book of the Prophets." He rounds out his discussion by claiming that there are those who see the entirety of Scripture as one book that tells a continuous narrative. Augustine, however, makes his opinion succinctly known in his canon list found in *On*

[104] For Jerome's fascination with Hebrew letters and numerology see his *Epist*. 30, and also Guy G. Stroumsa, *The Scriptural Universe of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 113–14. On the precursors and longevity of Origen's division of the Hebrew canon based on the twenty-two Hebrew letters see Edmon L. Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture in Patristic Biblical Theory: Canon, Language, Text*, VCSup 114 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 85–92. One sees the flexibility of this numerology, however, in his preface to Samuel-Kings. He notes that some count Ruth and Lamentations as separate works, and thus the number is twenty-four and not twenty-two. This too, however, receives symbolic significance as Jerome connects it to the twenty-four shepherds in Revelation.

Christian Doctrine 2:8: "Next are the Prophets, in which there is one book of the Psalms of David" (*deinde Prophetae in quibus David unus liber Psalmorum*).

Augustine's appeal to unity may highlight at least one dimension of what is at stake in this debate. While we tend to acknowledge ancient writers and readers as intertextually inclined and scripturally omnivorous, arrangement and division mattered. Augustine, for example, continues his exposition of Psalm 150 with the assumption that Psalms constitutes one book and that "if we put our question to the Book of Psalms itself and do so by considering the psalms in sets of fifty, we receive a profound answer, one that deserves careful thought."[105] The profound answer is undoubtedly the Trinity. Ultimately, as in our rabbinic examples above, conceptions of order and unity, which are often molded by the material apparatus of a text, affect interpretation and meaning.

The above comments by Jerome and Augustine, which demand the Psalter be conceptualized as one book, may, in part, rest on the codex, the primary material medium of Christian access to the Psalter. While one scroll could in theory contain the entire book of Psalms it would be bulky and unwieldy. The codex, however, could comfortably contain the entirety of the Psalms and contribute to its mental categorization as one single book.[106] At the same time, we must acknowledge the fact that Jerome's and Augustine's comments rest upon the background of both Jewish and Christian traditions that divide the Psalter into five books.[107] I suggest that if the

[105] Translation from Boniface Ramsey, ed., *Expositions on the Psalms 121-150*, trans. Maria Boulding, vol. 6, 6 vols., The Works of Saint Augustine III/20 (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004), 511.

[106] Psalms so often appear as separate work and in its own codex that otherwise complete Greek and Latin biblical codices omit Psalms altogether. See Franciscus A. van Liere, *An Introduction to the Medieval Bible*, Introduction to Religion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 29. Indeed, Christians in various regions seem to categorize Psalms as distinct from both the New and Old Testaments, either talking about Psalms and New Testament; or Psalms, Old Testament and New Testament. For examples, see the final chapter of this dissertation.

[107] Gregory of Nyssa, for example, in his *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* acknowledges the Psalter's division into five and uses it as grist for his theological mill. He equates the order of the five books to the progressive stages of spiritual life. He uses the doxologies as guiding markers. There is no doubt that Augustine and Jerome are reacting to readings of Psalms that are quite similar to Gregory's. For further on Gregory and Psalm order see Matthias Henze, "Patristic Interpretations of the Composition of the Psalter," in *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*, ed. Craig A. Evans, vol. 2, 2 vols., LSTS 50–51 (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 141–44. He

codex does indeed shape the thought of Jerome and Augustine it exemplifies a process by which technology slowly adjusts intellectual horizons over long periods of time. New paradigms do not manifest fully formed; old structures do no vanish overnight.

Additionally, the relationship between materiality and mentality is not unidirectional. We must not fall into the trap of technological determinism. Materiality and textual imagination exist in dialectic tension. Jerome and Augustine offer us a window into the impact materiality may have on crafting interpretation. Cassiodorus, a sixth century Roman statesman and pedagogical theoretician, provides the opposing vista: the role exegesis has on shaping materiality. In his *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*, Cassiodorus provides the framework for a building a Christian library. He begins his work by gathering information about the biblical canon, informing the reader which commentaries to consult and how to access them. In his section on the Psalter, he lists earlier patristic exegetes and expresses his profound debt to the commentary of Augustine. He concludes his discussion by prescribing the ideal way to physically access the Psalter:

> I have decided that this entire collection of Psalms ought to be put in three volumes of fifty psalms each so that the triple number of the jubilee year might signify to you the gift of remission desired from the Holy Trinity. A single volume containing all the psalms might prove too burdensome for some brothers. With the Lord's aid many may find a shortened form of the book beneficial to their salvation and may receive the hope of precious salvation when the work is divided in such a way. Have in your library then one book of all the Psalms for reference if perchance the text strikes you as erroneous. But the interest of the brothers may be served by the divided sections.[108]

In addition to further highlighting the existence of the Psalter as one book on the shelf of a monastic library, Cassiodorus demonstrates the impact interpretation can have on materiality. The desire to divide the Psalms is a pragmatic one; a full volume may be too cumbersome to read or too imposing

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does not put Gregory in conversation with Jerome or Augustine. See also Ronald E. Heine, *Gregory of Nyssa's Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, OECS (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 50–71.

[108] James W. Halporn, trans., *Cassiodorus: Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul*, TTH 42 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2003), 121.

to memorize. The choice to divide it into three smaller books is one driven by hermeneutics. Other number combinations are technically possible. Five books, for example, would fall well within the bounds of tradition. Instead, Cassiodorus appeals to other traditional mental frames of reference in suggesting how to physically access the Psalter: the fifty-year jubilee and the Trinity. Perhaps his earlier acknowledged debt to Augustine is manifest in his choice to divide a study Psalter into three. Regardless, his comment highlights the process by which materiality shapes mentality, which in turn shapes materiality.

Even if the material medium had no impact on these mental categories, and I do not think that is the case, it is undeniable that Jews and Christians are engaging in a shared discourse about the divisibility of the Psalter. The soft inferential voices of our rabbinic sources are amplified and made clear by the polemical megaphones of Jerome and Augustine. In both communities, division and meaning were mutually referential and intimately bound. Textuality matters.

Punctuating the Psalms

The most acute interactions between Psalms and textuality appear in examples that focus on writing, erasing and correcting – the activities that simultaneously define a scribe and make him notorious. Within rabbinic literature, the book of Psalms features in only two instances. Attention to these sources shifts our material-focused lenses from the macro questions of length and divisibly to the micro concerns of jots and tittles. This optic nonetheless continues to clarify the pluriform textual condition of the Psalter in Late Antiquity, as well as the manifold attempts by readers to control it and make meaning of it.

Let us begin with one example, unique to Psalms, that rests at the nexus of materiality and lineation. A lengthy discourse in b. Pesaḥ. 117a discusses the relationship of the word hallelujah

to text division. It demonstrates that the correct oral and material partitioning of a text mattered. The debate may also highlight the blurring of reading and writing practices. It begins as follows: "R. Ḥisda said: 'hallelujah is the end of a textual unit (*pirqa*); Rabba b. R. Huna said: 'hallelujah is the beginning of a textual unit (*pirqa*).'" [109] The Psalter is littered with ambiguous hallelujahs. These include every instance of hallelujah except for Psalms 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, which each begin and end with hallelujah, follow a chapter that ends in hallelujah and precede one that begins with hallelujah.[110] What about the remainder?[111] Does hallelujah open up a new psalm or close the previous one? At the very least, R. Ḥisda and Rabba b. R. Huna are arguing about where to pause when reading or reciting the Psalms. I suggest, however, that materiality both informs this argument and is ultimately at stake in it. Ancient Jewish scrolls contain no internal markings for the division of text other than large blank spaces. Even within this scribal paradigm, Psalms proves distinctive. The various psalm texts from Qumran demonstrate that the titles and the opening words of individual chapters of psalms often begin a new line. This is true even of Psalters written in prose.[112] If *pirqa* in this passage denotes a unit of text surrounded by blank spaces then the

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[109] All talmudic manuscripts except JTS 1623/2 and Colombia X 893 read פירקא. These two outliers have פיסקא, a reading that Sokoloff adopts in his dictionary. פירקא in general signifies a unit of text, such as a section of prayer (b. Ber. 20b), or a chapter of Mishnah (e.g. b. Ber. 52b). It is a fixed and known measure. See Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 2:898–900. In some biblical scrolls, a new section could begin with a blank space. These may not necessarily correspond to the Masoretic divisions of Psalms. This still applies if פיסקא is the correct reading. It means "section of a literary work." To my knowledge, our passage is the only one in classical rabbinic literature to connect it to biblical text. Nonetheless, this usage does appear in Geonic literature, where סוף פיסקא appears to mean the next available blank space. For examples see Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the talmudic and Geonic Periods* (Ramat-Gan, Israel : Baltimore: Bar Ilan University Press ; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 902. Of course, פיסקה does appear in Hebrew, where it seems to indicate a pause between two units of text. See Sifra Dibbura Denedava 2, discussed by Naeh, "The Structure and the Division of Torat Kohanin (B)," 67.

[110] With the exception, of course, of Psalm 150, which concludes the book.

[111] It is an issue for Psalm 145-6: תהלת ה׳; 135-6: ברוך ה׳ מציון; 134-135: יברכך ה׳ מציון; 117-118: כי גבר עלינו חסדו; 116-117: בחצרות בית ה׳; 115-116: ואנחנו נברך יה; 113-114: מושיבי עקרת הבית; 112-113: רשע יראה וכעס; 111-112: ראשית חכמה; 110-111: מנחל בדרך ישתה. Also note the somewhat anomalous hallelujah in Psalm 135:2-3: שעמדים בבית ה׳.

[112] 11QPs[a] contains numerous examples in which the beginning of a psalm starts a new line of text. This also occurs in texts divided stichographically, such as 4QPs[b] XXII. Psalm titles for the most part were simply the beginning of a new psalm. However, some scrolls set them apart as independent units. For this development see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 165.

argument between R. Ḥisda and Rabba b. R. Huna becomes a scribal one: where should hallelujah fall? For Rabba b. R. Huna, hallelujah begin a new section and thus a new line; for R. Ḥisda, it does not. Rather, it concludes the previous section, and a blank space would follow. In reality, the material Psalters of Late Antiquity likely exhibited both styles of divisions; indeed, the opinions of R. Ḥisda and Rabba b. R. Huna may have been informed by the psalm scroll most immediately at their disposal.

That materiality matters, and that a *pirqa* likely refers to a unit of text surrounded by blank spaces, is evident from the statement that immediately follows: "R. Ḥisda said, 'I saw the Psalter in the house of R. Ḥannan b. Rabba and hallelujah was written in the middle of a text unit (*emtza pirqa*). Perhaps he was unsure.'" This remark leaves little doubt that *pirqa* in this discourse is bound to materiality. Uncertain, however, is the phrase "middle of a textual unit," which appears only here. What could it mean? As noted above, the hallelujahs at the beginning or end of a textual unit are noticeable because of the blank space that either follows or precedes them. A hallelujah in the middle of a textual unit does not have this distinguishing marker. Or, more precisely, the hallelujahs in R. Ḥannan's Psalter had neither a space before them nor one after them. It appeared embedded in a larger block of text without distinction.[113] His Psalter would read as follows: "The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing, hallelujah, praise O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord" (Ps 112:10-

[113] For lack of spacing between Psalms see 4QPs^{a} 9 II and 4QPs^{o} 1. These cases are far from clear, however. More clear is 4QPs^{r} I. For the suggestion that middle means no vacant space and thus the actual middle of a line see also C. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1897), 381. He adopts this in his edition of the Bible, which lays out the Psalms stichographically, and places these disputed hallelujahs in the their own separate line, but in the middle of that line. See, for example, the relevant Psalms in C. D. Ginsburg, *Liber Psalmorum* (London: Societatis Bibliophilorum Britannicae et Externae, 1913). See also Heinrich Graetz, "Die Halleluya - Und Hallel - Psalmen," *MGWJ* 18 (1879): 193.

113:1). With the assumption that beginnings of textual units must contain at least a break if not a new line, it is no wonder R. Ḥisda interpreted the lack of spacing as an indication of uncertainty.[114]

Perhaps R. Ḥannan was not in doubt. Perhaps the Psalter in R. Ḥannan's possession was written in prose and contained blank spaces in locations that do not correspond to our chapter divisions. For R. Ḥannan, a textual unit (*pirqa*) would not have been marked off by a written and visual distinction, such as the start of a new line, but rather by performative reading. A reader must interact with a text to produce meaning. As the tradition that follows demonstrates, R. Ḥannan was far from uncertain about the location of various hallelujahs. He declares: "All agree that for '*tehillat'* (Ps 145-6), '*rasha'* (Ps 112-3) and '*omedim'* (Ps 135:1-2) the hallelujah that follows it is the beginning of a textual unit (*pirqa*)." The phrase "that follows it" is best understood in light of the type of psalm scroll just descrbied, which would not have a space between the last word of Psalm 112 and the hallelujah that follows.[115] That reading and not writing is at play in the latter half of this Talmduic discourse receives further support as the Talmud cites the enigmatic "readers" (*qara'ai*),[116] who add two more examples: Psalm 110:7 and Psalm 111:10. If writing were at stake the tradition could have cited the opinions of the "scribes." With the text of a scroll running in a linear manner and chapter breaks unmarked, it was incumbent upon the reader to know when tradition demanded a pause. Such a prose Psalter was not for the novice.

Ultimately, this passage in b. Pesaḥ. 117a informs us about the multifarious nature of Psalm scrolls and their readers. We examined how the opinions of rabbinic sages are connected to

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[114] This anecdote contains the narrative trope of "authentication by scroll" that we will explore further below. For a similar trope in Greco-Roman literature see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 111. For yet another example see b. Shab. 49b. I hope explore this trope in depth at a future date.

[115] A much clearer way to claim that the hallelujah would begin a new section if the text did have a line break (or any break) would be to write: הללויה **דקמיה** הללי נפשי ריש פירקא, using Psalm 146 as an example.

[116] For other examples of Bible readers see b. Meg. 28b and b. Avod. Zar. 40a. JTS 1623/2 and Colombia X 893 read סוראיי. I am unsure how this reading arises. Could they be talking about Syraic Psalters? It is tempting to see סוראיי as the original reading, which eventually becomes קראיי as reference to the Karaites. This is, however, doubtful.

the materiality of the Psalters in their possession. Various rabbis uncoincidentally crafted their legal positions about the ideal psalm scroll by reference to the physical Psalter they knew best. Questions about line spacing prove no less contested than issues of length and divisibility. In fact, the narrower we set our focus the more controversy we uncover.

Erasing the Psalter

Minutiae matter. This fact is best observed at the most microscopic level of our exploration of rabbinic textuality; namely, in discourses about word spacing and the erasure of letters. Hallelujah, that peculiar word found exclusively in Psalms, once again takes center stage. The following exchange in y. Meg. 1:11 72a[117] will exemplify the connection and tension between textuality, materiality and rabbinic legislation on Psalms. The debate in the following passage is set upon the background of two considerations: 1) divine names are holy and thus cannot be erased, and 2) certain words containing theophoric elements cannot be split in two while others can. The status of halleujah, although initially placed in the list of words that can be divided, is up for debate:

> [It's a debate between] Rav and Samuel. One claims [it is spelled] hallelu jah, and the other hallelujah. The one who claims it is hallelu jah, it may be divided but not erased. The one who claims it is hallelujah, it can be erased but not divided. We do not know which tradent said what. [Let us solve this problem] from what Rav said: "I heard from my uncle, 'if someone should give me a book of Psalms of R Meir,[118] I would erase every hallelujah[119] that are found in it, for he did not intend to sanctify them.'" From here we learn that he is

[117] Parallel in y. Sukkah 3:12 53d.

[118] Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 24; Blau, *Studien zum althebräischen Buchwesen*, 111 n.3 suggest that this means any text copied by R. Meir and not necessarily his own personal volume. This is probably correct. It is further tempting to read with Jonathan Siegel, *The Scribes of Qumran. Studies in the Early History of Jewish Scribal Customs, with Special Reference to the Qumran Biblical Scrolls and to the Tannaitic Traditions of Massekheth Soferim* (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 1971), 283 n.6 who claims that the scroll in the passage may not have contained the entirety of the Psalms, but just the sections with Hallel. No positive evidence, however, can be offered.

[119] A scribe of the Leiden manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud places a dot above every instance in which hallelu and jah are separated. This was likely necessary for scribal clarity. The situation in the parallel version in y. Sukkah more complicated. The scribe primarily distinguishes between the two be placing a *tzere* under the first lamed of the hallel that cannot be divided and a *sheva* under the one than cannot be erased. The spacing, however, is inconsistent. The hallleujah of the father-in-law's statement is graphically represented as one single word. The scribe does not employ vowels for it.

> the one who would claim hallelu jah. The words of the rabbis dispute this. R. Simon in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi said: "Ten words of praise are said in the book of Psalms: … the richest of them all is hallelujah for the divine name and praise are combined in it."

As a whole, this conversation operates on two levels: orthography and attributed meaning. Hallelujah can be written in one of two ways, "hallelu jah" or "hallelujah," both of which are extant in Genizah fragments and Masoretic manuscripts that contain Psalms.[120] The Palestinian Talmud attempts to correlate these variants with putative sanctity, suggesting only two possibilities: 1) hallelu jah contains a divine name; 2) hallelujah does not. This binary is deceptively simple. As earlier scholarship has noted, while the source focuses on attempting to identify the authorities behind various traditions, it actually betrays three scribal and sacral possibilities: 1) halleujah contains a divine name; 2) hallelujah does not contain a divine name; 3) hallelu jah contains a divine name.[121] The anonymous voice of the Palestinian Talmud attempts to reduce the statement of Rav's uncle to orthography. It is actually more radical.

In order to best appreciate the true force of the statement of Rav's uncle we need to briefly examine the treatment of divine names in Jewish scribal culture. Within the context of scroll production, the statement attributed to Rav's uncle stands out. In addition to further highlighting rabbinic engagement with physical scrolls, it accentuates the problematics of writing and erasing divine names. Effacing divinity is no trifling matter in scribal cultures. The Qumran scrolls and early Christian papyri testify to the care accorded to both signifying and erasing divine names.[122] Additionally, an earlier statement in this section of the Palestinian Talmud declares that "Jah" may

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[120] For Masoretic variation see Siegel, *Scribes of Qumran*, 97–100. For a Genizah fragment that separates hallelu and jah see Ezra Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs of Palestinian Jews during the Times of the Genizah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 279 n.20. For additional discussion of Masoretic variation see Israel Yevin, "The Division into Sections in the Book of Psalms," *Textus* 7 (1969): 91–92, 95–96.

[121] For previous discussions see Siegel, *Scribes of Qumran*, 80–110; Graetz, "Die Halleluya - Und Hallel - Psalmen," 195; Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition*, 376–82. The particular historical-positive and text-critical arguments and conclusions of these scholars do not have an impact on my current analysis.

[122] For Qumran see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 205–8. For some early papyri see Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 92–94.

never be erased. Furthermore, it permits a scribe to delete a divine name only when scriptural context ensures that it does not actually refer to God, such as all instances of *Elohim* in the Micha story of Judges 18 except for that in verse 31. Rav's uncle adds a new dimension to scribal discourse by privileging his reconstruction of scribal intentionality over orthography (and perhaps context).[123] In the eyes of Rav's uncle, had he surmised that R. Meir intended to sanctify hallelujah, the divine name would be inerasable. The vehemence of the statement by Rav's uncle may indicate that he wants the "Jah" to be read as a divine name. Our narrative, however, does not tell us which orthographic option he would employ: hallelu jah, or an intentionally sanctified hallelujah.

Could the interest in reconstructing the intentionality of the scribe as a textual hermeneutic be the beginnings of conjectural emendation within a rabbinic context? Regardless, attention to intentionality explains the unique use of "Psalms of R. Meir," a term that appears only here. Probing the intention of a scribe requires a named tradent about whom others can speculate. An anonymously produced scroll would not do; the intention of the scribe who produced the scroll would be lost in transmission. Given the extant literary trope of a Torah of R. Meir that contains divergent readings it is of little wonder that he is chosen.[124] Additionally, that named tradents and questions about intentionality go hand-in-hand may be hinted at in the parallel to this narrative found in b. Pesaḥ. 117a, which we will explore next. The Babylonian Talmud does not focus on

[123] Or does one appeal to intentionality when context itself is ambiguous, such as our hallelujahs? That scribal intentionality matters in the writing of the divine name see y. Shab. 12:5 13d: "If someone needed to write the divine name, and he had intention to write Yehudah but forgot and wrote it without a *daled*." I disagree with Siegel, *Scribes of Qumran*, 86–87, who ties the question of whether the name is sacred to whether the scroll was intended for synagogue use or not.

[124] It is worth noting, though, that our example is not strictly about a different textual reading. On R. Meir as a scribe see also y. Meg. 4:1 74d. On the Torah of R. Meir and its scribal divergences see Ibid., 255–63. On its connection to the scroll taken by Titus from Jerusalem, see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 23–26; Nathan Jastram, "The Severus Scroll and R. Meir's Torah," in *The Text of the Hebrew Bible: From the Rabbis to the Masoretes*, ed. Elvira Martín Contreras and Lorena Miralles-Maciá (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 137–45; Armin Lange, "Rabbi Meir and the Severus Scroll," in *Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning (Prov. 1:5): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday*, ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer, SJ 90 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 51–74. For a history of scholarship see pg. 51 n.2. Most studies seem to ignore or downplay our source.

reconstructing intentionally. Missing as well is the designation of the physical Psalter in the narrative as that of R. Meir or another named figure.

How does b. Pesaḥ. 117a treat the question of division and erasure? It begins with a tradition that R. Ḥisda cites in the name of R. Yoḥanan that hallelujah, *kesyah* and *yedidyah* are each a single word. The theophoric element is not graphically distinct. Rav claims that only *kesyah* and *yedidyah* are, while Rabbah posits this only for an entirely different word – *merḥavyah*. In the course of its dialectic, the anonymous voice of the Babylonian Talmud attempts to clarify why Rav treats hallelujah as two separate words. It cites an anecdote involving Rav: "Rav said, I saw a Psalter belonging to my friend and hallelu was written on one side and jah on another."[125] If it were one word, it would have been written together. Physical evidence determines Rav's legal ruling. Like the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud attempts to establish Rav's position via anecdote. The evidence offered, however, differs in both scope and force. Assumptions about intentionality are replaced by a tactic found elsewhere in rabbinic literature: authentication through material evidence. Recall the narrative in b. Qidd. 30b, discussed above, where R. Joseph is told to find a scroll and determine the exact middle for verses in the Pentateuch. This method is, of course, employed in a more *ad hoc* than systematic manner.[126] Nevertheless, it highlights the fact that rabbinic law may be grounded in experiential reality, in this case, the material Psalter.

What kind of psalm scroll was Rav reported to have seen? Traditional interpreters read and translate the word *gisa* as "line."[127] They likely imagine that Rav saw a scroll with the word halleu at the end of one line and jah at the beginning of the following one; but the word *gisa*', found

[125] The manuscript variants are largely inconsequential. Oxford Opp. 23, Munich 95, JTS 1623/2, Colombia X 893 and Vatican 134 have בחד גיסא; Munich 9, JTS 1608 and Vatican 109 have מהאי גיסא.
[126] For the similar *ad hoc* consulting of scrolls in Greco-Roman scenes of reading see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 111. I hope to provide a fuller study of this motif in rabbinic literature at a later date.
[127] See, for example, Rashi *ad locum*.

almost exclusively in the Babylonian Talmud, is better translated as "side." While it is possible to understand it as meaning the different sides of a single column of a prose Psalter, and thus separate lines within that column, the semantics of the phrase "from one side to the other" often imagines a roughly continuous line.[128] Furthermore, the expected word for "line of text" is *ḥiṭṭa* in Aramaic, or *shiṭṭah* in both Hebrew and Aramaic.[129] It is possible, therefore, that the Psalter of Rav's friend was divided into stiches, and thus within a single line hallelu was found at the end of one stich and jah at the beginning of the another.[130]

Regardless of the exact layout of the Psalter that Rav encountered, we cannot deny that it had a direct impact on his textual imagination and legislation. Physical scrolls and rabbinic hermeneutics must be examined in tandem. The classification of rabbinic Judaism as an oral society does not give us license to ignore the impact that physical material had on their culture. Everything from mental categories, to discussion of scrolls, to debates about spacing and erasure conclusively demonstrate one underappreciated fact: materiality matters.

Conclusion

At the heart of this chapter lies two simple questions: First, what did the Psalter look like in Jewish Late Antiquity? Second, how do rabbis engage with the material and textual dimensions of the book of Psalms? No single solution suffices. Instead, I have opted to follow the methodology laid out by historians of reading, who account for both the rich interplay between materiality and textual imagination as well as the diversity of its expressions. In this chapter, I have gathered

[128] For numerous examples see Sokoloff, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 282.
[129] This is especially true when it comes to lines of writing. See, for example, b. B. Bat. 162a-b. Admittedly, חטא is very rare. שיטה, however, occurs within Aramaic sentences, including in Targum. See Targum Jonathan to Isaiah 30:8 as an example. See also y. Giṭ 5:3 46d.
[130] Perhaps it would not be too far-fetched to suggest that the stich layout was likely that commonly used for the Song of the Sea.

together and contextualized almost every reference in classical rabbinic literature to the book of Psalms as a textual artifact. We thus began the exploration of the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity by examining the material medium of the psalm scroll, a common way that many Jews – especially those among the elite – would have encountered the Psalter.

In addition to filling out an unstudied dimension of psalm reception, this chapter argues that scholars of ancient Judaism have far too often ignored or minimized the material dimensions of Jewish engagement with Scripture. While questions of exegesis, orality and literacy are important, we must think beyond them in order to better develop the analytical tools necessary to appreciate the rich and varied encounters ancient Jews had with the Bible.

By adopting a contextualizing strategy, this chapter attempted to thickly described[131] the multiple approaches ancient Jews adopted towards textuality and materiality. It began by exploring the possible lengths and layouts of material psalm scrolls from Qumran through Late Antiquity. This set a plausible background upon which the rabbinic sources discussed operate. The chapter then examined how the physical apparatus of the scroll encouraged particular forms of textual imagination and undergirded discussions about length, divisibility, space and erasure. The material condition of the Psalms and interpretation of the Psalter are bound in a ceaseless dialectic. To ignore one side in favor of the other is to paint a skewed picture of rabbinic culture.

Our more nuanced portrait, however, is still incomplete. The physical Psalter not only informed discussions about materiality and textuality, but also reading practices. In the following chapter, I will pay close attention to the interplay between materiality and reading as it pertained to the Psalter. I will also examine the socio-cultural dynamics involved in reading and representing the

[131] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3–32. In emphasizing 'contextualizing strategy' I draw from the mode of cultural history developed by Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Darnton, "First Steps Towards a History of Reading."

Chapter 2: Reading the Material Psalter, Towards a Sociology of Rabbinic Scriptural Reading

> My father, may his memory be blessed, said that my grandfather, may his memory be blessed, said that just as movement is difficult for a person so too movement is difficult for books. When he died, he said to his son, "Be warned, do not take out books from your brother's house in which I dwell." And when they needed to read they would come there, just as when he was alive so too when he died. They said: "Whomever does not see brothers sitting and books in their hands has not seen a good interpretation (of the verse) 'Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers sit together' (Ps 133:1).'" Therefore, my father and teacher, may his memory be blessed, and I would come every day to the house of my grandfather, may his memory be blessed, to study there and fulfill upon ourselves [the rabbinic saying]: "Be exiled to a place of Torah" (m. Avot 4:18).

- *S. Y. Agnon, "The Set of Talmud in My Grandfather's House"*[1]

Agnon's tale and subtle interpretation of ancient sources highlights a feature of books and reading briefly explored in the previous chapter. Books bind, and reading creates a sacred community of learning. Psalm 133:1 in the hands of Agnon becomes the exegetical keystone that completes the edifice of Jewish education and community. Good and pleasant is the act of communal reading. Agnon adopts a psalm verse to exemplify engagement with the crown jewel of post-rabbinic Judaism – the Talmud. In this chapter, I will follow the path Agnon sets, but for a text much earlier than the Talmud – the book of Psalms. In addition to taking up the third question posed in the introduction of the previous chapter, "What impact did the physical Psalms have on ancient Jewish reading practices," I will add a couple of new ones inspired by Agnon: How does reading the Psalms function sociologically? And, how does a Psalter travel?[2]

[1] S. Y. Agnon, *These and These*, vol. 2, 6 vols., 12th ed., The Complete Works of Shmuel Yosef Agnon (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing, 1971), 219. Translation from Hebrew my own.

[2] Answers to these questions are already hinted at in our discussion of y. B. Bat. 1:7 13a in the previous chapter, which notes the travel of psalm scrolls as inheritance, and explores the desire of one sage to keep scriptural sets together in order to engender a community of sacred reading.

This chapter accomplishes several tasks by grappling with these queries. It fills out the portrait begun in the previous chapter by completing the analysis of nearly every instance in which "the book of Psalms" appears in classical rabbinic literature as a textual artifact, and by furthering the attempt to re-imagine rabbinic engagement with Scripture as more materially oriented than previously recognized. This chapter, however, is focused on reading. As such, it will also adopt the methodological posture of historians of reading, who teach us that reading is a sociological, performative, active and contextual activity that occurs at the intersection of reader, material and situation.[3] It cannot be reduced to a singular event.[4] Diversity in representation and practice is the rule, much in the same way that variety is the rule for the material manifestations of the late antique Psalter. Within the context of the study of ancient Judaism this means that we must be attentive to ancient Jewish readers as more than *interpreters* of Scripture.[5] Scriptural interpretation is, of course, the best attested form of reading in rabbinic literature, and this chapter will not neglect to analyze the impact materiality has on interpretive reading. At the same time, however, we must pay attention to scriptural reading as a performative and community-defining activity, an act that produces more than the correct exegesis of a particular verse.[6] In this chapter, I will attempt to

[3]William A. Johnson, "Towards a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity," *American Journal of Philology* 121 (2000): 592–627; Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*; Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy." Perhaps this sentiment is well captured by Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 12."To consider reading to be a concrete act requires holding any process of the construction of meaning (hence, of interpretation) as situated at the crossroads between readers endowed with specific competences, identified by their positions and their dispositions and characterized by their practice of reading, and texts whose meaning is always dependent on their particular discursive and formal mechanisms – in the case of printed texs we might call them 'typographical' (in a broad sense of the adjective)." Of course Chartier's considerations apply to more than just print. See also Chartier, *The Order of Books*.

[4]For a recent example that highlights the mutability of reading and the necessity of historical contextualization see Raphael, *Reading Galileo*. For methodological statement see pg. 4-5. Raphael explicitly places herself in the Jardine-Grafton tradition, as do I.

[5] Most scholarship on rabbinic engagement with Scripture focuses on its interpretive dimensions. This bibliography is much too vast to cite with any degree of completeness. For three recent monographs that treat biblical books see Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms*; Jonathan Kaplan, *My Perfect One: Typology and Early Rabbinic Interpretation of Song of Songs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Zev Farber, *Images of Joshua in the Bible and Their Reception*, BZAW 457 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

[6] We will explore this line of argumentation further in the chapters on psalm liturgy and psalm piety.

show what can we learn about rabbinic society by widening the scope of what reading may accomplish.

This chapter will begin exploring the relationship between materiality, reader and sociological context by examining every rabbinic anecdote that depicts the reading of Psalms in action.[7] These narratives will highlight at least three ways that rabbis could approach the reading of Scripture: 1) scholastic reading, 2) leisure reading, and 3) affective reading. The chapter will also examine a scene of reading that underscores the anxiety scribes cause for readers of sacred texts. It will then explore the impact that the physical scroll has on rabbinic hermeneutics by detailing instances of psalm interpretation born from a linear reading process. The chapter concludes by examining the social and symbolic wealth attached to the physical Psalter.

Rabbinic Scenes of Reading: An Introduction

In the previous chapter we examined the physical apparatus of a psalm scroll, detailing its material variety and its impact upon rabbinic textuality. We may now focus on the relationship between materiality and reading practices. There are several ways to access this information in rabbinic literature. The most obvious and common is through an examination of rabbinic scriptural exegesis, working from the product of reading back to the mental and physical structures that inform it. I will perform this task at the end of this chapter. The most fruitful way to examine rabbinic scriptural reading and materiality, however, is also the least readily available; namely, through an analysis of anecdotal depictions of rabbinic reading in action.[8] These narratives, which

[7] I exclude, of course, those narratives explored in the previous chapter.

[8] For an attempt to tease out the semantics of the word "read" (קרא) for biblical and rabbinic Judaism see Daniel Boyarin, "Placing Reading: Ancient Israel and Medieval Europe," in *The Ethnography of Reading*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 10–37. He is correct in noting that קרא in this literature often denotes an oral speech act, and that reading in this culture looks very different from the private and silent valence of "to read" of our own European tradition. Nonetheless, he too privileges orality and undercuts the importance of

I will call "scenes of reading," provide the clearest window into how rabbis imagine the practice of reading.[9]

In this first half of this chapter, I will analyze every scene of reading in classical rabbinic literature that includes the book of Psalms. As mentioned above, I will adopt the methodological stance of a historian of reading, examining reading as a varied, contextual and performative activity. In the words of Johnson, I understand reading as "*the negotiated construction of meaning within a particular sociocultural context*" (italics in original).[10] In particular, I will pay close attention to the sociocultural and material assumptions that underpin these scenes of reading.[11] Ultimately, I argue that applying the insights of historians of reading to rabbinic literature produces a more nuanced and intricate history of the rabbinic encounter with Scripture.[12]

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physical texts when present. Furthermore, his conclusions about the use of קרא are based on a limited and highly selective sample size.

[9] They are often tangential to the rabbinic discourse within which they are embedded. If I were allowed a modicum of positivism I would further argue that they are less likely to be reworked in light of the sugya at hand, and therefore good reflections or interventions into the accepted and widespread modes of reading.

[10] Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 11.

[11] In this sense, I am attempting to move beyond the confines of questions of literacy and the dichotomy between orality and writing. I have drawn inspiration from Jonathan Boyarin, ed., *The Ethnography of Reading* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Particularly powerful is the notion "that not only is all reading socially embedded, but indeed a great deal of reading is done in social groups" Jonathan Boyarin, "Introduction," in *The Ethnography of Reading*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4. This is especially true of the rabbinic sources I will examine.

[12] It is undeniable that the Bible, although a written text, was primarily read aloud. However, 1) we must attend to the sociological implications of this practice, and 2) it does not mean that the physical medium of reading did not matter. In dealing with these particular rabbinic sources we are certainly witnessing the activities of a literate elite. Thus, we cannot privilege hearing and memorizing over and against reading. Contra Stern, *Jewish Literary Cultures*, 170–78. Stern is likely correct that primary knowledge of Scripture did not come from simply reading the text. Private reading was not the most common way one encountered texts even among the literary elite. That said, he undercuts the role of materiality in shaping rabbinic interpretation. His argument against spatial reading is somewhat limited by the genre of *semikhut parshiyyot*, explored below, which demands spatial congruity. Additionally, interpretive puns are enjoyable even when working from a clearly written text. It does not require orality as a precondition. Furthermore, if the codex can be a precondition for Medieval exegesis why not the scroll for at least *some* aspects of rabbinic exegesis?

The Sociology and Materiality of Scriptural Reading

A particularly poignant scene of reading involving Psalms occurs in b. Avod. Zar. 19a. This narrative will exemplify multiple aspects of rabbinic reading: its linearity, its social-performative dimensions, and the fact that rabbinic scholastic reading maps well unto the reading patterns of late antique cultural elites:[13]

> [a] R. Judah said, "A person cannot learn Torah except that which his heart desires [to learn]. As it says, 'But rather the Torah of the Lord is his delight' (Ps 1:2)."
> [b] Levi and R. Simon the son of R. Judah[14] were sitting before R. Judah and were studying Scripture.[15] The scroll was finished.
> [c] Levi said, "Let Proverbs be brought." R. Simon son of R. Judah said, "Let Psalms be brought." Levi was defeated and they brought out Psalms.
> [d] [They began to read] and when they came to this verse, "Rather the Law of the Lord is his delight," R. Judah interpreted and said, "A person cannot learn Torah except what his heart desires."
> [e] Levi said, "My master, you have given us permission to stand [leave the learning session]."[16]

[13] This anecdote only occurs in the Babylonian Talmud and is cast Babylonian Aramaic. Nonetheless, there is little reason to think that rabbinic scriptural education vastly differed between Palestine and Babylonia. Styles of reading developed in an earlier Greco-Roman setting would have continued in Sassanian Persia. Furthermore, cultural norms – including manner of reading – connected elites throughout the Roman empire as well as across its borders. I do not mean to completely efface regional differences. Nonetheless, with regards to reading Scripture, difference operates upon a larger background of sameness.

[14] These two students appear to be a common literary pair in rabbinic literature. See David W. Halivni, "Aspects of the Formation of the Talmud," in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, TSAJ 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 422–23.

[15] A more literal translation would be "divide the portion," in which portion (סדר) is a section of biblical text. In this sense I follow but modify Wilhelm Bacher, *Die Bible- und Traditionsexegetische Terminologie der Amoraer* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905), 135–6, who suggests that this phrase means to divide into verses and read as verses. See his correct critique of earlier opinions. Marc G. Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture, 100 C.E.-350 C.E.: Texts on Education and Their Late Antique Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72 also follows Bacher. I differ slightly in that I believe that the unit of meaning, as evidenced in this passage, is not the biblical verse, but rather clauses. Recall from the previous chapter that a פסוק can be of various lengths. Sokoloff, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 800 translates this term as "recitation of the Bible." This is somewhat misleading, as the rabbis in some of the examples that contain the phrase, such as ours, do more than recite. They also expound. I plan on providing a full study of this phrase, analyzing all of its occurrences and examining its sociological implications at a later date. Hirshman also rightly notes that this activity is of higher level learning and mirrors Greco-Roman education.

[16] No significant manuscript variation.

The Babylonian Talmud cites this narrative to illustrate and interpret Psalm 1:2.[17] It plays off the multivalent nature of the Hebrew "*ki im,*" which can either mean "rather"[18] or "unless,"[19] and reads an originally descriptive statement, "*Rather* the Law of the Lord is his delight," which imagines what the fortunate man does instead of entering the council of the wicked (Ps 1:1), as a prescriptive statement that a student cannot learn something, "*Unless* the Torah of Lord is his delight."

This narrative does more than exemplify exegetical creativity. It demonstrates the complex interplay between materiality and rabbinic scholastic reading. It begins with R. Judah and his students "studying Scripture" from a physical scroll. When "the scroll is finished," they begin to debate about which text they ought to study next. R. Simon wins and they bring out Psalms. Scholastic rabbinic study was a shared, social and argumentative enterprise.[20]

Our narrative further assumes the linear process of reading and interpretation that typically accompanies the scroll form. As historians of the book have demonstrated, scrolls encourage the user to read across and down columns in a linear manner instead of jumping around within the text.[21] They neither contain pages to flip, like the codex, nor are infinitely modular, like a true oral

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[17] This story is embedded in a larger talmudic portion that seeks to interpret the entire first half of Psalm 1. For a detailed exploration of the context of this story see the final chapter of this dissertation.

[18] Such as Gen 15:4 – God tells Abraham that Ishmael will not inherit him *rather* (כי אם) the one that comes out from your loins will inherit him.

[19] Such as Gen 32:27 – The man wrestling with Jacob demands to be released because morning has dawned. Jacob will not do so *unless* (כי אם) the person blesses him. Each of these instances can be multiplied with examples.

[20] This feature is part of almost every narrative that includes the phrase פסק סידרא.

[21] On linear pattern of reading in for Greek scrolls and its role in interpretation see van Sickle, "The Book-Roll," 5–6, 19ff. For the ability to move around in a codex see particularly, Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 63, where he talks about the linear access of a scroll vs. random access of a codex. See also Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts*, 9. This may be why Jewish scenes of bibliomancy are rarely connected to a physical scroll, and most often stylized as someone asking a child what verse he studied in school that day. On the phenomenon of asking children, see Pieter van der Horst, "Ancient Jewish Bibliomancy," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000): 9–17. He does not call attention to the lack of materiality in these narratives. Indeed, the linear reading of a (poetic?) roll was also imposed on the early codex. Origen's Hexapla, which Grafton and Williams claim was the first columned book, was to be read straight across as if a scroll. See Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 17. Early Bible codecies were produced with 2-3 columns in order to mimic the scroll form. See Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts*, 37. New technology often attempts to mirror and perfect an older form before taking on a life of its own. This is true for the transition from manuscript to print. Early printed books were designed to look and act as much as possible like manuscripts. See Eugene F. Rice and Anthony Grafton, *The Foundations of Early Modern Europe, 1460-1559*, 2nd ed., The Norton History of Modern Europe (New York: Norton, 1994), 4–6. For a recent attempt to dismantle the

"text."[22] In fact, our narrative explicitly denotes the process of reading linearly with the phrase "when they arrived." This expression indicates motion,[23] and in this case signifies the movement from one verse (or smaller unit) to another.[24] Ultimately, this narrative provides a snapshot of a performative reading model in which one begins at the beginning, reads aloud to others,[25] breaks sentences into sense units and then offers an interpretation of each segment. When R. Judah "arrives" at Psalm 1:2a, "The Law of the Lord is his delight," he reads it in a manner that gives his student leeway to pause the study session. Behind this practice lies the physical scroll, which proceeds when read in a linear fashion.

A vivid portrait of reading must account for materiality. It must also consider the reading practices described. Reading is not a monolithic process, and its styles and aims differ with context. In addition to highlighting linearity, our narrative portrays a particular reading practice. namely, scholastic reading. We encounter the results of this practice throughout rabbinic literature,

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deterministic connection between scrolls and linearity see Mroczek, "Thinking Digitally About the Dead Sea Scrolls," 254–60. While I am sympathetic to any attempt at nuancing determinism, it is equally clear that my examples, which depict actual readers of scrolls, best map unto the well-established paradigm that sees the scroll form contributing to a process of linear reading. Even if we were to completely adopt Mroczek's viewpoint, I would argue that the initial encounter with reading a scroll was linear, even if the products of that reading were then used in a non-linear fashion. Furthermore, the combination of non-linear modality into a scroll format would then encourage readers to approach the new texts in a linear manner. In other words, readers adopt the same linear reading practice of texts produced by a linear mode of interpretation, such as 1QHab or what Mroczek calls randomized, like 4Q171 (Florilegium).

[22] For the most classic argument about the limitless variation of orality see Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, ed. Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). For the adaptation of this argument in explaining Mishnaic variation as the product of oral performance see Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah*. For further on oral variation in rabbinic tradition, as well as the notion that written traditions are merely one instance of a varied oral conversation see Steven D. Fraade, "Literary Composition and Oral Performance in Early Midrashim," *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999): 33–51; Martin S. Jaffee, "Oral Tradition in the Writings of Rabbinic Oral Torah: On Theorizing Rabbinic Orality," *Oral Tradition* 14 (1999): 3–32.

[23] For numerous examples see Sokoloff, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 658–60.

[24] For examples in which this phrase is used in conjunction with reading Scripture see b. Shab. 152a, b. Moʿed Qaṭ. 16b and b. Yoma 87a. For another example pertaining to Psalms see Kallah Rabbati 2:13. In this source, R. Akiva convinces R. Tarfon, a wealthy man, to sponsor the poor of several cities. After some time passed, R. Tarfon asks to see the cities. R. Akiva brings him into a study house and brings forth a child who is holding a book of Psalms in his hand. The child continues until reaching a certain verse, which R. Tarfon then interprets.

[25] That the activity of "studying Scripture" was done by reading aloud is clear from the examples above in which one rabbi is reading to another. The clearest example is b. Shab. 152a, where R. Kahana makes Rav sigh upon hearing a certain verse from Ecclesiastes.

oftentimes as midrash. Rarely, however, can we peer into a window that reveals how some rabbis imagine its production. For our narrative, the process of reading and interpretation is the practice of dividing lines, especially poetic ones, into sense units and then offering an explanation of each segment. This form of careful reading matches the model of ancient education as reconstructed by many scholars.[26] In the context of ancient education, especially at its more advanced stages, a master would read a text to his pupils, proceed sense-unit by sense-unit, and unpack its meaning and broader significances. These divisions left physical remnants. The papyrological record contains several examples of student exercises in which a pupil would place dots in places of word and sense division.[27] These dots likely facilitated future reading and interpretation. In b. Avod. Zar. 19a as well, a master parses a verse, interprets it, and then reveals its broader significance, in this case a principle central to rabbinic education: A student can only learn what he wants to learn.

[26] Education is a powerful tool of social comparison, because members of the Greco-Roman elite were expected to share a similar enough educational experiences and thus literary and sociocultural vocabulary. On the role of teacher in literate education see Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, TCH 11 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). For a description of elite Greco-Roman school reading, particularly as it pertains to dividing up texts to analyze, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 12–13; Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 191. The slow reading and division of text was particularly important in Greek texts, which are written in continuous script. It was also part of expected elite reading practice. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 149. For the performance of a literary text in a similar manner within a culturally elite context see Johnson, "Sociology of Reading," 615–24. Further in line with Johnson is the notion that reading a literary text is a form of entertainment. Within the same talmudic discussion, the rabbis attempt to persuade their followers that studying Torah is ample replacement for going to the Roman theater. Within a rabbinic study context, a reader-performer, to borrow Johnson's terminology, did not merely recite the biblical text, but added his own interpretive flourishes. In some ways this elite education is tied to rabbinic literacy. Rabbis, perhaps more than norm, were Hebrew literate and trained to be such. We must not fall into the fallacy, however, that *all or many* Jews were educated and literate. For such overly optimistic opinions see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 7; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 81–83; Shmuel Safrai, "Education and the Study of Torah," in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. Shmuel Safrai and Menachem Stern, vol. 2, 2 vols., 2nd ed., CRINT 1 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987), 945–70. For a more skeptical portrait, including a critique of earlier scholars, see Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 39–109. Ultimately, in my view, Jewish elites, such as rabbis, would have been as literate in Hebrew as Greco-Roman elites were in Greek and Latin.

[27] See Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind*, 140. Some Peshitta manuscripts also use a single bold dot to mark sense divisions in Psalms. See Tatu, "Graphic Devices Used," 115. This likely facilitated reading and interpretation.

This style of reading, however, must be situated within in its sociological context. A goal of ancient education, whether Greco-Roman, Christian or rabbinic, and by extension the reading practices it inculcates, was to produce culturally elite men capable of communicating across regional boundaries.[28] Rabbinic education distinguishes itself from Christian and Greco-Roman pedagogy primarily by the product it promotes and not necessarily by the process it employs. Namely, rabbinic learning attempts to construct self-perceived elite males who trade in the symbolic capital of Torah knowledge.[29]

Education not only instilled in elites a sense of shared identity, but also molded how they interacted with books. It created a particular elite reading culture. In his study of the sociology of elite reading, Johnson describes several characteristics notable to an elite reading performance. Drawing from a scene of reading in Plutarch, he claims that:

> (1) Reading is a shared, group activity, where one person … brings out the meaning of the text for the rest; (2) the reading is of a difficult text; (3) the reading is, at least for some listeners, not a passive activity – the possibility of interruption is real…; (4) implicitly, the goal of the reading is to … promote a wider discussion, an extension of the dynamic interactions of the social group; (5) the reading becomes thereby both focus and

[28] Peter Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 35–70. The products of that education would be continually practiced and thus reified with communal reading and discussion. See Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 39. Rabbinic education most certainly crafted a set of shared expectations and reading practices among rabbis from Palestine to Babylonia. For the constant "double consciousness" of rabbinic Jews and thus the connection between rabbinic Palestine and Babylonia see Daniel Boyarin, *A Traveling Homeland: The Babylonian Talmud as Diaspora*, Divinations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 54–96. While scholarship of the past two decades has done an excellent job segregating Palestinian rabbis and Babylonian rabbis into their own cultural spheres, we cannot deny the fact that those differences only make sense in light of an overarching shared culture and unity. The distinction between Palestinian and Babylonian only becomes relevant when localized assumptions forces a collective tradition to break down. For some excellent studies of the distinctive aspects of Babylonian rabbis see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Richard L. Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For an example of communication breakdown see Daniel Sperber, "On the Unfortunate Adventures of Rav Kahana: A Passage of Saboraic Polemic from Sasanian Persia," in *Irano-Judaica I; Studies Relating to Jewish Contacts with Persian Culture throughout the Ages*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1982), 83–100.

[29] For symbolic power see Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. On a recent attempt to write a history of the rabbis by imagining the them as Roman provincial elites see Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*. The attempt to write a history of Late Antiquity by paying particular attention to provincial and local elites can also be seen in Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

> springboard to a mutually understood set of group behaviors that serve to build the sense of an intellectual community.[30]

The rabbinic study session as portrayed in b. Avod. Zar. 19a maps almost perfectly unto the model of an elite reading performance described by Johnson. The reading was a shared group activity where R. Judah brought out the meaning of the text for his two students (1). The Bible, and Psalms in particular, was not an easy read (2). In our narrative, the group breaks down as Levi actively interrupts and even dissolves the session. Reading in a group was not a passive experience, even if led by a master (3). The session, especially towards the beginning of the narrative, demonstrates the dynamic relationship within this particular social group (4). In our example, reading Psalms both creates and ultimately destroys an intellectual community (5). It is undeniable that rabbinic scholastic reading is an elite mode of reading. Its content may not match that of neighboring gentiles, but its social transcript would be intimately familiar to contemporary elites.

Bridging the Gap: Non-Scholastic Contexts of Psalm Reading

As mentioned earlier, the activity of reading lies at the crossroads of reader, material and sociocultural context. The example examined above situated materiality and reading within the realm of elite rabbinic hermeneutics and scholasticism. The scenes explored in this section will provide snapshots of reading that occur outside the confines of the rabbinic academy and by persons who are not necessarily rabbis. It will demonstrate that scholastic reading was but one of many ways that ancient Jews in general and rabbis in particular encountered Psalms. What could non-scholastic reading look like?[31] What can it accomplish? The answers, of course, are manifold. In this section, I will provide evidence for three different types of non-scholastic reading: leisure

[30] Johnson, "Sociology of Reading," 618.
[31] For additional examples and further discussion see chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

reading, pietistic reading, and affective reading. What unites the examples below is that either the goal or the outcome of reading is not primarily the generation of the best understanding of the text at hand. It is not study for study's sake.

Our first example provides one snapshot of non-scholastic psalm reading in action. The context is the temple on the eve of Yom Kippur, the primary actor or object of action is the High Priest, and the goal of reading is simple: pass time. The High Priest was not allowed to fall asleep the night before Yom Kippur. M. Yoma 1:6-7 lists the various strategies used to keep him awake. They included goading him, snapping fingers and singing. M. Yoma also lists two forms of reading Scripture: scholastic reading and non-scholastic reading. The former is designated by the word "expound" (*drsh*) and the latter by the verb "read" (*qr'*).[32] That expound means rabbinic scholastic reading is evident from fact that the Mishnah prescribes it only if the High Priest is a "sage" or a "student of a sage."[33] The social identity of the reader molds the expectations of reading, even if it does not shift the intended results, in this instance, keeping the High Priest awake. We must always remember that reading is a multifaceted system with many interlocking but exchangeable parts.

If the High Priest does not belong to the rabbinic elite, one keeps him awake through non-scholastic reading. While the Mishnah does not specify what one expounds (*drsh*) in front of the High Priest, it does single out Job, Ezra, Chronicles and Daniel as especially appropriate books to

[32] The reading of Scripture (מקרא) and the production or reading of midrash (מדרש) are often viewed as separate activities. For an instance in which this division makes a difference see b. Ber. 11b, the question of whether one needs to say a blessing of the Torah before reading the latter. The distinction between מקרא and מדרש implies that there must be a style of reading the Bible that is not necessarily scholastic-interpretive. In fact, it appears as if דרש is elevated by the rabbis as a particularly rabbinic form of reading worthy of its own linguistic designation, as opposed to pietistic or affective reading, which fall under the more generalized term קרא, much in the same way that English provides a linguistic differentiation between reading thorouly or quickly (peruse and skim), but not between reading for pleasure and reading pietistically.

[33] On the nuances of expound (דרש) and its connection to the sage (חכם) see most recently Mandel, *The Origins of Midrash*. He argues that our Mishnah does not necessarily imply scriptural interpretation, but rather legal instruction. Based on the mention of biblical books at the conclusion of this Mishnah I am not sure I agree with Mandel's assessment of this text. Regardless, I would argue, that it is a scholastic form of reading.

read (*qr'*) to the High Priest. It does not spell out the logic behind its selection. Y. Yoma 1:6 39b, however, cites a Tannaitic tradition that provides a different set of books along with the rationale for their selection. It reads: "With Proverbs or Psalms, because their understanding drives away sleep."[34] Reading these books, from the vantage of the Palestinian Talmud, best accomplishes the desired goal of ruining sleep. The phrase "ruin taste of" (*pwg* + *ṭ'm*) in this Tannaitic fragment serves a dual purpose. First, the locution connects it directly to m. Yoma 1:7, which also uses the uncommon root *pwg* for keeping the High Priest awake.[35] Second, it playfully reworks a common metaphor. Nearly every other instance of the root *pwg* in rabbinic literature, especially when connected with *t'm*, refers to the diminution of taste in food.[36] The locution of the Palestinian Talmud acts as a double-edged metaphor that plays off the multivalence of *t'm* as both taste and reason.[37] The taste/understanding of Psalms and Proverbs ruins sleep. Reading in this passage is decidedly goal-oriented.

Two questions remain. First, why does the Palestinian Talmud single out Psalms and Proverbs? Second, if "expound" means scholastic reading, what would non-scholastic reading look like? The answers to these questions are entwined. I suggest that the poetic and wisdom content of Psalms and Proverbs accounts for their selection. They are books easily divisible into digestible units that invite reflection and conversation. In fact, the sociocultural context of scriptural reading that operates in this passage is not the one imagined by a recent scholar, namely, a scene in which

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[34] מפני שטעמן מפיג השינה.

[35] The fragment (and the Mishnah, although this is more complicated) could have used the much more common root עור.

[36] Some instances of of פוג alone include (for food unless otherwise indicated): t. Shab 3:5 (cold); t. Pesaḥ 2:16; t. Moʿed Qaṭ 3:16; y. Shab 3:4 6b (heat is מפיג cold); y. Avod. Zar. 1:6 40a; b. Eruv. 64b; b. Betzah 34a (for cooling heat); b. Tan. 17b; b. B. Bat. 10a; b. Sanh. 22b. Instances of פוג+טעם in reference to food: Mekh. R. Ishmael, Pisḥa 6; y. Pesaḥ 2:8 29c; b. Pesaḥ 41a; b. Betzah 14a. For further examples see Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 1138-9. The Palestinian Talmud passage seems to be the only case in which פוג is directly used with sleep.

[37] The phrase "taste of sleep" does appear in places like y. Sukkah 5:2 55b, where one does "not taste the taste of sleep" during the celebration of Sukkot at the Temple.

a wise sage reads to and educates a boorish and illiterate High Priest.[38] For starters, the phrase "if he reads often" obviously indicates literacy, and the phrase "if he does not" cannot mean that he is illiterate. It simply means that the High Priest is not a bookworm. He may not be a sage, but he is not unlettered. We must remember that the High Priests, both historically and in rabbinic imagination, are part of the social elite.[39] They may be corrupt, but they are wealthy and powerful. I suggest, therefore, that non-scholastic reading (*qr'*) in this particular context likely indicates another elite activity: leisure reading. Greco-Roman elites who enjoyed reading would often set aside time to read either alone or, as is more often the case, in a group setting.[40] Unlike the sociological makeup of scholastic reading, which involves the transmission of knowledge from master to student, leisure reading encouraged equal exchange among peers. Leisure reading provided enjoyment and entertainment as well as edification and socialization. For the High Priest on the eve of Yom Kippur, it also helped pass the time. Lively discussion and reflection on books like Psalms and Proverbs would stave off sleep. Indeed, *qr'* in this context cannot simply mean "read aloud" without any further activity. Nothing would put the High Priest to sleep faster than

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[38] It is mistake to read our Mishnah as reflecting the low intellectual level of the High Priest, or claim that he is illiterate as Isaac Kalimi, "The Day of Atonement in the Late Second Temple Period. Sadducees' High Priests, Pharisees' Norms, and Qumranties' Calenndar(s)," in *The Day of Atonement: Its Interpretations in Early Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Thomas Hieke and Tobias Nicklas, Themes in Biblical Narrative 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 87–88. For starters, it is clear that the High Priest is literate. The word רגיל means "normally." See, for example, t. Eruv. 3:1, a person follows the sage he normally does. Likewise, לא רגיל means usually not, but still capable of. See, for example, Sifre Numbers 99, where Miriam would normally not speak before Aaron unless the time demanded it. Kalimi's argument that the biblical books mentioned contain Aramaic elements and thus would be easier for the uneducated High Priest to understand is undermined by the inclusion of Job, an extremely complicated book in any language. For other scholars who read the High Priest in this passage as illiterate or unintelligent see Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, *The Impact of Yom Kippur on Early Christianity: The Day of Atonement from Second Temple Judaism to the Fifth Century*, vol. 163, TSAJ (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 23 n.17; Richard Hidary, "Rhetroic of Rabbinic Authority," in *Jewish Rhetorics: History, Theory, Practice*, ed. Michael F. Bernard-Donals and Janice W. Fernheimer (Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 38 n.31.

[39] See, for example, y. Tan 4:11 69c, where the daughter of the High Priest borrows clothing from the daughter of the king and visa-versa.

[40] Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 33–62. I would tentatively suggest that phrase "does not normally read" is best understood to mean that the High Priest does not normally take the active reading position in social situations of public reading. Sometimes, the producer of a text would read; other times a slave would read aloud to a room of literate men.

unreflectively reading out words on a page, or worse, being read to. Rather, reading entails an entire social system, one that varies by context and is contingent upon actors.

A scene of reading in Leviticus Rabbah 16:2 also captures the non-scholastic reading of Psalms in action.[41] It differs from the above example in several significant ways. First, the material scroll plays a role in this narrative. Second, it includes an exchange between an elite rabbinic sage and a non-elite merchant. The two characters have different goals in reading. The merchant marshals reading to inculcate piety, while the rabbi lauds a new interpretive insight.[42] Thus, this scene highlights the role of the actor in the process of reading, all the while providing another example of what non-scholastic reading may look like in the ancient world:

> A story about a merchant[43] who would go around the cities near[44] Sepphoris and would announce[45] and say: "Who wants to buy[46] the potion of life?"[47] R. Yannai, who was sitting and expounding out in his triclinium, looked at him.[48] He heard him [the merchant] call out, "Who wants to buy the potion of life?" R. Yannai looked at him and said, "Come up

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[41] Reading primarily with Vatican 32, but will note significant variants as they arise. There appears to be two major families of variants here. I will call Mss London, Vatican, Frickovitch, Munich and Paris "A," and Ms Jerusalem, both Oxford manuscripts and Ms Friedberg "B." The above translation follows A. The Genizah fragment seems to conflate these. For an alternative literary analysis of this story see Avigdor Shinan, "R. Yannai, the Peddler and the Wealthy Man," *Bikoret U-Farshanut* 30 (1994): 15–23. He reads with Margolis's edition. He does not discuss the function of book and reading in this story, but does a great job demonstrating the how the social tensions in this homily is reflected in its literary design and diction. For an insightful and detailed study that highlights the use of architecture and space in this narrative see Gil P. Klein, "Torah in Triclinia: The Rabbinic Banquet and the Significance of Architecture," *JQR* 102 (2012): 352–67. His analysis of the widening and narrowing of space between R. Yannai and the merchant is very convincing. Less convincing, is his allegorical reading of the merchant as the embodiment of *derekh eretz*, and its conflict with Torah in this narrative. The phrase *derekh eretz* does not appear here. Again, I am interested in the role of materiality and reading in this narrative, which Klein does not deal with.

[42] It would, however, be incorrect to imagine psalm piety as the domain of the non-elite merchant alone. Rabbis were deeply enmeshed in the pietistic application of Psalms. See chapter 5 of this dissertation.

[43] Munich adds "from Caesarea"; Both Oxford Mss and JNUL Heb 24 have "from Sepphoris."

[44] B read "of"

[45] B omits this.

[46] B omits this. Indeed, B omits any notion of "selling"

[47] B adds: "Let him come and take. He entered into Akbara (Upper Galilee), next to the house of R. Yannai." Jerusalem reads "place" instead of Akbara. On Akbara see Uzi Leibner, *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee: An Archaeological Survey of the Eastern Galilee*, TSAJ 127 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 106–16.

[48] B has: "and R. Yannai was sitting and expounding in his triclinium" It omits him hearing the merchant's call. Munich, from A, adds "expounding" (דרש) and omits "explaining" (פשט) like B. In light of the פשט at the end of the narrative, as well as the fact that ישב ודרש is more common I am inclined to think that פשט is the original reading.

here and sell it to me." He[49] [the merchant] said to him, "You do not need it, neither you nor ones like you."[50] He pressed on him, so he went next to him and brought out a psalm scroll.[51] He showed him the verse,[52] "Who is a person who wants life, loves days, that he may see good?" (Ps 34:13). What is written after it? "Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from bad and do good. Seek peace and chase after it" (Ps 34:14-15).[53] R. Yannai said, "All my days I would read this text[54] and not understand the meaning of this verse[55] until this merchant came and made it known."[56]

In this narrative, a merchant claims to be selling the impossible – the potion of life. R. Yannai, lounging comfortably and intrigued, wishes to purchase it. The merchant refuses, declaring that R. Yannai and those like him, presumably referring to other rabbis, have no need of his elixir. When pressed, the merchant finally pulls out his ware. It is not a potion, but rather a psalm scroll.[57] He unrolls it, shows R. Yannai Psalm 34:13-15 and reads it aloud to him. This simple and unadorned exposition surprises R. Yannai, who congratulates the merchant for teaching him something new.

Like the scenes of reading explored above, this narrative can be profitably analyzed by paying attention to materiality, reading practice and social context. The peddler was a familiar

[49] B adds: "when he [the merchant] saw him."
[50] B adds: "even so, come here."
[51] Genizah adds "this is the potion of life that you bought."
[52] The phrase הראה פסוק "to show a verse" appears to be unique here. Of course, it makes perfect sense upon the background of a physical scroll. B has "read a verse before him." The Geniza imagines a somewhat different scenario: "He was continually reading in front of him until he reached this verse." This version, indeed, best captures the experience of reading from a scroll. The phrase קרא והולך appears only in later strata of rabbinic literature. It is almost always connected to a physical text of some sort. See, Kallah Rabbati 2:13 (Psalms), Songs Rab. 3:2 (Isaiah), Pesiq. Rab. 11 (parchment), and Tanḥ Pequde 11.
[53] Both A and B (but not Genizah) have clear additions from other later narratives featuring R. Yannai in this section of Lev. Rab. A contains R. Yannai citing a verse from Proverbs. B has R. Yannai taking the merchant in, feeding him and giving him a gold dinar. Both are clearly secondary.
[54] B instead contains the expression "struggled with" מצטער על. This phrase is part of a stereotypical formula that appears numerous times elsewhere in rabbinic literature. For another example see b. Ber. 54a and b. Yoma 3b. Genizah has "deal with" עסוק. B also replaces מקרא with פסוק.
[55] For פשט as extension and context see David W. Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 52–88. Here, however, I think it means something more like unadorned, or 'unexpounded'. In other words, read unscholastically.
[56] On this phrase see Stuart S. Miller, *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique 'Erez Israel: A Philological Inquiry into Local Traditions in Talmud Yerushalmi*, TSAJ 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 36–37.
[57] Cf. Klein, "Torah in Triclinia," 354, who suggests that the merchandise is the homily. The physical text clearly plays a role here. In light of our discussion above, I would also speculate that the scroll was likely not an entire Psalter, but a small scroll. Perhaps even just book one of the Psalms.

sight in late antique Palestine, as he was until the modern era.[58] Distinctive to this period, however, was the growing book industry. Not only did wealthy patrons hire scribes to copy a borrowed work, but peddlers trafficked in prefabricated scrolls and codices.[59] Leviticus Rabbah refers to this developing market and the material reality of its day. Instead of a physical potion of life, the merchant pulls out a material scroll, a Psalter. The physical scroll, in turn, lends a tactile reality to the drama that reciting verses aloud would miss. The potion of life becomes simultaneously tangible and abstract. It is both the psalm scroll and the advice embedded therein. Our narrative also situates the scroll, the material medium, as the locus of reading and persuasion. The merchant does not convince R. Yannai until he pulls out his ware, points to a sequence of verses and reads them aloud.

The reading of these verses also appears to have multiple effects. For the merchant, it underwrites piety. A relatively straightforward reading of a psalm highlights the characteristics of

[58] For a survey of sources for peddlers in this region see Ben-Zion Rozenfeld and Joseph Menirav, *Markets and Marketing in Roman Palestine*, trans. Chava Cassel, JSJSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 117–24. For an attempt to read the peddler in this narrative as a Greco-Roman stock figure see Klein, "Torah in Triclinia," 355. For the low-status of merchants see Shinan, "R. Yannai," 17.

[59] There are some parallel examples for book merchants found in papyri. P. Petaus 30, for example, is a fragment of a private letter dating to 2rd century. It reads: ""Julius Placidus to his father Herclanus, greeting. Dius came to us and showed us six parchment codices. We selected none of those, but we collated eight, for which I paid on account 100 drachmas. You will be on the lookout in any case.... I hope you are well ... by Julius Placidus." Translation from Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 53. Another intriguing example of book merchants can be seen in P. Oxy. 2192: "Demetrius the bookseller has them [that is, the two books of the *Men Who Appear in Comedies*], according to Harpocration. I have ordered Apollonides to send to me some of my own books—which ones you'll find out from him. And if you find any volumes of Seleucus's work on *Tenses/Metrics/Rhythms* that I don't own, have copies made and send them to me. Diodorus's circle also has some that I don't own." Translation from Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 180–81. For another example see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 58–92. On the book market in general see the classic study of Felix Reichmann, "The Book Trade at the Time of the Roman Empire," *Library Quarterly* 8 (1938): 40–76. See more recently, George W. Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries: Book Collections and Their Management in Antiquity*, Studies in the History of Greece and Rome (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 16–17; Peter White, "Bookshops in the Literary Culture of Rome," in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 268–87. It is more likely the case that in Late Antiquity, as it was in the Middle Ages, that book production was a private affair linked to patronage networks. For Antiquity see A. F Norman, "The Book Trade in Fourth-Century Antioch," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 80 (1960): 122–26; Raymond J. Starr, "The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World," *Classics Quarterly* 37 (1987): 213–23. Both acknowledge the rising role of a book market. For the Middle Ages see Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts*, 81–83.

good behavior and the concomitant promise of "life."[60] This unadorned reading astounds R. Yannai, who declares that he never truly understood the meaning of Psalm 34:13-15 until now. While the statement itself is a slight variation on a stock formula found elsewhere in rabbinic literature, we must still attend to R. Yannai's surprise.[61] What did he find novel and innovative? I suggest that in this context it was the meaning of Scripture born out of an unadorned style of reading, i.e. pietistic, non-scholastic reading. It is worth noting that the narrative begins with R. Yannai "sitting and expounding," presumably in the scholastic mode explored above. As we saw above, scholastic reading was expository and elite. In fact, within the academic social circles of the rabbis offering an unadorned reading of a scriptural verse could lead to scorn. In y. Ber. 2:3 4d, for example, R. Yonatan chastises R. Ḥiyya for his simplistic reading and application of Prov 9:5 by declaring: "You know how to read (*liqro*) but you do not know how to expound (*lidrosh*)!"[62] The merchant's reading in our narrative is neither expository nor conditioned by elite expectations.

[60] Klein, "Torah in Triclinia," 356 points to the use of כתיב בתריה by the merchant as an indication of his use of a rabbinic hermeneutical device. While the phrase exists in all manuscripts there is reason to suspect it is an intrusion. For starters, it causes the narrative to strain, almost as if the device was added at a later point to the story to make it conform to some expected manner of rabbinic interpretation. If we read with group A, then the merchant is not even reading, but simply showing R. Yannai a group of verses. The phrase כתיב בתריה clearly stands out as an interpretive marker either inserted by an anonymous storyteller or later editor. If we read with group B, "he read to him this verse," we would need something like "and he said" before "what is written after" to make this a smooth narrative. Most other instances of כתיב בתריה do not contain this sort of narrative strain. The standard phraseology is כתיב X, followed by כתיב בתריהY. It does vary, however, and a fully study of this device and its function is a desideratum.

[61] The typically phraseology is: "all my days I read verse x and did not understand it until y." For examples see t. Maksh. 3:15, Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1, b. Meg 21a.

[62] Perhaps this statement can be read in light of Lucian's parody of the book-collector, a person who obtains a lot of scrolls, who is technically literate, but cannot "read." He lacks *paidea*. On this narrative, see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 157–70. It must be noted, however, that the contrast between "read" and "interpret" is not always stable. At least in one case, b. Shab. 116b, the difference between "read" and "interpret" is the presence of a physical scroll: "Even though they said that one cannot read holy writings [during set study times], one may recite or interpret them. If he needs a specific verse, he may bring a scroll and read it." This too, however, may reflect an understanding of "read" as leisure reading, as the following statement claims: "For what reason did they say that one cannot read holy Scripture? So that they say, if one cannot read holy Scripture, how much more so non-sacred documents!" This source certainly highlights the competition between rabbinic scholastic reading and other forms of reading. For other examples of this formula see y. Shev. 4:3 35b, y. Shev 5:9 36a, y. Avod. Zar. 4:9 44b,

From the perspective of R. Yannai, a wealthy member of the rabbinic elite lounging about in his triclinium,[63] it was unexpected and insightful.

Attention to materiality, textuality and reading practices allows us to view this narrative as a window into the complicated social dynamics involved in a deceptively simple process called reading. In this particular scene, elite/scholastic and non-elite/pietistic expectations of reading encounter one another and butt heads. As a whole, however, the story attempts to minimize the latent tension that social difference and literary expectations produce. The merchant respects the rabbi, declaring that he does not need the potion of life, and the rabbi in turn learns from the merchant. Each validates the other from the perspective of his own habituated reading practice. The merchant assumes that the rabbi does not need the results of a pietistic reading; the rabbi commends the merchant's reading as insightful biblical interpretation. At the very least, our scene imagines the parties conversing over the material apparatus of a psalm scroll.

Reading from a physical scroll occurs elsewhere in rabbinic literature. The following text, which does not contain the book of Psalms, highlights yet another mode of non-scholastic reading: affective reading, defined here as reading that stirs to action.[64] As in the other examples, the primary purpose of this reading practice was not to produce a better understanding of the text at hand. Genesis Rabbah 46:10 tells the tale of two royal princes reading the book of Genesis together:[65]

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[63] Shinan, "R. Yannai," 18 n.17 convincingly demonstrates that the use of positionality in the story ("low" vs. "high") underscores the primary social positions. He also calls attention to the social leveling performed by the word פשוט at the beginning and end of the story. See pg. 19. R. Yannai in particular was imagined as rich. In our narrative alone, he is lounging in his own triclinium. On R. Yannai and his school, see Aharon Oppenheimer, "'Those of the School of Yannai,'" in *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society*, ed. Nili Oppenheimer, TSAJ 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 156–65. See also Miller, *Sages and Commoners*, 339–93. On this wealth see Shinan, "R. Yannai," 18 n.13.

[64] I have adopted the terminology from Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy."

[65] For earlier treatments of this narrative, especially in light of its parallel in Josephus see Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene in Josephus and Rabbinic Sources," in *Josephus, Judaism, and*

> "You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin" (Gen 17:11); like a sore it is attached to the body. And it happened that Monobazus and Izates, the sons of Ptolemy the King, were sitting and reading (*yoshvin veqorin*)[66] the book of Genesis. When they came to this verse,[67] "You shall circumcise" one turned his face to the wall and began to cry, and the other turned his face to the wall and began to cry. One went and circumcised himself; the other circumcised himself. After some time, they were sitting and reading the book of Genesis, and when they reached the verse, "You shall circumcise." One said to his companion, "Woe to you, my brother." He said, "Woe to you, my brother, and not to me." They revealed the matter one to another. When their mother became aware, she went and told their father, "A sore has developed on their flesh, and the physician has prescribed that they be circumcised." He [their father] said, "And let them be circumcised." How did the Holy One, blessed be He, repay him? R. Pinḥas said: "When he went forth to war, an ambush was set for him, but an angel descended and saved him."[68]

The conversion of Monobazus and Izates to Judaism was the stuff of legends, a grand tale of former pagan princes who realized the truth. The narrative in Genesis Rabbah imagines the conditions of that transformation, at the center of which lies the affective reading of a physical scriptural scroll. As Monobazus and Izates read the book of Genesis together they come across Genesis 17:11, the commandment of circumcision. Their joint reading, which at first may have been a social and leisure activity, quickly turns internal, personal and affective. The text demands that they be circumcised but they are not, a fact that brings both readers to shame and tears. Reading ultimately leads to action as each brother, without the knowledge of the other, gets circumcised. As they reconvene and read Genesis 17:11 once more, they learn that they have each fulfilled the divine precept.[69]

Christianity, ed. Louis H. Feldman and Gōhei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 301–2. Louis H. Feldman, "Jewish Proselytism," in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Gōhei Hata (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 376–77; Tal Ilan, "The Conversion of the House of Adiabene," in *Josephus and the Rabbis*, ed. Tal Ilan and Vered Noam (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2017), 508–20. It is worth noting, as pointed out by the scholars above, that both Josephus and Genesis Rabbah include a scene of reading. On the question of the relationship between Josephus and rabbinic literature in general see recently Vered Noam, "Did the Rabbis Know Josephus' Works?," *Tarbitz* 81 (2013): 367–95.

[66] Note the phrase not used, which is typical of rabbinic scholastic reading ישב + דרש. For other instances of ישב + קרא see t. Eruv 8:13, Lam. Rab. Pet. 17.

[67] The Hebrew phrase used here, הגיעו לפסוק הזה, is the semantic equivalent of the Aramaic phrase for linear reading explored above: מטו להאי קרא.

[68] Translating from Theodore-Albeck. There are no significant variants that drastically change the reading.

[69] The phrase used to denote the passage of time is לאחר ימים. The phrase seems to indicate a time lapse that is longer than "immediately" (מיד), and possibly shorter than a year. This sense of time lapse certainly adds to the drama of the

At the very least, our text highlights the powerful effects of reading, for which the physical scroll provides occasion and perhaps even additional stimulus. The discrepancy between textual demand and reality drive the brothers to tears, which the narrator decides to cast in the idiom of another biblical story clothed rabbinic garb. In the words of Genesis Rabbah, "One turned his face to the wall and began to cry, and the other turned his face to the wall and began to cry." This may mirror the action of two other individuals who found themselves bereft: Isaac and Rebecca. The words "opposite his wife" (*linokhaḥ ishto*) in Genesis 25:21, "Isaac prayed to the Lord *linokhaḥ ishto*," triggers an interpretation Genesis Rabbah 63:5. What exactly does "opposite" mean? Instead of reading it as "on behalf of," an anonymous exegete answers, "To teach that Isaac stretched out (in prayer) on one side, and she (Rebecca) on the other." In addition to giving Rebecca agency, the homilist paints the scene of prayer, a portrait similar to the one depicted in the narrative about Monobazus and Izates. When two people are jointly affected by a harsh reality, they go to opposite ends of a room to cry or pray.

The narrative, as well, highlights several sociological facts about the rabbinic imagination of reading. First, reading – especially non-scholastic reading – can be a shared activity among peers of equal stature. As mentioned earlier, one of the hallmarks of scholastic reading was its penchant for hierarchy. A master, the authoritative interpreter, unpacks the text's meaning for a student.[70] The scene in Genesis Rabbah, however, depicts two readers of equal rank. They do not interpret the text; they are affected by it. Second, the scene highlights the blurry boundary that separates communal and individual reading. As mentioned above, reading in the ancient world was

motif of secrecy and revelation present in this midrash. The brothers do not immediately tell one another. It arises as a natural result of reading. I also wonder if the time lapse may indicate a reading cycle, in which the brothers review Genesis on a regular basis. This is, of course, a speculative suggestion.

[70] The narrative with R. Simon and Levi discussed above is only amusing because it highlights the breakdown of a study session. Most were, in fact, successful.

often done in a group setting.[71] Although Monobazus and Izates read Genesis at the same time and are equally affected by its words, they do not perform the action of circumcision together. Each acts on the impulse born by reading in private. Reading may be a group activity, but each individual may act upon it as he or she wills. This fuzziness plays into the secrecy motif that guides our narrative. At first, each brother hides the action from one another. Eventually, their mother finds out[72] and hides the incident from their father.[73]

Book of Psalms and its Scribes

The final scene of reading involving Psalms occurs in the context of evaluating scribal penmanship. It provides a window into the sociology of rabbinic reading in a manner different from the examples above. Instead of highlighting the process and results of reading, it provides a quick glimpse into the judgment of written texts and the scribes behind them.

The transmission of written knowledge in the ancient world was at the mercy of scribes, some meticulous and others lazy. This human element could trigger anxiety and demands for strict control. Rabbis were among the many ancient social groups that attempted to navigate this uncertain sea of blank ink. That rabbis attempt to curate the production of scriptural texts is evident

[71] Private reading was not unheard of in the ancient world. See Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 148–53. The sources described here clearly demonstrate that private reading for pleasure was a possibility in the ancient world. Contra Boyarin, "Placing Reading," 18. Rabbis too likely engaged in this mode of reading, as our discussion of leisure reading suggests.

[72] It is worth pointing out that the brothers never actually tell the mother. Rather, she "feels" it: ביון שהרגישה.

[73] A comparison to Constantine may lie deeper than just the conversion of a formerly pagan monarch. This imaginative retelling of conversion may have acted as a type of counter-myth. Like Constantine, each brother now bears the brand of a new religion. Unlike Constantine, it is the product of reading Scripture, not engaging in war. Our narrative, however, does not ignore that key Constantinian mytheme. As a reward for allowing his children to be circumcised, the father of Monobazus and Izates received angelic aid during an ambush that would have certainly cost him his life. Assenting to circumcision, even under the duplicitous guise of a medical necessity, produces power. At the center of this entire narrative, however, lies the book and its reading. In the eyes of our narrator, war does not convert, proper reading does. For ancient Jews living under a Christianity fueled by a Constantinian myth, our narrative provides an example of a Jewish Constantine as well as highlights an activity in which Jews may take comfort.

from several folio-length discussions in both the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmudim.[74] Numerous scribal practices delineated in these folios were justified by claiming that they stemmed from Moses at Sinai.[75] That accurate transcription of biblical rolls also mattered is evident from various dicta, such as that attributed to R. Akiva in b. Pesaḥ 112a, who demanded that one teach one's children from corrected biblical texts.[76] Even topics such as the placement of a line and the legibility of text were worthy of praise and scorn. B. B. Bat. 164b depicts a scene in which two rabbis read from physical texts. They laud and lambast the workmanship of the exact same scribe:[77]

> [a] Once a tied document was brought to Rabbi [Judah the Prince]. They said, "There is no date on this!" R. Simon b. R. Levi said, "Perhaps it was swallowed up between the ties?" They split it apart and saw it. He [Rabbi] looked upon him [R. Simon] with much embarrassment[78] [i.e. Rabbi gave R. Simon a look that indicated that he was ashamed of R. Simon]. He [R. Simon] said, "I did not write it, rather Judah the Tailor wrote it." He [Rabbi] said to him: "Quit from slander!"
> [b] One time the rabbi [R. Simon] was sitting before Rabbi and was reading sequentially[79] the book of Psalms. He said, "Look how expert[80] this writing is!" He [R. Simon] said to him: "I did not write it, rather Judah the Tailor wrote it." He [Rabbi] said back, "Quit from this slander!"
> [c] It makes sense in the first case where there was slander, but where is there slander here? It is as R. Dimi brother of R. Safra (scribe!).[81] As R. Dimi taught, "Really a person ought not talk about the good deeds of his friend, for through his good deeds come his ill ones."[82]

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[74] Y. Meg. 1:11 71b-72a and b. Menaḥ 29a-32b, although scribal information continues on further folios.
[75] See. y. Meg. 1:11 71d.
[76] For a survey of rabbinic sources that highlight the varying accuracy of biblical texts see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 20–27. For a concrete examination of vulgar and model texts in light of the Qumran Great Isaiah scroll see Edward Yechezkel Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll*, STDJ 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 77–89.
[77] It is worth noting that the scribe depicted here seems to mirror the "multipurpose scribes" of early Christian literature described by Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 32–40.
[78] The phrase is חזה ביה ברב בישות.
[79] On the phrase "to read sequentially"(פסק סדר) see note 15 above.
[80] For this usage of מיושר, see b. Meg. 18b (x2) and b. Sanh. 22a. The use in Megillah refers to the expert scribe, R. Meir. B. Sanh. derives "Assyrian script" from "writing that is straight in its letters" – i.e. clear. For the attempt to connect this phrase with כתב שלם see Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, 3:134–35. In our context this means that the writing is quite expert. One needs only look at documentary and Qumran scrolls to understand the appreciation for clear and expert writing. For the internal Greek notion of "beautiful writing" see Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 2–3. Origen's assistants as well were said to be trained in beautiful writing. See Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 69.
[81] The citation formula for R. Dimi is unstable. Regardless, I suggest that that addition of "brother of R. Safra" is unnecessary and likely added for literary effect.
[82] Reading with Hamburg 165. There are minor variations throughout. The only significant variation is among the citation formula for R. Dimi.

The redactor, as evidenced by the anonymous voice in [c], attempts to construct a discourse on the dangers and nuances of slander by thinking with the scribe, an anxiety-provoking figure ready to receive either approbation or opprobrium. He juxtaposes (or creates?) two short anecdotes about the scribal activity of a certain Judah the Tailor, a figure found only in these narratives. In the first, Judah's work was incompetent; in the second, it was impeccable. Ancient readers could not escape the handwriting of scribes and would always appreciate expert writing.[83]

Why dwell on the Psalter? Any scroll would have sufficed. I suggest one of two tentative possibilities. First, the storyteller was aware of the narrative about sequentially reading psalms in b. Avod. Zar. 19a and built upon that story. This tale, like the one explored earlier in this chapter, includes both R. Judah and R. Simon.[84] Second, as mentioned earlier and as we will explore throughout this dissertation, Psalms was an extremely popular book. It would be the most obvious choice to fill out a narrative, especially when the choice of book does not have a direct impact upon the story.

Regardless of why Psalms was selected, these narratives shed light on ways rabbis imagine scribes and writing. First, scribal activity was not limited to a professional class of scribes. Rabbis can scribe, and so could tailors. Second, from the vantage of our redactor, the same scribe producing documentary texts could produce literary ones. Third, and perhaps most importantly, scribal practice is inconsistent. This fact rests at the core of the collection,and allows the scribe to be raised up as an exemplar of an inherently problematic figure whose good works can highlight

[83] Indeed, expert writing was rewarded. The Edict of Diocletian states: "To a scribe for best writing, 25 denarii per 100 lines; for second quality writing, 20 denarii per 100 lines; to a notary for writing a petition or legal document, 10 denarii per 100 lines." (col. 7, lines 41-3). B.M. Papyrus 2110 contains: "for 10,000 lines 28 drachmas … for 6,300 lines 13 drachmas." Translations and discussion of variety of writing in Turner, *Greek Manuscripts*, 1, 23.

[84] Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 72 suggests that this might be the exact same recitation as the one we explored above. This harmonization, I believe, goes too far.

the bad. Ultimately, the fallibility of human scribes leads to legislation attempting to control scribal production, appreciation of expert writing, and condemnation of unintentional or willful errors.[85]

In total, the scenes of reading explored above provide us with evidence of how rabbis imagine their interaction with the material psalm scroll. The narratives open up vistas into the sociology of rabbinic reading and provide a glimpse into elite scholastic reading, leisure reading, affective reading along with the joy and anxiety of reading the work produced by scribal hands. The pluriformity of scenes of reading demonstrates that reading is a variegated activity that can be understood only by paying careful attention to sociological, material and historical contexts. The very simple word "to read" belies the complicated physical and sociocultural mechanics that provide that act with coherence and meaning.

The Scroll Form and Linear Reading

The scenes of reading examined above provide one vista from which to gaze upon and assess the impact that materiality had on the rabbinic engagement with Psalms. From this vantage, we were able to explore the variety of reading stances applied to the Psalter. The scenes provided us with access to various rabbinic "theories" of reading. We may also examine the role of the material psalm scroll in rabbinic reading from another angle, namely "practice." Or, in other words, we can trace the guiding influence of the physical Psalter on rabbinic hermeneutics by working backwards from the results of rabbinic reading – midrash.

In this section, I will focus on just one way in which the physical scroll informed rabbinic hermeneutics. As mentioned above, the scroll form of ancient Jewish biblical texts promoted a

[85] For some other examples of scribal meticulousness and textual anxiety in rabbinic literature see Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 24. So long as there were written texts there was always worry about its corruption and transmitters.

style of linear reading and interpretation. This reading practice contrasts with the much-studied oral mode of rabbinic scholastic production. Scholars of rabbinic literature are fond of calling attention to the oral, and thus modular, nature of rabbinic discourse.[86] They argue that the 'text' in front of us is but one instantiation of many possible oral performances. Different presentations will contain varied order and even arguments.[87] This, in turn, helps explain parallel, but differing, versions of rabbinic texts.[88] While mostly persuasive, this perspective does not capture the full picture of rabbinic reading and literary production. The examples explored below will highlight an alternative mode of intellectual production, one in which textual order counts and is worthy of signification. Or, in other words, the acts of "sequentially reading verses" and "coming to a certain verse" left real interpretive residuum. In the background of these hermeneutic results, I argue, rests the physical apparatus of a scroll, which encouraged the act of reading and interpreting in a linear manner.

Three remarks are in order before we explore the examples. First, not every instance of rabbinic interpretation can be read against the background of a scroll. Orality is a steady feature of rabbinic pedagogy, but we must understand it in conjunction with and not in opposition to the physical scroll. At the very least we must acknowledge that attention to materiality, where applicable, nuances our portrait of rabbinic scriptural engagement. Second, the hermeneutical

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[86] The most wide-ranging textual treatment is Sussman, "Oral Torah," 1:259–72. See also Naeh, "Structure and Division (A)," 508–10; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*. For orality in rabbinic biblical interpretation see Stern, "The First Jewish Books." See also studies in note 22, above.

[87] Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah*, 35–75. See especially pg. 35, where she says: "First, by putting aside literary notions of textuality, we open ourselves to the possibility of recognizing *nonlinear* forms of continuity among the parallel traditions." See also Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 124. Jaffee further elaborates on the modular and non-linear nature of rabbinic performances in Martin S. Jaffee, "What Difference Does the Orality of Rabbinic Writing Make for the Interpretations of Rabbinic Writing?," in *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?*, ed. Matthew Kraus, Judaism in Context 4 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 11–34. See especially pg. 20 where he says: "We understand rabbinic text best, I hold, when we can locate it synoptically in the range of textual elements that remained 'in the air' when the scribe reduced part of the performative tradition to a fixed textual rendering."

[88] Sussman attributes to orality the constant variation in names, confusion of where traditions originate and even conflicting legal opinions. See Sussman, "Oral Torah," 1:270–75. See the footnotes therein for examples.

results of reading linearly are not unique to the Psalms.[89] Third, this section will cover neither every example nor every potential result of reading linearly. As such, the following discussion should be viewed as an invitation to further study rather than a definitive taxonomy and analysis of linear reading.

The widespread impact of materiality and linear reading upon rabbinic interpretation may be viewed through an analysis of a common rabbinic hermeneutical practice called "connection of scriptural portions" (*semikhut parshiyyot*).[90] Interpretation in this key, broadly defined, seeks to derive meaning by reading linearly across scriptural divisions, asking: What can we learn from the fact that this piece of Scripture directly follows another? Its interest in textuality is patently obvious, and I suggest that the enterprise was encouraged by the scroll form. We will explore three variations of this phenomenon. The first two sources do not explicitly identify their exegetical stance as *semikhut parshiyyot*; the third does. They are all, nonetheless, informed and shaped by the process of reading linearly. The first example comes from b. Ber. 7b:[91]

> R. Yoḥanan further said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai: "Bad educational upbringing[92] in a person's house is worse than the war of Gog and Magog. For about the war of Gog and Magog it is written, 'Why do the nations conspire, and the people plot in vain' (Ps 2:1)[93] And for bad education it is written,[94] 'A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom

[89] One example could be the interpretation of forty lashes in m. Mak. 3:11, which reads across Deut 25:2b-3a in deriving the number forty. This sort of 'misreading' best makes sense upon the background of an unpunctuated scroll. Additional examples could be provided by tracing instances of כתיב בתריה.

[90] See the classic treatment of Heinemann, *The Methods of Aggadah*, 140. For an English summary of this influential work see http://www.uncg.edu/rel/faculty/bregman2.html. See most recently Avigdor Shinan and Yair Zakovitch, "Why is 'A' Placed Next to 'B'? Juxtaposition in the Bible and Beyond," in *Tradition, Transmission, and Transformation from Second Temple Literature through Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Menahem Kister et al., STDJ 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 322–42. I am skeptical about their attempt to trace the technique and its awareness back to Second Temple literature and the Bible. For a brief survey of the use of סמך as an exegetical technique see Bacher, *Die Bible- und Traditionsexegetische*, 142–43. I admit this activity is certainly possible in an oral context, but certainly is encouraged by reading a text in a linear manner.

[91] Reading with Ms Florence.

[92] The phrase used here is *tarbut ra'ah* and occurs only handful of times in rabbinic literature. It seems to indicate either sexual impropriety (as in m. Nid. 10:8) or rebellion (as in Lam. Rab. 4:14). This latter source bears some genetic, or at least form-critical, connection to b. Ber. 7b. Licentiousness and betrayal are not unconnected phenomenon.

[93] Munich adds verse 2 as well.

[94] Paris and Oxford have an extended reading that further highlight the contrast between bad education and the war of Gog and Magog. Florence has it as well, but it was erased by a scribe.

his son' (Ps 3:1), and it is written after that:[95] 'Lord, how great is my affliction![96] Many rise up against me' (Ps 3:2)."

In this unit of interpretation, the *scroll* of Psalms counts. Rabbi Yoḥanan derives pedagogical significance from the textual order of the Psalter, in which Psalm 3 follows Psalm 2. The arrangement, in his reading, demonstrates that failure to educate one's children leads to results worse than that of the final eschatological battle. He arrives at this understanding by implicitly attributing tones to each psalm and distinguishing between them. In Psalm 2, interpreted almost uniformly in rabbinic literature as pertaining to the war of Gog and Magog,[97] the Psalmist adopts an incredulous and victorious stance. He never doubts his success, and is not in pain. In Psalm 3, interpreted in light of its title, the psalmist's tone is plaintive. Linear reading highlights this shift in tone and demands interpretation. Thus, the poor rearing of Absalom caused David more pain than the future war with Gog and Magog.

Another example of Psalm interpretation highlights the process and results of reading linearly across a text. This unit of exegesis is predicated on the assumption that the order of the Psalter and its production is of historical significance. B. Ber. 9b states:

> R. Judah son of R. Simon b. Pazzi said, "David composed 103 chapters[98] of the book of Psalms,[99] but did not say the word hallelujah[100] in them until he saw the downfall of the wicked (*resha'im*) as it says: 'Let the sinner cease from the land, the wicked (*resha'im*) are no more. Bless the Lord, O my soul. hallelujah' (Ps 104:35)."[101]

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[95] Only Florence has "after it" although Munich cites Psalm 3:2 as well.

[96] This is the reading the exegete likely assumes. It is also a philologically plausible one. The alternative would be: "O Lord, how many are my enemies."

[97] Nearly every time this psalm is cited in rabbinic literature it is connected to this final eschatological battle. I will defend this claim and its significance in another place. It is a clear example of "scriptural priming," a phenomenon that we will discuss at length in the next chapter.

[98] Munich singularly reads 139 chapters, although this seems to be mistaken. The parallel in Lev. Rab. 4:7 reads either 120, or 102. The parallel in Mid. Ps. 104:27 reads 104. For a discussion of this variation see Moshe Benovitz, *Talmud Ha-Igud: BT Berakhot Chapter 1* (Jerusalem: The Society for the Interpretation of the Talmud, 2006), 430–31. I follow Benovitz in thinking that 103 was the original number in the time of the Amoriam. 103 either comes from the combination of Psalms 1-2, as directly stated a bit later in this *sugya*, or from the combination of Psalms 9-10.

[99] Oxford lacks book of Psalms, and a scribe added it in Florence.

[100] It is interesting to note in light of our discussion in the previous chapter that the scribe of Florence spaced Halellu and Jah apart.

[101] Reading with Paris. See, however, the parallel in Lev. Rab. 4:7.

R. Judah's statement responds to an implicit question. If "hallelujah" is a key word in the Psalter,[102] occurring at least twenty-four times, why does it first appear in Psalm 104? At least two assumptions underpin R. Judah's answer. First, that a distinction exists between the sinners and the wicked. While the sinners will perish in the future, the wicked are nonetheless gone now. This provides the psalmist reason to rejoice and praise God. Now he can say hallelujah. Second, the order of the Psalms matters and can be used as an interpretive index for the life of David. For R. Judah, the delay in singing hallelujah is of historical significance. David witnessed the demise of the wicked when he was nearing the end of composing the Psalter. This mode of rabbinic interpretation textualizes an originally oral composition and ascribes meaning to the distance between units, in this case the opening Psalm 1 and Psalm 104. The scroll form, which encourages the slow reading of a stable text one unit after another, best forms the background of this comment.[103]

Not all rabbis condoned an interpretive stance that reads historical significance from the order of the Psalter. A narrative in b. Ber. 10a will demonstrate that interpreters who sought to make historical claims from the order of the Psalms were challenged – and caricatured – by some rabbinic contemporaries. These opposing rabbis did not abandon the significance of order, and thus the scroll form. Rather, they sought to derive pedagogical rather than historical meaning from the conjunction of two units of text. The following tale of a rabbinic encounter with a heretic (*min*),[104] in addition to highlighting the materiality behind psalm interpretation, also engages a

[102] See, for example, the tradition attributed to R. Joshua b. Levi in b. Pesaḥ. 117a, which lists the various praises in Psalms and declares Hallelujah to be the best of them all.
[103] For another example that exhibits the sequential reading see the interpretation of the five occurrences of *barkhi nafshi* in Lev. Rab. 4:7 and b. Ber. 10a.
[104] What exactly is a *min* and how to read *minim* narratives are a subject of much scholarly controversy, one that I do not intend to get enmeshed in. For the time being see Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Christine Hayes, "Legal Realism and the Fashioning of Sectarians in Jewish Antiquity," in *Sects and Sectarianism in Jewish History*, ed. Sacha Stern, IJS 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 119–46; Boyarin, *Border Lines*; Martin Goodman, "The Function of Minim in Early Rabbinic

larger question of reading practices: Should one read Scripture as history or pedagogy?[105] B. Ber. 10a states:[106]

> [a] A certain *min* said to R. Abbahu,[107] "It is written, 'A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son' (Ps 3). And it is also written, 'A Psalm of David when he fled from Saul in the cave' (Ps 57). Which of these events was first? The story of Saul was first![108] So let it be written at the beginning!" He said to him, "You who do not derive significance from the conjunction of passages (*daresh semukhin*)[109] find it difficult to read them together.[110]We who derive significance from the conjunction of passages do not have difficulty reading them together."[111]
> [b] For R. Yoḥanan said,[112] "From where do we derive conjoined passages from the Torah? 'Conjoined passages[113] are forever, they were made in truth and uprightness' (Ps 111:8)."
> [c] Why is the chapter of Absalom (Ps 3) connected to that of Gog and Magog (Ps 2)? To inform you that if someone tells you that it is impossible for a slave[114] to rebel against his master, you can tell him, is it impossible that a son rebels against his father? Yet, it happens here.[115]

Judaism," in *Judaism in the Roman World*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 163–74; Yaakov Y. Teppler, *Birkat Haminim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World*, trans. Susan Weingarten, TSAJ 120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007). Michal Bar-Asher Siegal is currently working on a monograph-long study on the *minim* narratives in the Babylonian Talmud.

[105] For a similar debate in a later time period see Anthony Grafton, "The Scholarship of Poliziano and Its Context," in *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 47–75.

[106] Reading with Oxford, will note significant variations.

[107] Florence and Bolonga read R. Joshua b. Ḥanninah.

[108] Munich and Paris ask this same question but in different words.

[109] The phrase "expound conjoined passages," (דרש סמוכין) only appears in the Babylonian Talmud and infrequently at that. In addition to our passage, it also appears in b. Ber. 21b (R. Judah only expounds conjoined passages for Deuteronomy), b. Pes 28b (סמוכין applies to conjoined verses and not just large units of text), b. Yeb 3b, b. Yeb 4a (these sources clearly show that some rabbis do not דרש סמוכין). However, the concept of the Bible intentionally placing passages next to each other is more common, including use of the word סמך. For one early example see Sifre Numbers 131: "R. Akiva said, 'Any portion (פרשה) that is close (סמוך) to its friend we may learn from it.' Rabbi said, 'There are many portions (פרשיות) that are connected to each other and distant from one another like the east and west.'" For further examples see Bacher, *Die Bible- und Traditionsexegetische*, 142–43. For further discussion see Arnold Goldberg, "Die 'Semikha'. Eine Kompositionsform der rabbinischen Homilie," in *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung. Gesammelte Studien II*, ed. Margarete Schlüter and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 347–94.

[110] Munich reads "to read"; Florence and Seu d'Urgell omits "to read together."

[111] Paris, Florence and Seu d'Urgell omit "to read together."

[112] Munich and Florence attribute this to R. Elazar. Florence also omits "conjoined passages are alluded to in the Torah" and reads instead: "What does it mean when it says 'all his precepts are true; they are established forever, they are done in truth and righteousness' (Ps 111:7b-8)." This itself may be a really nice instance of justifying the practice of דרש סמוכין by literally reading across conjoined texts!

[113] Reading midrashically from "established." How often do rabbis justify a hermeneutical practice through Pentateuchal prooftext?

[114] Bologna reads "man" instead of "slave."

[115] Section [c] appears to be an independent compositional unit, and thus it relates to the discussion of section [a] only in redaction. Cf. Shinan and Zakovitch, "Why is 'A' Placed Next to 'B'?," who read [c] as if it were said by R. Abbahu. For an analysis of the independence of [c] and the structure of these passages in general and its relationship to Mid. Ps. see Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 444–45. For a very brief discussion of this passage in relationship with other

In order to properly contextualize this narrative, we must constantly bear in mind that the goal of caricature and polemic is to make the opposing view appear illogical and absurd. We must, therefore, reconstruct the opposing position sympathetically. In our case, the *min* likely stands in for those who approach Scripture with two assumptions: 1) the overall order of scriptural passages reflects a steady historical progression,[116] and 2) the linear movement from one passage to the next need not bear any rhetorical or interpretive significance. Ultimately, both R. Abbahu and the 'heretic' are indebted to the materiality of the scroll to undergird their position. What differs is their reading practices.

The *min* as represented in this story picks up on a fundamental error in the Psalter. If the Psalms were meant to narrate sequentially the adventures of David why is the story out of order? Surely David fled from Saul before Absalom. The expectation of order and history are inextricably bound in this representation of the *min* much as they are in the interpretation of R. Judah above. Scrolls and historical reading progress sequentially.

R. Abbahu retorts that the *min* makes a categorical reading error. Historical disjunction is rhetorical conjunction. The failure of a historical hermeneutic reflects an impoverished reading strategy, not a lack of significance in Scripture. Conjoined passages are automatically significant and should, according to R. Abbahu, be unpacked with a reading practice attentive to pedagogy.

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minim passages see R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: William & Norgate, 1903), 272–74. See more recently Hayes, "Legal Realism," 139–40. I agree that anxiety over reading is on display, but I do not think that it ties back to lack of "contextual reading." I also wonder if "reading conjoining passages" really would seem "artificial" in the ancient world.

[116] It is worth noting that Christian interpreters were also concerned about the historical anachronisms in the ordering of the Psalms. Origen notes that either the Psalms were collected haphazardly, or that there is indeed some logic to its anachronistic order. Eusebius notes that the first 50 Psalms were composed after David killed Uriah, and the remainder from before. See Nicholas de Lange, "Origen and the Rabbis on the Hebrew Bible," in *Studia Patristica Vol XIV, Part III*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1976), 120–21. One need not turn to Christians for making historical meaning of the order of Psalms. R. Judah's statement about the placement of hallelujah, discussed above, is part of the same sugya as the *min* narrative.

Failure to see this is labeled as heresy, an aspersion cast on fellow rabbis who refuse to read conjoined passages as anything other than the simple progression of a text.[117]

After buttressing this claim with a scriptural proof, the narrative then provides an example of pedagogical reading. It concludes with the same example with which this section began, the connection between Psalms 2 and 3, although it provides a completely different lesson. Once again the entirety of Psalm 2 is read as Gog and Magog and Psalm 3 as Absalom's rebellion. The existence of these two passage side-by-side allows the exegete to "read them together" and form a pedagogical-rhetorical lesson: if someone claims that a slave cannot conceivably rebel against his master, one ought to respond that a son has rebelled against his father. Any rebellion is possible.

The first claim in this short dialogue, that a slave cannot rebel against his master, is exceptionally weak. Slave rebellion, on both small and large scales, was not an unknown occurrence. At stake, perhaps, is the question of cosmic slavery. In Psalm 2:2-3 the kings of the earth gather against God and his Messiah, desiring to tear the bonds of servitude asunder. Can this truly occur? The connection between Psalms 2 and 3 answers in the affirmative. Alternatively, perhaps the forced nature of this interpretation is the very point. A rhetorical reading practice must accompany Scripture, even if its products are less than perfect. Problematic meaning is better than no meaning at all. At the very least, these few folios in the Babylonian Talmud illustrate that order, and thus the materiality behind it, was significant. Its exact meaning, however, was up for debate.

[117] See note 108 above, where our sources make clear that various rabbis, including R. Judah (!), do not derive meaning from juxtaposed passages.

Psalm Scroll: Fiscal and Symbolic Wealth

The scenes and products of reading explored throughout this chapter are not our only vista into the material Psalter and its impact upon rabbinic thought. Indeed, a sole focus on reading and textuality may occlude the fact that scrolls are material entities with their own value and import. More than merely mediums of a message, they are objects of wealth, power, and prestige – a fact recognized by Jews from Tannaitic Palestine to Amoraic Babylonia.[118] One example from each region will highlight the actual and symbol capital attached to scrolls and provide a context for our discussion of the material psalm scroll.

The fiscal and social significance of scrolls appears as early as m. Meg. 3:1, which presents a hierarchy of objects a community may purchase. Money accrued from the sale of less holy items must be used to acquire more holy ones and not visa-versa.[119] The list of items, in rising order of significance, is as follows: city street, synagogue, ark, scroll covers,[120] scrolls, a Torah. The final four items on the list are scroll-related. In other words, the object to which is attached the most

[118] Book exchange and production in the Greco-Roman world were an essential means of creating and reifying patronage and other social relations. See Grafton and Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book*, 13, 55; Starr, "The Circulation"; Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 33–34; Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 5. For scribal networks of copying and exchange see Ibid., 77–104. Our rabbinic sources do not afford us insight into Jewish literary patronage. Nevertheless, they do give us a glimpse into the role of biblical scrolls in communal production. Papyri rolls could also be somewhat pricey, and ultimately an emblem of high culture. See Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 20–22. On ancient attitudes towards the expense of papyrus, along with an argument that they were cheaper than assumed see T. C. Skeat, "Was Papyrus Regarded as 'Cheap' or 'Expensive' in the Ancient World," in *The Collected Biblical Writings of T.C. Skeat*, ed. J. K. Elliott, NovTSupp 113 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 88–105. One wonders if papyri were expensive from the perspective of those not enormously wealthy. According to Parkinson and Quirke, *Papyrus*, 19, the price of a sheet was 1-2 days' wage for a day worker. Elite users would have understood it as an incidential expenditure.

[119] This rule, while not explicitly stated in the first Mishnah, is clearly operative as explicitly expressed in the following Mishnah. For this context I am employing the Durkheimean nexus between community and holy. See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph W. Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915).

[120] On protective scroll covers and their vibrant displays see Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 48; Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 62; Tov, *Scribal Practices*, 39.

social significance for communal holiness is the scroll.[121] Indeed, the ark and its contents are at the center of actual – and not merely imagined – Jewish architecture.[122] Extant synagogue art features, as if reflected in water, prominent representations of the ark that may have stood in that room.[123] For some Jews, the synagogue may have even acted as sacred library with the ark as its stacks.[124] In addition to reading scrolls within the synagogue in a non-liturgical context,[125] some Jews may have borrowed scrolls. In his 36th letter, Jerome apologizes to Damasus for his delayed response. A Jew brought him Hebrew scrolls from the local synagogue; they demanded his immediate attention. The ark with its scrolls, however, did more than affirm (and transgress) community.[126] It demonstrated wealth. Scrolls were certainly the synagogue's greatest movable treasure.[127]

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[121] The discussion of Scripture and sanctity within Tannaitic literature especially appears in the context of "impurity of hands." It is not my intention to enter the scholarly debate about the contours and meaning of this phrase. See most recently, Albert I. Baumgarten, "Sacred Scriptures Defile the Hands," *JJS* 58 (2016): 46–67.

[122] From the end of the 2nd century onwards nearly every synagogue excavated yielded fragments of a Torah shrine, a stone structure that would house the Torah ark. For a detailed study of the Torah shrine and ark within see Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues-Archaeology and Art: New Discoveries and Current Research*, HdO 105 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 166–217.

[123] Within Palestine, these include but are not limited to: Bet Alpha, Naʿaran, Jericho, Capernaum, Naʿana, Hammath Tiberias, Sepphoris, Susiya, Kefar Yasif, Bet Sheʿan A.

[124] On the question of whether the synagogue functioned a library see Haran, "Archives, Libraries, and the Order of the Biblical Books"; Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 189–94; Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 404–5; Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 150–68. If we avoid using number of books as a classification for what constitutes a library, and recognize that local churches also housed small collections of edifying literature, then there is no reason why a synagogue cannot also function as a library, at least sociologically. Further, as Houston, *Inside Roman Libraries*, 4 has noted, the difference between small and large collections was of scale and not substance.

[125] A possible hint of this may reside in b. Shab. 116b, which claims that in Nehardeah people would sequentially read verses in the afternoon services of the Sabbath. It is unclear, however, if the setting is a synagogue, or if this is truly non-liturgical.

[126] The power of scrolls to create and undermine community is also present in John Chrysostom's tirade against those Christians who attend synagogue because of the Scriptures kept there: "Although the books have their own holiness, they do not give a share of it to the place because those who frequent the place are defiled." John Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians*, trans. Paul W. Harkins, The Fathers of the Church 68 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 1.6. Could Chrysostom and his community impute a particular holiness to Jewish books because of the scroll form? Indeed, this would lend flavor to Chrysostom's interpretation of Psalm 40:8's "head of book" as small scrolls unfurled slowly, which represents the slow coming of Jesus. Scrolls provide the evidence that Jews, attached to scrolls, rejected Jesus. See Ibid., 7.2.

[127] Another source that demonstrates the cost of producing a Torah is Gen. Rab. 36:8. R Ḥiyya boasts he would write an entire Torah at the cost of 200 copper coins. This was because he took the coins, bought flax, sowed it, reaped it, made it into rope, caught a deer and wrote an entire Torah on its hide. In short, to write a full scroll was a prohibitively expensive endeavor. For a collection of rabbinic sources that discuss writing on deer skin see Meir Bar-Ilan, "The Writing of Torah-Scrolls, Tefillin, Mezuzot and Amulets on Deer Skin," *Beit Mikra* 30 (1985): 375–81.

The expense of scroll production and the desire to encourage the rich to share their wealth lie behind our second example, a short exegetical statement in b. Ketub. 50a:

> "Wealth and riches are in his house; and his merit endures forever" (Ps 112:3). R. Huna and R. Ḥisda. One said it refers to someone who learns Torah and then teaches it to others. The other says that this is one who commissions the writing[128] of Pentateuch, Prophets and Hagiography and lends them to others.

Both interpretations highlight the activity of sharing. We will focus on the second comment. Scrolls are expensive, but they are required to fulfill the perennial obligation of Torah study. This interpreter likely reads Psalm 112:13 as a prescriptive if/then statement. If wealth and riches are in one's house, namely, if one can afford the cost of producing sacred scrolls, then one should lend them out to others –sharing wealth. If one does, "his merit endures forever." Ultimately, scrolls are objects that rest at the crossroads of wealth and community.[129]

Within this web of signification, we find two legal discourses that refer to the material Psalter. The first, a case of dividing psalm scrolls amongst inheritors, was discussed in the previous chapter.[130] I mentioned there the social significance of keeping scriptural sets together, a value also exhibited in the Agnon epigraph to this chapter. The second instance is a case of international divorce, which highlights the value and movement of sacred scrolls. In late antique Mediterranean practice, a woman who marries receives a *Ketubah* – a document detailing, *inter alia*, a husband's fiscal responsibilities to his wife upon his death or their divorce.[131] In discussing whether a divorcee

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[128] It is absolutely clear that the Hebrew כותב can mean the act of sponsoring a written document. The ability to write was not overly common. Thus, when rabbis discuss writing documents it likely means through the intermediary of an invisible scribe, such as in m. Ned. 5:5. Indeed, the unique case of personal writing is something that gets highlighted in the king parable of Sifre Numbers 117. The king *himself* will write and sign the document. For other examples see Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 121, 474–76. For the "factitice *katab*" in documentary texts see Ada Yardeni, Baruch Levine, and Jonas C. Greenfield, eds., *Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabatean*, Judean Desert Studies 3 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002), 12–13.

[129] For a similar pattern involving Galen berating a wealthy person to spend money on scrolls and scribes see Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture*, 93–94.

[130] See above, pages 48-50.

[131] For a good introduction see Mordechai A. Friedman, "Contracts: Rabbinic Literature and Ancient Jewish Documents," in *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shmuel Safrai et al., CRINT 3b (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 443–49.

must take an oath in order to receive her *Ketubah*, b. Giṭ 35a-b supports a position by citing an instance of case law:

> They sent [a document] from there (i.e. Palestine) [saying]: "So and So the daughter of So and So acquired a divorce document from the hands of Aḥa son of Ḥidia, who is also known as Aie Mari. She swore by all the benefit of the world[132] that she only received from her *Ketubah* one mattress,[133] a book of Psalms, the book of Job, and Proverbs, much worn.[134] They have evaluated these at five *maneh*. When she comes to you, let her collect the remainder [of her *Ketubah*]."[135]

The rabbis of Babylonia receive word from their Palestinian counterparts that a divorcee is coming to collect part of her *Ketubah* from her husband's property. The Palestinian letter implicitly demonstrates the husband's wealth. The standard rabbinic *Ketubah* for a first marriage is 200 *zuz* (= 200 Roman *denariis*).[136] This equals two *maneh*.[137] Our divorcee already received an estimated five *maneh* and is traveling to Babylonia to collect more.

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[132] Oath formula, lit. "She vowed and swore off all the fruits of the world."

[133] Translating Jewish Babylonian Aramaic *glofqara*, which matches Syraic *qlbyar'* and Greek *kerbikarion*. See Sokoloff, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 285. For the theoretical price of bedding see y. Tan. 1:4 64b, in which Pentakakos is worthy to pray for rain because he sold his bed and bedsheets and gave the money to a woman so that she may free her husband. The word for bed here is ערס. We may infer, however, that this was not an inconsequential sum.

[134] It is unclear whether the "much worn" is modifying the all the books or just Proverbs.

[135] There is a bit of manuscript variation with regards to what the woman collected. I have translated according to Munich 95 and Vatican 130. Vatican 140 reads: "one mattress, one scroll of the Pentateuch, and a book of Psalms, Job and Proverbs." This reading seems unlikely if we are talking about an entire Pentateuchal collection. Alternatively, it may read one scroll of the Pentateuch. The first Soncino print reads: "one mattress, one book of Psalms, the book of Job and Proverbs much worn." What likely happened was the scribe did not write scroll of law and read the "one" as modifying the book of Psalms. This is how the line appears in the Vilna edition. Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 19 bases his conclusions off the Vilna. See, however, his attempt to price the ancient book on pages 16-20.

[136] See m. Ketub. 1:4. For an on-the-ground study of *Ketubot* using the documents from the Cario Geniza see Mordechai A. Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine: A Cairo Geniza Study* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1980). For the equation of *zuz* with *denarius* see Daniel Sperber, *Roman Palestine 200-400 Money and Prices* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1974), 31. If judged according to the documents at Dura Europos, 200 *denarii* could buy one a crimson robe with purple veil (75d), crockery and bronze utensils (25d), gold earrings and bracelets (50d) and three mitres (50d). In 121 CE, work for the crown was valued at 1 *denariis* per day. Ibid., 109–10. According to the rabbis in m. Peah 8:8, only those who do not have 200 *zuz* in their possession are classified as poor. One catches a glimpse of the exchange rate of 1 *maneh* = 100 *zuz* in y. Maʿas. She. 1:1 52: "Take this *maneh* worth of second tithe and give me fifty *zuzin* of non-sacral fruit."

[137] Sperber, *Money and Prices*, 35. Considering the items listed it is unlikely that *maneh* means a single *denarius*. If there were a complete shift from *maneh* equaling 100 *denarii* to just one by the middle of the third century this could indicate that our letter predates that change. There is no reason, however, to expect total consistency.

This letter may also help us begin to estimate the overall value of scriptural books in the second and third centuries. Once one subtracts the amount of a mattress, one could get at the relative value of the remaining scrolls. According to a receipt found at Dura Europos, "two mattresses, one with fleeces" cost 100 *denarii*.[138] If we assume that each mattress was of equivalent value, each individual item totals ½ *maneh*. This would leave 4½ *maneh* as the price of worn out, but large, scrolls. For internal rabbinic measure, let us adopt the statement in Ecc. Rab. 2:18 that R. Meir, a good expert scribe, earned twelve *denarii* a week. He ate and drank with four, paid for his clothing with another four, and supported his colleagues with the rest (four *denarii)*. A total of 450 *denarii* would support his activities for less than a year. He was far wealthier than a day-worker in the region of Akbara (Galilee) who would make less than a *dinar* a day.[139] I admit these calculations are speculative, but they nonetheless capture the exorbitant costs of a scroll.[140]

Our source further demonstrates that wealthy Jews owned and used copies of sacred Scripture. At least one of these scrolls is "well worn."[141] Only the wealthy elite could afford to enhance their religious life by purchasing scrolls and reading Scripture at leisure. The remainder of the literate population would need to frequent the synagogue.

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[138] Ibid., 110.

[139] See y. B. Metz. 6:6. This seems to have been the average salary of a workingman in Rome.

[140] A cheap copy of a published work during the imperial period could cost six or ten sesterces. See Kenyon, *Books and Readers*, 84. Six sesterces would be about the wage of two days for a legionary solider during the reign of Domitian. According to the Edict of Diocleatean, a high quality *Aeneid* would cost 3400 denarii. See Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, 174. Extrapolating reality from the Edict, however, is problematic. For some additional calculations of material and price see Skeat, "The Length of the Standard Papyrus Roll and the Cost-Advantage of the Codex," 66–67.

[141] Scroll in the ancient world "lived" for long periods of time. See George W. Houston, "Papyrological Evidence for Book Collections and Libraries in the Roman Empire," in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 248–51. The papyri he examines shows that manuscripts can live for over 200 years.

Our source may further provide evidence for Jewish female readers of Scripture in Late Antiquity, assuming the scrolls in this *ketubah* are not merely a carrier of liquid wealth.[142] The fact that our document lists a mattress may indicate that the items the divorcee acquired were of personal significance and use. Psalms, Job and Proverbs do form a particularly nice collection of moral and ethical wisdom. Could the worn-down parchment be the product of her own meticulous and continuous reading? If elite Christian women, like Jerome's Paula,[143] read Scripture why not their Jewish counterparts?[144]

Conclusion

This chapter completes our exploration of nearly every instance in rabbinic literature that mentions the book of Psalms as a material artefact. More particularly, it moves from the discussion of materiality and textuality found in chapter 1 to an examination of their impact upon rabbinic reading practices. In doing so, it highlights an understudied facet of rabbinic culture often ignored in favor of emphasizing the oral nature of rabbinic scholastic production. I argue that materiality matters, and that reading produces more than interpretation.

Instead of reducing reading to a singular and simplistic act, however, this chapter celebrates its variety and diversity. It follows the methodology laid out by historians of reading, who emphasize that reading is a varied and contextual process that stands at the crossroads of material,

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[142] For female readers in Late Antiquity see Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters*, 41–52; Kim Haines-Eitzen, *The Gendered Palimpsest: Women, Writing, and Representation in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[143] In his 107th letter, Jerome pens an educational program for Laetea. He proclaims that her treasure should be scriptural manuscripts, and that she should begin her education with Psalms. For some examples of Palestinian rabbis owning and reading scrolls see Hezser, *Jewish Literacy*, 147–51.

[144] Interestingly enough, the movement of scrolls between Palestine and Babylonia is at stake in y. Sanh. 3:10 21a, where R. Elazar refuses to let the scrolls of Kahana be taken by his heirs outside of Palestine. Is this an attempt to keep wealth local?

reader and sociocultural situation. In particular, this chapter explored how rabbis read Psalms from at least two vantages: 1) scenes of reading and 2) rabbinic hermeneutics. The evidence provided by the first, which consists of short narratives that portray the process of reading in action, afforded us insight into the variety of possible reading practices reflected in rabbinic literature. We explored the social transcript of elite Jewish reading and its background in cultured Greco-Roman reading, highlighted non-scholastic forms of reading such as leisure reading and affective reading, and mapped out the contours of scribal activity and textual anxiety. The second vista, rabbinic hermeneutics, provided a view of the process and results of linear reading, a type of reading encouraged by the scroll form of a scriptural text. The chapter concluded with an examination of a letter that placed into focus the social and symbolic significance of the material Psalter as well as a potential female reader of Psalms.

Ultimately, this chapter with its focus on reading and materiality sets the stage for the remainder of this dissertation. As emphasized throughout, reading and materiality are enmeshed within a mutually-referential sociocultural matrix. Our ancient sources, however, provide more information for reading than materiality. The following chapters, therefore, will examine the complicated processes of reading from multiple vantages: scholastic, liturgical, pietistic-magical, polemical and irenic.

Chapter 3: Reading Scholastically, Psalm 29 in Tannaitic Midrash

> I am got extremely interested in tabulating, according to mere size of genera, the species having any varieties marked by Greek letters or otherwise: the result (as far as I have yet gone) seems to me one of the most important arguments I have yet met with, that varieties are only small species—or species only strongly marked varieties. The subject is in many ways so very important for me; I wish much you would think of any well-worked Floras with from 1000-2000 species, with the varieties marked. It is good to have hair-splitters and lumpers.*
>
> *Those who make many species are the " splitters," and those who make few are the " lumpers."

- *Charles Darwin, Letter to J.D. Hooker, August 1857*[1]

In the previous chapter I noted that rabbinic literature is dominated by the process and results of scholastic reading. This strategy places the biblical text and its interpretation at the center of discourse. It seeks to uncover what a biblical text means. This reading strategy, which is the subject of this chapter, contrasts to the forms of reading that will occupy our attention in the following chapters, such as non-interpretive types of reading such as liturgical, magical, and pietistic reading.

The interpretive dimension of rabbinic reading, often simply called midrash,[2] has received much scholarly attention. In this chapter, I will focus on a largely ignored aspect of rabbinic scholastic reading, a feature I will call holistic exegesis, namely, the fact that rabbinic readers can approach a large unit of biblical text with both "lumping" and "splitting" reading strategies simultaneously. Previous scholarship tends to focus on only one of these reading practices, often

[1] Charles Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, Volume 2: Including an Autobiographical Chapter*, ed. Francis Darwin (London: John Murray, 1887), 105.

[2] For a short overview of key scholarly opinions and controversies Bakhos, "Method(ological) Matters." For further see Rachel A. Anisfeld, *Sustain Me with Raisin-Cakes: Pesikta deRav Kahana and the Popularization of Rabbinic Judaism*, JSJSup 133 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 7–13, and the scholarship cited there.

at the expense of the other. By examining both in tandem, we can depict the results of rabbinic scholastic reading and its process in a more nuanced manner.

First, let me define the terms "lumpers" and "splitters" in this context. Both were originally employed to describe the difference between ways of organizing biological knowledge. They have since migrated to other fields such as anthropology and liturgy.[3] A "lumper" combines units into the same category of analysis unless he is compelled to separate them. A "splitter" maintains units in separate categories unless convinced to combine them. In the context of this chapter, I employ these terms to describe how previous scholars have categorized the process of rabbinic reading. Scholars who view the rabbis as "splitters" tend to view the process and results of rabbinic reading as atomistic. Those who conceptualize the rabbis as "lumpers" tend to focus on the themes and motifs produced by rabbinic interpretation of a large portion of text.

With a few exceptions, prior scholarship has examined rabbinic scholastic reading as an activity driven by splitting tendencies. As Benjamin Sommer recently put it, "The rabbis believe that the main unit of expression in the Bible is the verse or a group of two or three successive verses. They are not especially interested in larger literary units, such as a whole poem or a complete story, much less a whole biblical book."[4] This chapter will highlight the limitations of

[3] Eviatar Zerubavel, "Lumping and Splitting: Notes on Social Classification," *Sociological Forum* 11 (1996): 421–433; Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), ix.

[4] Benjamin D. Sommer, "Concepts of Scriptural Language in Midrash," in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 66–67. See also more recently restated in Benjamin D. Sommer, *Revelation and Authority: Sinai in Jewish Scripture and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 218–23. This is, of course, a reframing of Kugel's claim: "The second fundamental point, still more basic, is that midrash is an exegesis of biblical verses, not of books. The basic unit of the Bible, for the midrashist, is the verse: this is what he seeks to expound, and it might be said that there simply is no boundary encountered beyond that of the verse until one comes to the borders of the canon…." James Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 145. In this statement Kugel exhibits a penchant for insight and sweeping rhetoric. Yes, a single biblical verse is often at the center of exegesis, but must we adopt a dichotomy of "book or bust"? Can larger units, smaller than a book – say a single psalm – be the object of exegesis? Kugel's argument, along with this chapter, falls within a much larger debate about the question: "Are rabbis atomistic readers of Scripture?" This chapter argues they are not. In general, the conversation maps into two major camps with various

this claim. It is true that attention to the exegesis of a single verse has much explanatory power for understanding some of the mechanics of rabbinic reading,[5] and that the genres of literature in which rabbinic scholastic reading appear give the impression that the exegetical field ranges from parts of a single verse at minimum to 2-3 verses at maximum.[6] Imagining atomisim as the core of rabbinic hermeneutics, however, occludes the range and variety of rabbinic scholastic reading. As

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subdivisions. I will not develop the full genealogy here, but will give an outline. Among the earliest modern scholars to categorize rabbinic exegesis as atomistic was George F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim*., vol. 1, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 248. This perspective became the dominant one and still retains a large following. Brewer adopts this for apologetic purposes, arguing that New Testament authors do not read atomistically, but the rabbis do. See David I. Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE*, TSAJ 30 (Mohr Siebeck, 1992). A non-apologetic approach that also views rabbinic exegesis as atomistic was developed by James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 24; Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash." The origins of the non-atomism camp may be traced back to Heinemann, *The Methods of Aggadah*, who argues that sometimes rabbis do interpret in larger context. Neusner attacks Kugel and demands midrash not be read atomistically. Of course, this is because he wants to see each rabbinic document as a stable whole. See Jacob Neusner, "The Case of James Kugel's Joking Rabbis and Other Serious Issues," in *Wrong Ways and Right Ways in the Study of Formative Judaism: Critical Method and Literature, History, and the History of Religion*, BJS 145 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 59–7. See especially pgs. 67-8. For this debate see Bakhos, "Method(ological) Matters," 167–71. One can see rabbinic "lumping" across rabbinic documents of a single period and not just within them. Other scholars have recently attacked atomism by focusing on a single work, see Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 61. The most recent attempt to argue against atomism is, to my knowledge, Devora Steinmetz, "Beyond the Verse: Midrash Aggadah as Interpretation of Biblical Narrative," *AJS Review* 30 (2006): 325–45. This article is problematic as the author reads her own midrash back into the biblical text and argues that the actual midrash she is analyzing reflects this. My chapter adds to this conversation by reading across rabbinic texts and demonstrating that Psalm 29 is part of a stable, internally-consistent and contextual conversation. The conclusion of Sommer's paragraph also deserves analysis, "Thus, as Robert Harris has emphasized to me, there is no conception of the Binding of Isaac among the classical midrashic interpreters. Only in the Middle Ages, when Jewish interpreters began thinking about longer textual units, does this concept (or this famous term) appear in Jewish literature. For the rabbis, the Bible is not so much a collection of poems, laws, and narratives. It is a collection of verses." Harris's statement needs much emendation. Just because the term עקדת יצחק may be late does not mean there was no conception of Isaac having an עקדה. One sees it as early as the Mekhilta R. Ishmael Pisḥa 7: "I see the blood of the Akedah of Isaac (עקדתו של יצחק)" Some early rabbis also clearly thought of the "Akedah" as a cohesive biblical unit. After an analysis that places a large portion of Psalm 8 in the context of the splitting of the sea, t. Soṭah 6:2 contains a line by R. Elazar that reads: לא נאמרה פרשה זו אלא לענין עקידה, "This chapter actually refers to the topic of the Akedah." We see two things here. First, the Akedah is a concept and a long narrative textual unit – triggered by the use of ענין. Second, an entire psalm is at play. On פרשה and ענין Naeh, "The Structure and the Division of Torat Kohanin (B)," 67–69.

[5] The value of closely examining a biblical verse for internal midrashic triggers is amply demonstrated by the magisterial Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*. In many ways, it would contrast with the more synthetic and holistic approach in Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews*, ed. Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003).

[6] There are, of course, clear exceptions. Many midrashim will string quote long sections of a single text. See the example from Sifre Deuteronomy 319 below. See also the string quote of Isaiah 2:12-17 in Mekhilta R. Ishmael Shirata 2. These are not the only examples, of course.

I will demonstrate below, specific verses – or, more often, parts of a verse – are split apart and read with hermeneutical care with regards to the whole of a particular passage. It is further possible that atomization, like rabbinic pluralism, may be a mirage set up by redaction.[7]

Thus, at the same time as they split, rabbis undeniably lump, reading a large unit of text consistently within a particular contextual framework.[8] We must remember, however, that this context need not be the same one produced by the modern academic readings of biblical scholars.[9] Put simply, an exegetical context is produced when a rabbi reads a section of a large unit of text in a particular manner, which in turn shapes the interpretations of other rabbis who seek to make claims within or against that established framework. In other words, large units of biblical text may be *exegetically primed*[10] to be read and interpreted in a particular manner.

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[7] On the critique of pluralism as a redactional fantasy see David Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies*, Rethinking Theory (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 33–34.

[8] Some of these are self-reflectively triggered by the word ענין. See the example at the end of note 4, above. For another example where an entire psalm is treated as a unified dialogue see Lev. Rab. 28:6. My work draws inspiration from Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 93–104, 112–13. Here he attempts to understand the entirety of Psalm 114 as the hermeneutical key for unlocking a passage in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael about the splitting of the sea. He deals with one passage that quotes multiple verses of Psalm 114 and not every location in Tannaitic literature where Psalm 114 is quoted to determine whether this is a consistent pattern. Furthermore, his concerns are almost entirely literary. Mine are historical and literary.

[9] I am more interested in understanding consistent reading patterns than getting entangled in the apologetically-laden question of whether rabbis knew *peshat*, the "literal" sense of Scripture. For a recent attempt to find *peshat* in classical rabbinic literature see Martin Lockshin, "Peshat in Genesis Rabbah," in *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context*, ed. Sarit Kattan Gribetz et al., TSAJ 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). For *peshat*, at least in the Babylonian Talmud, as "context" see Halivni, *Peshat and Derash*; David Kraemer, "Scriptural Interpretation in the Mishnah," in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø et al., vol. 1.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 283–84. Boyarin attempts to subtly rework midash as *peshat* by stating: "Midrash is a reading of the 'plain sense of things' but only if we recognize that the plain sense grows and changes throughout history and that this is the bibles underlying meaning." Boyarin, *Intertextuality*, 18. Although, by frequently placing and contrasting midrashic exegesis with source-criticism, Boyarin really seems to want *derash* to be either a suitable *peshat* or a (theologically?) justified alternative. See especially pg. 49.

[10] I use the term "priming" its psychological sense. For an accessible description see Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 50–58. In many ways, my contention here is similar to Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and Its Interpretation in the Midrash Sifre to Deuteronomy*, SUNY Series in Judaica (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 26, that rabbinic commentators did not simply work with scriptural verses, but with traditions about those verses. However, his interest in understanding the Sifre as a commentary document pushes him to see exegesis as atomized and paratactic. By focusing on the reception of scriptural text itself in all forms of early rabbinic thought I think we can get at something larger.

Scholars of reception often schematically note large interpretive trends, what I am calling the exegetical context, without sufficient analysis of the interpretive varieties within that trend.[11] Acknowledging that an exegetical context molds interpretation should not efface the pursuit of interpretive variety. Even when the rabbis read a text within a particular context they do not do so with one voice. Rather, each individual interpreter subtly reworks and revises the exegetically primed text as he sees fit. In many cases, he attaches his particular contribution to the larger conversation by isolating a verse or a feature in a verse upon which to comment. He is bound to a particular discourse, but not in a deterministic manner. We must leave room for interpretive creativity. This chapter, therefore, also offers a critique of reception history.

A nuanced portrait of rabbinic interpretation must pay attention to both the exegetical superstructure and the individual interpreter's interaction with it. We gain access to individual interpreters and the exegetical superstructure by collecting and examining every citation of a particular textual unit. A holistic approach, which I develop below, posits that in order to fully appreciate the contours of rabbinic scholastic reading and the arguments it produces we must attend to the rabbis as both lumpers and splitters. The book of Psalms provides a ready proving grounds for this approach. Even within rabbinic imagination, most psalms are short and self-contained units of text. They are clearly divided, in part, by their titles. This chapter will present a

[11] For the schematic approach to psalm reception, which sacrifices nuance for coverage see Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms*; Susan E. Gillingham, "An Introduction to Reception History with particular reference to Psalm 1," *Revue des sciences religieuses*.85 (2011): 571–599; Susan E. Gillingham, *Psalms through the Centuries* (Malden, MA: Blackwell., 2008); Susan E. Gillingham, "The Reception of Psalm 137 in Jewish and Christian Traditions," in *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 64–82. See also Brennan Breed, "The Reception of the Psalms: The Example of Psalm 91," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 297–312; John F. A Sawyer, "The Psalms in Judaism and Christianity: A Reception History Perspective," in *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms*, ed. Susan E. Gillingham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 134–43. This is not to say that Reception History has little to offer. On the contrary, the combination of historical nuance and reception can open up dimensions of reading otherwise ignored. To do so, however, scholars of reception criticism must move beyond stamp-collecting.

case study that models the utility of adopting a holistic perspective on rabbinic scholastic reading. The method developed here will inform nearly every chapter that follows.

In particular, this chapter focuses on the reading of Psalm 29 within Tannaitic literature. The psalm is a self-contained unit of eleven verses, with nearly every Tannaitic comment simultaneously splitting and lumping. Within the Tannaitic corpus, the psalm was exegetically primed to be read within the framework of Sinaitic revelation. While this exegetical trend has been noted, no scholar, to my knowledge, has sought to examine it and its ramifications for rabbinic intellectual history in detail.[12] A thorough analysis will demonstrate that a discourse about the boundaries of revelation surrounds this psalm in the Tannaitic period. This discourse appears across every major compilation of Tannaitic midrash belonging to both the Ishmael and Akiva schools.[13] It is not the *only* way rabbis of this period read Psalm 29; nonetheless, it is the dominant one.[14] The revelation discourse almost completely disappears in the Amoraic period, where Psalm

[12] For some earlier mentions of this exegetical trend see Steven D. Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy and Pluralism Revisited," in *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages*, JSJSup 147 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 456; Steven D. Fraade, "Hearing and Seeing at Sinai: Interpretive Trajectories," in *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages*, JSJSup 147 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 507. Fraade notes that rabbis tend to read this psalm as referring to Sinai. See also Michael D. Goulder, *The Psalms of the Return (Book V, Psalms 107-150)*, JSOTSupp 258 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 201–2; Irving Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process: Tradition and Interpretation in Rabbinic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 75–78. Jacob's suggestion that the identification of the psalm with Sinai rests entirely on its use of the word *qol* is overly simplistic. Note as well that even Sommer claims that "the rabbis interpret Psalm 29 as a description of the events of Sinai." Sommer, *Revelation and Authority*, 266 n.25. Surprisingly, an article devoted to Psalm 29 in Midrash Psalms makes no mention of earlier precedent of interpreting this psalm in relationship to revelation or Sinai. See Menn and Sandmel, "Psalm 29 in Jewish Psalms Commentary (Midrash Tehillim): King David's Instructions for Synagogue Prayer."

[13] Kahana notes that *aggadic* material is less readily divisible into schools than its *halakhic* counterparts. However, as he demonstrates, placing one against the other could yield profitable results. See Menahem Kahana, *The Two Mekhiltot on the Amalek Portion* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999). For differences in legal sections of Tannaitic midrash see Yadin, *Scripture as Logos*; Azzan Yadin-Israel, *Scripture and Tradition: Rabbi Akiva and the Triumph of Midrash* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).

[14] The only places in Tannaitic literature where Psalm 29 does not directly engage with revelation are: t. Ber. 3:25 (which we will discuss in the next chapter), Sifre Deuteronomy 40, and Sifre Deuteronomy 319 (although below I suggest it might). Psalm 29:8 in Sifre Deuteronomy 40 seems to be a prooftext about a very particular phenomenon. The use of Psalm 29 in the final Mishnah of m. Uqtzin does not count as it is not really a Tannaitic source, see Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 2:979. The verse also appears as part of Mehkilta Deuteronomy. However, only two words exist in the pages published by Kahana and thus it is too fragmentary to analyze. See Menahem Kahana, "Pages of the Deuteronomy Mekhilta on Ha'azinu and Wezot Ha-Berakha," *Tarbitz* 57 (1988): 194.

29 is exegetically primed to be read in the context of justifying the Amidah.[15] I will explore this development further in the following chapter. Ultimately, I wish to argue that the rabbis 'thought with Psalm 29' and did not just appended their opinions to this psalm as an afterthought. As I will demonstrate, numerous rabbinic comments dealing with Psalm 29 quote more than one verse or assume a context supplied by the interpretation of other verses in this psalm. Rabbinic scholastic reading, therefore, entails more than splitting.

The Tannaitic rabbis who engage with Psalm 29, however, do not merely lump their interpretation into the framework of revelation, but differ about its details and constitution. Furthermore, most rabbis attach their interpretation to the larger discourse of revelation by isolating a verse or a feature within a verse upon which to comment. Rabbinic scholastic reading, therefore, entails more than lumping. Attention to both lumping and splitting – a holistic approach – offers the best view into the process and results that constitute rabbinic interpretation.

I will deal with the reception of Psalm 29 in several parts. First, I will briefly sketch the history of this psalm in the biblical and Second Temple periods. Then, I will focus on a midrash about Balaam that prominently features Psalm 29. This midrash appears in several locations in Tannaitic literature, each with important differences. I will map the development and ideological argument of each variation of the Balaam midrash. Afterwards, I will turn to the remaining references to Psalm 29 in the Tannaitic corpus. I will conclude with some brief suggestions as to why a discourse on the boundaries of revelation involving Psalm 29 was compelling to Tannaitic rabbis and why it disappears in the Amoriac period.

[15] I must be clear that for the purposes of this chapter I am not considering Tanḥuma material part of the Amoraic period. Several comments in the Tanḥuma do read Psalm 29 in terms of revelation. This is not surprising. Strong exegetical tendencies do not simply disappear. It does, however, highlight the absence of Psalm 29 as revelation in sources that clearly date to the Amoriac period.

The Pre-Rabbinic Psalm 29

In this section, I will briefly examine Psalm 29 in its the ancient Near Eastern and Second Temple contexts. I will not provide a full analysis of the psalm, but rather highlight the features that had an impact upon its future rabbinic readers. Psalm 29 reads:[16]

A Psalm of David.

1 Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendor.
3 The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over mighty waters.
4 The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.
5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
6 He makes Lebanon skip[17] like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.

[16] Translating with NRSV, although there are numerous difficulties with this psalm. I have no intention of solving them all, or engaging with every conversation about this psalm. The interested reader should carefully examine the articles cited in the following notes and then follow those footnotes to even more detailed studies.
[17] For a defense of the enclitic mem against object suffix, see Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "וירקידם כמו עגל (Ps. 29, 6)," *Leshonenu* 47 (1982): 70–73.

7 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;

the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

9 The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl,[18]

and strips the forest bare;

and in his temple all say, "Glory!"

10 The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;[19]

the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

11 May the Lord give strength to his people!

May the Lord bless his people with peace!

This psalm divides into four sections: vv. 1-2, which both begin with "ascribe" (*havu*); vv. 3-9b, which detail the "voice" of the Lord; vv. 9c-10, which employ enthronement imagery; and v.11, which acts as a concluding doxology.[20] Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Psalm 29 in its ancient Near Eastern context is its relationship to contemporary accounts of theophany. H. L.

[18] For the suggestion that this line means "the voice of YHWH causes hinds to calve," and that *qol* means "thunder" and not "hark" see Jeffrey H. Tigay, "'The Voice of YHWH Causes Hinds to Calve' (Psalm 29:9)," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Chaim Cohen et al., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 399–411.

[19] The phrase למבול in conjunction with the imagery of sitting is strange. Epstein suggest it means "chair," J. N. Epstein, "מבול (Ps. 29, 10) – נִכֵּר," *Tarbitz* 12 (1940): 82. Chaim Cohen suggests, based on Akkadian, that it means "from time immemorial." See Chaim Cohen, "ה' למבול ישב (Ps. 29:10) — A New Interpretation," *Leshonenu* 53 (1989): 193–201. Pardee, in his analysis, claims, "Though I, like many of my predecessors, have adopted that translation [i.e. the Lord at the Flood did sit – AJB], I have never known just what it was supposed to mean." Dennis Pardee, "On Psalm 29: Structure and Meaning," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint et al., VTSupp 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 172.

[20] For a somewhat similar structural analysis see David N. Freedman and C. Franke Hyland, "Psalm 29: A Structural Analysis," *HTR* 66 (1973): 237–56. They argue that the theophany happens in heaven and that it truly is the *voice* of God – not God Himself – that travels. For another metrical analysis see Frank M. Cross, "Notes on a Canaanite Psalm in the Old Testament," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 117 (1950): 19–21. I am largely unconvinced of true meter in Biblical Hebrew poetry. For a more recent structural analysis of the Psalm see Pardee, "On Psalm 29: Structure and Meaning."

Ginzberg has convincingly demonstrated that the psalmist reworked a poem pertaining to the dramatic appearance of Baal, the chief Canaanite deity, into a psalm about the advent of YHWH, depicted as a storm god.[21] At its face, there is no reason to localize the entire psalm within the framework of Sinaitic revelation.[22] In fact, the wilderness mentioned in the psalm is that of Qadesh, not Ḥoreb/Sinai. Furthermore, YHWH appears to move – as if a storm – across the entire land: from the Mediterranean Sea, to Lebanon/Sirion, to the wilderness of Qadesh.[23] The poem does not center on the Sinai region.

Little to no evidence exists for the use of Psalm 29 during the Second Temple period. Second Temple literature does not quote – and may not even allude to – Psalm 29 in part or in whole.[24] This does not mean that the psalm was unread; rather, its readers left no traces of their activity. A notable exception is the Septuagint translation of the Psalm, which adds "of going forth of the Tent" to the title of the psalm in some manuscripts.[25] Furthermore, if one may believe the concluding section of Mishnah Tamid, Psalm 29 was sung once a week at the temple by the

[21] See H. L Ginsberg, *The Ugarit Texts* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1936), 129ff. See also Theodor H. Gaster, "Psalm 29," *JQR* 37 (1946): 55–65. For the argument that Ginsberg's case is overstated see B. Margulis, "The Canaanite Origin of Psalm 29 Reconsidered," *Biblica* 51 (1970): 332–48. For a modified argument see P. C. Craigie, "Psalm XXIX in the Hebrew Poetic Tradition," *VT* 22 (1972): 143–51. Craigie's form-critical arguments are, of course, dated.

[22] Some scholars have argued that at least within biblical tradition Psalm 29 could not have been read together with revelation at Sinai. See Samuel E. Loewenstamm, "The Trembling of the World at the Appearance of God," *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 3 (1961): 57–58. He further calls attention to the fact that Psalm 29 does not describe the theophany of a legislative God, but a warrior God.

[23] I do not think, *contra* Ginsberg, that Qadesh here is in Syria. See H. L. Ginsberg, "An Ancient Name of the Syrian Desert," *Bulletin of the Jewish Palestine Exploration Society* 6 (1939): 96–97. Regardless, rabbis would almost certainly have read this as the Qadesh of the south.

[24] No true quotation is recorded in Armin Lange and Matthias Weigold, *Biblical Quotations and Allusions in Second Temple Jewish Literature*, JAJSupp 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011); Bradley H. McLean, *Citations and Allusions to Jewish Scripture in Early Christian and Jewish Writings through 180 C.E.* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1992). McLean cites Acts 7:2 as an allusion to Ps 29:3. Acts is not a Second Temple text, and the allusion is weak. The allusions cited in Steve Delamarter, *A Scripture Index to Charlesworth's The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), are extremely tenuous. 3 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Elijah are not Second Temple texts. Ps 29:5 contains no similarity to the proposed allusion in 2 Baruch 36:6. Same for the proposed allusion Psalms of Solomon 1:6 to Ps 29:1.

[25] From a phenomenological, although ahistorical, perspective this interpretation may be the precursor of reading Psalm 29 at the removal of the Torah scroll from the Ark in Medieval Jewish practice.

Levites. There is reason, however, to be suspicious of this tradition, which we will discuss in the following chapter.

As we will explore in detail below, the direct connection between this psalm and Sinai first appears in rabbinic literature. Why did early rabbis read the psalm as pertaining to revelation at Sinai? First, any text containing theophonic elements has the hermeneutic *potential* to be read by the rabbis in light of Sinai. In the Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1 and 5, for example, the rabbis read theophonic verses from Habakkuk 3 in light of Sinaitic revelation. Psalm 29 could have just as easily been read, however, as another revelatory moment, such as at the splitting of the sea.[26] Second, although unstated in rabbinic literature, early rabbinic readers may have understood the unspecified "wilderness" in 8a as Sinai. Regardless of how the interpretation of Psalm 29 as revelation arose, by the time of the rabbis it was firmly entrenched, with nearly every early rabbinic reader attaching himself to this generalized discourse of revelation and localizing it further by using both the hermeneutical tools and assumptions available.

Psalm 29 in Tannaitic Literature

The Tannaitic sources discussed below imagine the *entirety* of Psalm 29 within the context of Sinaitic revelation, and not just one or two verses. The consistency is striking, especially within the historiographical framework that argues against a centralized rabbinic movement.[27] Consistency, however, is not uniformity. Close attention to the sources enmeshed in this exegetical

[26] This is what happens, for example, with Psalm 8 in early rabbinic interpretation. We must remember that theophany does not only occur at Sinai. At least one Septuagint tradition, for example, did not contextualize Psalm 29 as Sinai, but rather, "of the going forth of the Tent." Alternatively, tradents could have picked up on מבול and read the psalm in the context of Noah. Of course, as we will see below, the Balaam Midrash manages to combine both Noah's flood and Sinai.

[27] Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*.

trend uncovers many different perspectives on how to engage with Psalm 29 and the Sinaitic revelation. In other words, while many Tannaim sought to read Psalm 29 in light of Sinai, their goals in doing so differed from one another. By paying close attention to the voices of the Tannaim, we will hear the echoing fragments of interpretive and ideological controversies.

The Balaam Midrash: Gentiles and Revelation

Our first example of holistic reading appears as a midrash about Balaam and the gentiles during Sinaitic revelation.[28] Throughout this chapter I will call it the "Balaam Midrash." It appears three times in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, twice in the Mekhilta of R. Simon, once in Sifre Deuteronomy, and is reconstructed once by Hoffman in his Midrash Tannaim.[29] Each iteration shares the same core features but differs in key ways. As a whole, the different versions employ

[28] For an early, but brief, study of this passage see Louis Finkelstein, "The Transmission of Early Rabbinic Traditions," *HUCA* 16 (1941): 117–22. He uses the variation in our midrash to posit the existence of orally fixed and memorized catchwords that are then expanded upon in various versions. In other words, form-criticism. See also Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Qol Adonai: A Study in Rabbinic Theology," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 24 (1972): 13–21. I do not quite agree that this is a sermon on Psalm 29, as much as a sermon that cannot be told without reference to *varying* parts of Psalm 29. His theological reading compares the "word" at creation and "word" at revelation, and has little concern for the context and content of the midrash itself. Where is creation in this midrash? He also seems to be aware of the conversation about the place of Torah for gentiles regarding this midrash in general, but reduces it to "the gentiles did not avail themselves of the message sent to them" (pg. 20). He does not see the nuances in the numerous variations. For an attempt at getting to the "original" version of this midrash, see Jakob J. Petuchowski, "A Sermon on Psalm 29 Attributed to Rabbi Eleazar Hamodai," *HUCA* 48 (1977): 243–64. I am less interested in conjecturing about the original pure structure of the midrash, but rather its first real instantiation and its Tannaitic variations. Thus, I will not be dealing with versions of the midrash found in non-Tannaitic literature. My goals, unlike Petuchowski and Finkelstein, are historical and ideological and not (just) form-critical.

[29] A Tannaitic setting for Mekh. R. Simon and Midrash Tannaim are uncertain. Their contributions to this chapter are stylistic and not ideological. If I were to remove them from this study, the results would still remain the same. Nonetheless, as Kahana notes, the *aggadic* material in Mekh. R. Simon fundamentally resembles that in Mekh. R. Ishmael when in parallel. This may allow us to favor a Tannaitic setting. On Mekh. R. Simon see Menahem Kahana, "The Halakhic Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shmuel Safrai et al., CRINT 3b (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 72–77; Kahana, *The Two Mekhiltot on the Amalek Portion*. A version of this midrash also appears in b. Zevaḥ 116a, Pesiq. Rab. 20; Mid. Prov. 21:22; Mid. Leqaḥ Tov 20:2; Yal. Shim. Judges, 48; and Midrash HaGadol Exodus 18:1. I will not discuss these instances because I am interested in the Tannaitic discourses that surround and constitute this midrash.

Psalm 29 in a discussion about the boundaries of revelation as it pertains to gentiles. Attention to the details, however, reveals that the Tannaim do not speak in unison.

My analysis will proceed as follows. I will first examine the core of the midrash as it appears in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael. I will then organize the frames that surround (and reshape) the Balaam Midrash into an ideological spectrum, examining first the sources that most vigorously exclude gentiles from revelation and concluding with those that accord them the most space. I must stress that my organizational choice does not claim a teleological development in which exclusion gives way to inclusion.

The Balaam Midrash as it occurs in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael appears twice in near identical wording[30] and once more obliquely referenced.[31] I will begin by explicating the midrash itself before examining the varying frames that surround and transform it:[32]

> At that time (i.e. during Sinaitic revelation) all the nations of the world gathered unto Balaam the Wicked.[33] They said to him, "Balaam, perhaps the Lord is doing unto us just as he did unto the generation of the flood? As it says 'The Lord sat on the flood' (Ps. 29:10a)." He said to them, "You idiots, God already promised to Noah that he would not bring a flood on the earth, as it says, 'This is as the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you' (Isa 54:9)." They said to him, "He said he would not bring a flood of water, but perhaps a flood of fire?" He said to them, "He is bringing neither a flood of fire nor a flood of water, but rather he is giving Torah to his nation, as it says 'The Lord is giving strength to his nation' (Ps 29:11a)." Upon hearing this from his mouth, everyone turned away and went to his place.

[30] BaḤodesh 5 and Amalek 3.
[31] BaḤodesh 1.
[32] This midrash is cited according to Munich Ms of Mekhilta of R. Ishamel Amalek 3. The only significant difference between this and Oxford is "the wicked" after Balaam's name. Another major difference is that the citation of this midrash in BaḤodesh 5 is cut short in both Munich and the first printing. It remains full only in Oxford.
[33] For Balaam as the archetypal gentile prophet see Judith R. Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, BJS 47 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983), 88; Ephraim E. Urbach, "Homilies of the Rabbis on the Prophets of the Nations and the Balaam Stories," *Tarbitz* 25 (1956): 272–89. On the general reception of Balaam see Geurt Hendrik van Kooten and Jacques van Ruiten, eds., *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam*, Themes in Biblical Narrative 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

This midrash transforms Psalm 29 into a locus for thinking about Sinaitic revelation in general and the place of gentiles in particular. While the core midrash quotes only two verse from Psalm 29, the surrounding frames – which I will discuss below – demonstrate that other verses from the psalm also play a role in this drama.

The above midrash paints a scene in which the gentiles come to Balaam for advice during the Sinaitic revelation. The nations of the world fear another flood and quote Psalm 29:10 as a prooftext that a torrent may yet wipe out the world. The verse reads: "The Lord sat (*yashav)* on the flood" – "sat" is cast in the perfect tense. This implies that God sat on the flood in the past and could unleash another one at any moment.[34] Balaam chastises his fellow gentiles by citing a verse in which God promises to never inflict another deluge upon the world. The nations are not convinced. Closely reading "*waters* of Noah" – and perhaps drawing on the fiery elements in Psalm 29:7 – they retort that perhaps God will send forth a flood of *fire*.[35] Balaam assuages their fear, saying that the current tumult is really just the Israelites receiving the Torah. He quotes Psalm 29:11a: "God is giving strength to his nation." The exegetical context of Psalm 29 as a psalm about Sinaitic revelation supplies the logic for replacing strength with Torah. In other words, if Psalm 29 is about revelation then what must God be giving to his nation if not Torah?[36] The nations are placated. The unnatural occurrences no longer pertain to them. They return home.

[34] Petuchowski, "A Sermon on Psalm 29," 258 claims that fear of another flood "can hardly be deduced from such modern translations." Instead, he anachronistically appeals to midrashim in Targum Psalms and Midrash Psalms which reads Psalm 29:10a as "Attribute of Judgement" and 29:10b as "Attribute of Mercy," and argues that this made treating the verse as a dialogue natural. Two late traditions do not multiply into an earlier one. Furthermore, we need not appeal to theological fancies when basic biblical grammar suffices.

[35] For the motif of flood of fire elsewhere see Menachem Kister, "Observations on Aspects of Exegesis, Tradition and Theology in Midrash, Pseudepigrapha, and Other Jewish Writings," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. John C. Reeves, SBLEJL 6 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 17–19.

[36] This idea is further explored below.

What does this midrash say about gentiles and the boundaries of revelation? From the perspective of the narrator, the gentiles are included in the larger Israelite story, but only from the sidelines. They experience the effects of revelation, but are not direct participants. While the nations initially think that they are the center of the narrative, they soon learn otherwise. Thus, gentiles – Balaam included – are useful in confirming the existence and power of revelation while simultaneously limiting it to Israel. Ultimately, revelation is conceived of as a public affair limited to Israelites.[37] The narrative explored above is, however, only one version of this midrash. In this iteration of the midrash, the nations are portrayed as apathetic to revelation. They were part of the larger story, but withdrew from it. This midrash, however, does not stand in isolation. Its claims are mediated by the varying introductions that frame it, which act as both paratext and part of the narrative itself.[38]

Frame #1: Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5[39]

The frame of this Balaam Midrash in Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5 sheds light on the development and the further embedding of Psalm 29 within the matrix of revelation. It reads:[40]

> Another interpretation:
> [a] "I am the Lord your God" (Exod 20:2): When God stood and said, "I am the Lord your God," the earth trembled, as it says, "Lord, when you went out of Seir, when you marched from the region of Edom, the earth trembled, the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water" (Judg 5:4). And it also says, "The mountains quaked before the Lord, the One of Sinai before the Lord, the God of Israel" (Judg 5:5). And it also says, "The voice of the Lord with strength … and in his temple everyone says 'Glory'" (Ps 29:4-9). Until their houses were filled with the radiance of the divine presence.

[37] One could imagine another telling of revelation which does not at all account for the place of gentiles.
[38] On paratexts, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, Literature, Culture, Theory 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
[39] For an analysis of the internal context of this Mekhilta section see Marc G. Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999), 93–98.
[40] Translating with Oxford but filling out scriptural citations; no major variants.

We must first attend to the frame itself before we examine how it shapes the Balaam Midrash. The frame's use of Psalm 29 is far from clear. If we read the citation of Psalm 29:4-9 as part of the previous string of scriptural citations, then the meaning of "until their houses were filled with the radiance of the divine presence" is vague. The clause becomes a mere sentence fragment, especially if we render *ad* as "until."[41] Several interpretive options exist. First, we may read the third "and it also says" as the beginning of an entirely new sequence of events. The scene unfolds as follows: "I am the Lord" issues forth the verses from Psalm 29, causing the houses of the nations of the world to both quake and fill with the divine presence. Thus, revelation consists of the "voices" of Psalm 29. A second option would be to temporarily ignore all verse citations and imagine a scene in which after God spoke the earth trembled. When the tremors ceased, the houses were filled with divine radiance. In this reading, the scriptural verses are entirely secondary. The infusion of divine radiance, however, best suits Psalm 29:9's "Glory."[42] A third, and perhaps more plausible, possibility reads the clause that begins with *ad* as the connective tissue between the cited verses and Balaam Midrash. Instead of "until," *ad* would better translate as "when." *When* the gentiles experienced quakes and unnatural illumination they came to Balaam. The clause is not a sentence fragment. In any case, the clause "when their houses were filled with the radiance of the divine presence" clearly reworks Psalm 29:9 "and in his temple everyone says 'Glory'!"[43] "His

[41] On the semantic possibilities of עד in Ancient and Medieval Hebrew and their impact upon biblical interpretation see Richard C. Steiner, "Four Inner-Biblical Interpretations of Genesis 49:10: On the Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguities of עַד as Reflected in the Prophecies of Nathan, Ahijah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132 (2013): 33–60.

[42] None of the other two verses cited are as explicit about divine glory.

[43] Petuchowski, "A Sermon on Psalm 29," 256 recognizes this reading of Psalm 29:9b and suggests "Glory!" is the "king's" (sic) response. He does not develop the implications of this reading for the meaning of the midrash. Furthermore, the "houses" cannot refer to the Israelites within the contours of the midrash. Israel, is standing at Sinai! Regarding the עד sentence fragment, Petuchowski (pg. 257) suggests similar that the עד sentence fragment is an exposition on Psalm 29:9, which reads: "That is to say, the events described above continued until their houses were filled with the radiance of the *shekhinah*." However, we must recognize that the statement is more than mere exposition. It is an essential element of the narrative itself. It becomes a primary reason the nations seek out Balaam. Further, given the tremors of revelation, it is implausible that the gentiles did not *also* feel tremors.

temple" (*hekhalo*) is generalized to "their houses" (*batehem*), indicating that all gentiles experienced the divine light. The frame also situates the gentile population as the voice that proclaims "Glory!" in the psalm, which I think the midrash reads as an expression of surprise, one of the several reasons the nations go to Balaam. The experience of revelation was not limited to gentile kings, as some versions of the Balaam Midrash will suggest. Regardless, the frame, by enmeshing Psalm 29 within the narrative, treats the psalm somewhat differently from the other verses cited. Either the citation of Psalm 29:4-9 directly connects to the Balaam Midrash, while the verses from Judges simply prove that when God speaks the earth trembles; or, at the very least, the connective tissue between the frame and Balaam Midrash is a reworking of a verse from Psalm 29. In either case, Psalm 29 plays an important role in imagining or scripturally locating the scene.

As a whole, the frame plus midrash depict the following scene. As God proclaims his first commandment to the Israelites three entities issue forth: words, tremors and divine radiance. Israel experiences all three – and thus the full effect of revelation, the words, of course, being the primary component. The gentiles, however, are privy to only two of the three: namely, a soundless revelation of violent tremors and divine radiance. To them, these omens spell divine wrath. The gentiles then confer with Balaam, who informs them that the words, the substance of revelation, are currently being received by the Jews. The gentiles, upon confirming that the world will not end, walk away. As noted above, I read this as a sign of apathy, an interpretation that will become clearer when we explore other versions of the midrash.[44] It is worth noting that a midrash that underscores the lack of interest by the nations in revelation fits well within the surrounding context of this section of the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, which cites homily after homily underscoring the

[44] Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World*, 95 also reads this line as gentile recognition that Torah is for the Jews. He does not seem to read it against the extended version in the Sifre and elsewhere.

same point: the nations knew about the Torah and actively chose to ignore the chance to receive it.

Frame #2: Mekhilta R. Ishmael Amalek 3 (and Mekhilta R. Simon Yitro 18:1)[45]

Not all gentiles, however, ignore the events of Sinai. Mekhilta R. Ishmael Amalek 3 repurposes the Balaam Midrash in order to answer an important exegetical question:

> "And Jethro the priest of Midian heard" (Exod 18:1): what thing did he hear and come? R. Joshua says, "At the time when the Torah was given to Israel all the kings of the world trembled in their palaces, as it says 'in his palace, everyone says 'Glory'' (Ps 29:9b)."[46]

This frame asks and answers a key question. Exodus 18:1 begins with the claim that Jethro heard about "all that God had done to Moses and his people Israel, how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt." What specifically about the entire exodus narrative prompted Jethro? According to R. Joshua, it was revelation.

This frame, however, answers more than "what," namely, Sinaitic revelation. It also (and primarily) answers "how," namely, by Jethro's experiencing part of revelation himself. Psalm 29 once again occupies center stage – this time highlighting the relationship of kingship to Sinaitic revelation. The frame imagines Jethro as a Midainite king[47] and reads *hekhal* not as temple or

[45] These versions are almost entirely similar. The Mekhilta R. Simon differs in two places. These will be noted, although the discussion is primarily based on the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael.

[46] Translating with either Oxford or Munich. The first printing is considerably extended. It also attributes this opinion to R. Elazar against Oxford and Munich, which attributes this to R. Joshua. The first printing, however, agrees with T-S AS 82.17, which reads: "R. Joshua said, 'He heard about the war with Amalek, since it is written next to it (i.e. Exod 17:18 follows the verses that describe the war between Israel and Amalek).' R. Elazar the Moadai said, 'He heard about the giving of the Torah…'" For the fragment see Menahem Kahana, *The Genizah Fragments of the Halakhic Midrashim* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 88.

[47] Jethro's status as a Midianite ruler is present in the Targumic tradition associated with this very verse. Both Onqelous and Neofiti translate the Hebrew "priest" (כהן) as "master" (רבא). While this is not "king" (מלכא), it is not "Jewish priest" (כהנא) or "gentile priest" (כומרא). The Midianites were imagined within a nomadic context, not having "kings" but "chieftains." Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is slightly more explicit with the use of the extremely rare word "ruler" (אונוס), possibly a Greek derivate from *turanos*, "tyrant." In short, this widespread tradition of Jethro as ruler of Midian may be operating in the background of this midrash.

palace of God but rather as a palace of a gentile king. Further, the suffix marker on *hekhal* refers to the individual king and not God. Thus, the frame reads Psalm 29:9b as: "And in his palace (i.e. of each individual king) everyone (i.e. the people in the palace, or: each individual king) says "Glory" (*kavod)* (i.e. look, it's the luminous substance associated with God's presence).[48] This frame may also presuppose the luminous motif present in the Mekhilta R. Ishamel BaḤodesh 5 version of the Balaam Midrash.[49]

The Mehkilta of R. Simon adds to this discussion a line not found in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael, one that draws this narrative into the realm of legal midrash: "Perhaps they did not know for what? It is taught, 'And in his palace everyone says 'Glory!'" This line responds to the initial question, "What did Jethro hear about?" and raises the ante from "hear" to "know." It then proclaims that all the kings of the world knew something was occurring. Additionally, this seemingly superfluous line may actually imply that all of Psalm 29:9b was the object of exegetical activity. R. Joshua's claim that "all the kings trembled in their palaces" rests primarily on the word *hekhalo*. The "what" of the "perhaps" clause highlights the last part of Psalm 29:9b – *kavod*, God's glory.[50] Even at its most narrow, the midrash interprets more than just one word of Psalm 29:9.

Both Mekhiltot then transition into the Balaam Midrash. The frame sets up Jethro as a character implicitly embedded in the Balaam encounter. Jethro, among others, sought Balaam's advice. The midrash ends, as noted above, with the nations wholly uninterested in revelation. They

[48] Later iterations of this midrash will understand this as the kings singing a song, perhaps the *Qedusha*. The idea of the *kavod* of God as replacement for God is a staple of Targumic translation and appears as early as biblical texts themselves. For an exploration of these biblical passages see Shawn Zelig Aster, *The Unbeatable Light: Melammu and Its Biblical Parallels*, AOAT 384 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2012), 258–315.
[49] This assumption is warranted unless one argues that the midrash is only interested in the word *hekhalo*. This reading is too narrow, however.
[50] Indeed, I do not think this frame highlights the tremors of the earth but rather the quaking of the kings.

return home. Jethro, lingering in the background, rejects the apathy of his fellow gentiles. He seeks out Israel.

This iteration of the Balaam Midrash is neither original to this context nor reworked to fit it. A revising hand would perhaps more directly highlight the contrast between the actions of Jethro and the nations, especially at the end of our midrash. More pointedly, the Balaam Midrash begins with "all the nations of the world" seeking out Balaam. Why mention *everyone* after initially highlighting the fear of the *kings* of the world? This discrepancy is so evident that the first printing of the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael (against both the Oxford and Munich manuscripts) changes the Balaam Midrash to read: "The kings of the world" went to Balaam. It appears, therefore, that both Mekhiltot re-contextualized the Balaam Midrash without changing its contents. They answer the question of how Jethro knew about revelation and further entrench Psalm 29 in a revelatory framework. If Frame #2 and its Balaam Midrash respond to Frame #1, they argue that not all gentiles ignore God – a select few may be worthy of drawing near to Israel. The boundaries of revelation have been redrawn, even if slightly.

When we place Frame #1, Frame #2 and the Balaam Midrash next to each other we also see the value of the holistic approach I am developing. Each midrash splits and lumps. The boundaries of interpretation are simultaneously words of a verse – such as *kavod* and flood – as well as the entirety of Psalm 29. Attention to how splitting and lumping operate together offers the best vantage from which to view an ideological dispute about the place of gentiles at revelation unfold.

Frame #3: Sifre Deuteronomy 343[51]

Sifre Deuteronomy 343 contains another version of the Balaam Midrash. Unlike the examples above, it minimizes the apathy the gentiles portray towards revelation. It even stands in contrast to its own redactional context, which depicts the gentiles as actively shunning the Torah or incapable of receiving it.[52] Furthermore, this version does not merely add a new frame, but updates and reworks the body of the Balaam Midrash by changing its conclusion, simplifying the scriptural prooftexts and expanding the narrative:

> "He came from Sinai" (Deut 33:2): When God revealed himself to give the Torah, the entire world shook on its foundations, as it says: "The voice of the Lord is over the waters, the God of glory thunders, the Lord over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty" (Ps 29:3-4).
> At that time all the nations gathered unto Balaam. They said to him, "It appears to us that the Lord is destroying the world with water." Balaam said to them, "And the waters shall never again become a flood" (Gen 9:15). They said to him, "What is this sound?" He said to them, "'The Lord is giving strength to his nation' (Ps 29:11a). And what is strength if not for Torah, as it says: 'with him are strength and wisdom' (Job 12:16a)." They said, "If so, 'let the Lord bless his nation with peace' (Ps 29:11b)."[53]

This iteration of the Balaam Midrash presents a clearer and more streamlined narrative. I will first summarize the midrash and highlight the salient differences between this version and the ones explored above before unpacking its particular ideological argument. In this version of the Balaam Midrash, revelation includes an earthquake and a treacherous thunderstorm, the occasional boom being the voice of God issuing commandments to his nation. Here the exegete plays on the meaning of *qol* as both "sound"[54] and "voice."[55] The gentiles, frightened, go to Balaam. Their

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[51] For the classic study of this section of the Sifre see Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 25–48. Here he profitably explores ideological variation between the Sifre and Mekhilta on the place of gentiles in the passage that precedes the Balaam Midrash. In both versions, the gentiles are painted in a negative light, with the Sifre's rebuke of gentiles sharper than that of the Mekhilta (pgs. 32-7).

[52] In all manuscripts except Berlin, which moves it elsewhere. This reads much like its original context in BaḤodesh 5.

[53] The manuscripts here present no significant variation.

[54] Perhaps also playing off of the actual Sinaitic revelation, where the Israelite see *qolot* (Exod 20:14).

[55] I am maintaining the Biblical Hebrew distinction between voice (of person or object) and sound (i.e. 'boom' or 'hark'), the latter likely the original semantic valence of *qol* in Psalm 29.

complaints are predicated on Psalm 29:3-4, which highlights strength, thunder and water. Like in Frame #2, the homilist quotes only the verses he requires. This has an impact upon the Balaam Midrash that follows. The homilist also removes the dialogue regarding the "flood of fire," which is not represented in the verses. Further, he replaces Isaiah 54:9 with Genesis 9:15. The Genesis verse provides a more simple and direct reference to God's promise to never bring a flood. Unlike the verse in Isaiah, which mentions the "waters of Noah," Genesis 9:15 was directly promised to Noah. The simplification of scriptural citations often indicates reworking. After Balaam dismisses the possibility of another flood, the nations inquire as to the nature of the sound they hear. Balaam responds by quoting the first half of the last verse of Psalm 29: "The Lord is giving[56] strength to his nation." Unlike most other iterations of this midrash, which leave this line unelaborated, this version unpacks and contextualizes the citation. Balaam explains, "What is strength if not Torah," and then links strength to Torah via Job 12:16a,[57] "With him is strength and wisdom." Admittedly, Torah does not directly appear in Job 12:16a. Our homilist likely understood *oz* and *toshiyah* as linking strength and wisdom, with wisdom equaling Torah. It seems more likely that the equation of *oz* with Torah already exists in the exegete's mind and the cited verse demonstrates that Torah and Wisdom – equal entities – are with God.[58] The most important variation for our purposes, however, comes at the end. The nations, apprised of the situation, complete the second half of the verse, declaring: "Let the Lord bless his nation with peace."[59]

[56] Taking the imperfect form as a present continuous as opposed to future tense. Or, perhaps, it should be read as jussive: Let the Lord give.
[57] One wonders if there is any connection between this verse and the previous one, which also discusses waters.
[58] See section on *oz* below. Contra Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process*, 78. The equation of Wisdom and Torah is fairly widespread in rabbinic literature.
[59] Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 199 n.46 notes the absence of this line in the Mekhilta versions but does develop its significance.

In this midrash, the exegete imagines Psalm 29 as occurring simultaneously with revelation and even – if only just the last verse – recited by the gentiles during revelation. He constructs a scenario in which the gentiles are not directly part of revelation, but nonetheless acknowledge it and bless Israel with peace. Additionally, in contrast to the previous iterations of this midrash, the revelation the gentiles perceive is not soundless. They come to Balaam and directly ask about the "sounds" they hear. Here the gentiles stand as both part of and apart from revelation.[60] Thus, within the spectrum we are exploring, this midrash stands between Jethro's acceptance of revelation in Frame #2 and the rhetoric of openness in Frame #6. Before jumping to Frame #6, however, let us explore the lumping and splitting of Psalm 29 in sources whose ideological claims are most similar to Sifre Deuteronomy 343.

Frame #4: Midrash Tannaim Deuteronomy 33:2

The Balaam narrative as reconstructed in Midrash Tannaim resembles that of Sifre Deuteronomy 343. It works from the same lemma, "He came from Sinai," and adopts the conciliatory conclusion in which the gentiles acknowledge revelation. It differs, however, in tone and use of Psalm 29:

> "He came from Sinai," (Deut 33:2): To teach that when God revealed himself to give the Torah to Israel the entire world shook on its foundations. As it says, "the voice of the Lord on water etc…" (Ps 29:3-9).
>
> At that time, all the nations of the world gathered to Balaam son of Beor. They said to him, "Perhaps the Lord is bringing a flood unto his world to destroy it as he did with the earlier ones? 'The Lord sat on the flood' (Ps 29:10a)." He said to them, "No! Today he is ruling

[60] I disagree with Ibid., 37, who suggests that the tone here is mocking. Or, more pointedly, if read within the context of the entire *pisqa* of the Sifre with the assumption that Sifre Deuteronomy 343 tells a continuous narrative then one can detect a mocking tone as the gentiles are pushed further from revelation. If read within the context of other versions of this passage it is actually more reconciliatory. I also do not see how the nation's blessing leads to "Israel's eventual redemption from the rule of the nations," without assuming the context provided by the next (and independent enough) passage in the Sifre. In short, source-criticism must precede redaction criticism.

(*molekh*)[61] his world, today he is restoring (*meshiv*) his world, as it says, 'And the Lord sits (*vayeshev*) as king of the world' (Ps 29:10b). He is giving Torah to his nation; he is giving praise[62] to his children; good reward to those who fear him.[63] As it says, 'The Lord is giving strength to his nation' (Ps 29:11a)." They responded, "If so, 'Let the Lord bless his nation with peace' (Ps 29:11b)."

Like Sifre Deuteronomy, Midrash Tannaim presents a simplified version of the Balaam narrative. Both remove the additional discourse on "flood of fire" and several scriptural citations. They differ, primarily, in their treatment of Psalm 29. Sifre Deuteronomy cites less verses from Psalm 29 than other iterations of the Balaam Midrash, but at the same time still retains the role of Psalm 29 as an ideological lodestone. Midrash Tannaim, by contrast, only cites Psalm 29, and more of it than other versions of the Balaam Midrash. Thus, where the frame of the Sifre quotes only Psalm 29:3-4 – verses that directly refer to water and power – Midrash Tannaim cites the entirety of vv. 3-9. Other iterations of the Balaam Midrash also quote vv. 3-9, and thus this fact alone cannot serve as evidence for the significance of the extended use of Psalm 29 by Midrash Tannaim. The change in the core Balaam Midrash to include meaningful use of v. 10b provides another clue. Of all the iterations of the Balaam Midrash explored in this chapter, only Midrash Tannaim has Balaam respond to the anxiety of another flood with the line:[64] "Today he is ruling his world, today he is restoring (*meshiv*) his world, as it says 'And the Lord sits as king of the world'[65] (Ps 29:10b)."

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[61] The form מולך as a participle of מלך is quite rare, appearing mostly in *piyyut* and Late Midrash. This may be a linguistic indicator for the lateness of this midrash or line. Alternatively, מולך may just be formed as a participle on the image of משיב. Both ישב and מלך are part of Palms 29:10b. Once the homilist cast ישב in participle form he did so for מלך. The Qal is chosen because Hifil would signify the coronation of another.

[62] It is entirely possible that this is a bilingual pun. שבח does mean praise, but in Aramaic it may also mean "glory," i.e. the divine presence. Considering this is a scene depicting revelation, it is possible to read this line as: "God is giving divine presence to his children."

[63] This triple phrase almost seems liturgical, and indeed parts of it are. The phrase "good reward to those who fear him" appears in several genizah fragments for the opening of *Pesuqe DeZimra*. Indeed, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, 1096 the line before reads: "Blessed be the one who gave the Torah to his nation." This may be another interesting case of the intersection between liturgy and interpretation. Petuchowski, "A Sermon on Psalm 29," 261 suggests that the formula is conscious effort to mirror biblical parallelism. As this does not seem to be a feature elsewhere employed in the Balaam Midrash another explanation would be better.

[64] However, it must be noted that Hoffman places this in small print, and thus it may truly be late. Although the lack of the Job prooftext still buttresses the argument.

[65] Translating in midrashic sense in which עולם means world and not just eternity.

Instead of retorting with a verse from Genesis or Isaiah – as in the examples above – the homilist has Balaam keep to Psalm 29 and creates an entirely new line of dialogue. The question supported by the first half of the verse 10, "Perhaps the Lord is bringing a flood," is answered in the second half of the verse, "God sits as king of the world." Something else is happening; namely, revelation. At the very least, this iteration of the Balaam narrative signals the central role of Psalm 29 in depicting this drama. Without Psalm 29, this tale could not be told. At the same time that the homilist splits Psalm 29 into interpretive bits he lumps them within a larger narrative framework.

Frame #5: Mekhilta R. Simon, Yitro 19:16[66]

If Midrash Tannaim takes a limiting approach, our next example exhibits the inverse, painting the Balaam Midrash in as ornate a manner as possible, combining elements found in almost every iteration explored above. Ideologically, it retains the same overall thrust as Midrash Tannaim and Sifre Deuteronomy 343. The gentiles are made aware of revelation and bless Israel. The frame does not realign the core Balaam Midrash as much as heighten its drama by depicting a scene of revelation that cannot be ignored.

In order to demonstrate the composite nature of this version I will employ a series of indicators in the following translation: italics signify traditions that align uniquely with Sifre Deuteronomy 343; a single underline with those related to Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5; a double underline with Mekhilta R. Ishamel BaḤodesh 1; a bold underline for Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 9; bold with features exclusive to this midrash; and unmarked with material common to almost every iteration:

[66] Epstein-Melamed 142. It is worth noting, however, that the entire homily is in small print in the Epstiein-Melamed edition.

> Perhaps the Torah was given silently? We learn, "There was sounds and lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain" (Exod 19:16). Sounds and sounds of sound, and lightning of lightnings upon lightnings. **Sounds distinct from one another, and lightning distinct from one another.** And thus it also says, "The voice of the Lord…" (Ps 29:3-9). **The verse teaches that the day of the giving of the Torah there were clouds, lightning and rainfall**.[67] And thus it says, "when you went out from Seir…" (Judg 5:4). **And it says, "The crash of your thunder the whirlwind, your lightnings lit the world, the earth trembled and shook" (Ps 77:19).**
>
> All the nations of the world gathered unto Balaam son of Beor and said to him, "It appears that God is destroying his world with water, as it says of the matter, 'The Lord sat on the flood' (Ps 29:10)." He said to them, "Idiots, it was already sworn that he would not bring a flood to the world, as it says of the matter, 'For the waters of Noah…' (Isa 44:9)." They said to him, "Certainly a flood of water he will not bring but perhaps he will bring a flood of fire?" He said to them, "He will bring neither a flood of water nor of fire." *They responded, "So what is this voice?"* He said, "He is giving Torah to his people, as it says, 'The Lord is giving strength to his people' (Ps 29:11a*), and what is strength if not Torah, as it says, 'With him is strength and understanding' (Job 12:16)." They said to him, "If so, 'let the Lord bless his nation with peace' (Ps 29:11b)."*[68]

The composite (and thus likely secondary) nature of this midrash is evident. It splices multiple earlier sources into the most detailed version of the narrative available. The baroque nature of this iteration of the Balaam Midrash is manifest not only in recombination, but also in addition. The homilist adds at least two new elements, both of which accentuate the unavoidability of experiencing some part of revelation. He creates a new line to introduce Judges 5:4 and adds Psalm 77:19 as a prooftext. The additional line, "The verse teaches that the day of the giving of the Torah there were clouds, lightning and rainfall" not only introduces two prooftexts, but also highlights three elements: clouds, lightning and torrential rain. Each element is simultaneously present in the combined prooftexts and in the revelatory experience. This added line further connects Scripture about revelation and its experience by simplifying the Hebrew: the common *ananim* (clouds)

[67] The phrase ירידת גשמים seems to only appear in Amoraic literature.

[68] Note that the final response of the gentiles does not contain a scriptural citation formula. The second half of Psalm 29:11 is imagined as the direct speech of those present.

replaces the uncommon *avim* (clouds), and *yeridat geshamim* (rainfall) replaces the more poetic *naṭaf*.

The impulse to add details is exhibited in the manuscript tradition of this version. The best Midrash HaGadol manuscript, מ[0] in the Epstein-Melamed edition, adds another entire line: "And there was something like the sound of a ram's horn that was heard in the atmosphere, as it says, 'And a very strong blast of a ram's horn' (Exod 19:16), until the entire world trembled." This line adds yet another detail to revelation: horn blasts. In addition to highlighting the unavoidability of revelation, it also creates an inclusio. The Balaam Midrash here in Mekh. R. Simon Yitro opened with Exodus 19:16 and now concludes with the same verse.

This version of the Balaam Midrash and that reconstructed in Midrash Tannaim present two sides of the same coin. Both, I argue, fall within the same ideological band of the spectrum we are exploring. Nonetheless, they tell their tale in radically different manners. The conservatism of Midrash Tannaim and the exuberance of Mekhilta R. Simon Yitro are best witnessed in light of one another. Together they exemplify the centrality of Psalm 29 to the story of gentiles at revelation. Narrative change need not be ideologically significant. This is not the case, however, for the following example.

Frame #6: Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1

The Balaam Midrash appears for a third time in the Mekhitla of R. Ishmael, where it is both referenced and reworked. It tells a different story about gentiles and the boundaries of revelation, one that places gentiles as close to revelation as possible:[69]

[69] Translating according to Vatican.

> "And they camped in the wilderness" (Exod 19:2): The Torah was given publicly,[70] openly, and in a free place. For if the Torah was given in the land of Israel, they (i.e. the Israelites) would say to the nations of the world: "You do not have a portion in it." Rather, the Torah was given in the desert, publicly, openly and in a free place; anyone who wants to accept it, come and accept it.[71] Perhaps it was given at night? It says, "day"[72] as it says: "On the morning of the third day" (Exod 19:16). Perhaps it was given in silence? It says, "There was thunder and lightning" (Exod 19:16). Perhaps no one heard the sound? It says, "The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty, the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars, the voice of the Lord flashes flames of fire, the voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness, the voice of the Lord causes deer to calve, the Lord sat on a Flood..." (Ps 29:4-10).[73]
>
> Balaam said to all those standing, "God is giving strength to his nation" (Ps 29:11a). They praised and said, "Let the Lord bless his nation with peace" (Ps 29:11b).[74]

A simple question triggers this homily: If the Israelites belong in the land of Israel, why deliver the Torah in the wilderness? Why not, for example, on Mt. Moriah, the future site of the temple?[75] The homilist answers: so that the Jews could not, *ab initio*, dispossess the gentiles of revelation. The Torah could have been given to anyone, whoever would come and accept it. The homilist underscores this point with the bilingual phrase: "publicly (*demos* –Greek*)*, openly (*parhesiah* – Greek) and in a free place (*mekom hefker* – Hebrew)."[76] Additionally, through interpretation of Exodus 19:16 and Psalm 29, he posits that revelation occurred during the day and was loud enough for all to hear. He confirms this last statement by summarizing and revising the Balaam Midrash.

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[70] Oxford omits דימוס.

[71] Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1 combines a kernel of the Balaam Midrash with another midrash found in Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5. It is possible that the homilist actively reworks and combines two originally distinct units. It would make this unit secondary. The version in Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5 places the burden of rejection on the gentiles: "Why was the Torah not given in Israel? So that *the gentiles will not have opening* to say 'The Torah was given in their land and therefore we did not accept it upon ourselves'… therefore the Torah was given in the desert, publically and openly in a place belonging to no one."

[72] Oxford omits יום.

[73] While not spelled out, I am confident that the entire verse 10 is at play. It would be akin to the way the citations above only cite the first part of *qol* verses but likely imply the entire verse.

[74] Oxford omits the response of the gentiles, but clearly signals that something is supposed to be there by using וג׳. This was clearly a case of a copyist who cut short his labors because he felt the narrative was already well-known. The line appears in both Munich and Vatican.

[75] Indeed, later midrashim will combine these two mountains. See Mid. Ps. 87.

[76] On the function of the Greek as a sign of pluralism in this passage see Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World*, 36–39.

Before turning to the ideological claims of the midrash, it is important to note the central role of Psalm 29. Once again, the near entirety of the psalm runs woof and warp through the narrative of revelation. The exegete weaves it into the Sinai experience, threading it in conjunction with verses actually depicting revelation. The important strand, however, is not merely Psalm 29:9b, as in the examples above, but rather each verse of Psalm 29:4-10. The constant "booms" of revelation (vv.4-9), the *qol* of each verse, attest to the fact that no one could ignore the spectacle, namely, that God sits enthroned as king of the world (v.10) ready to deliver his law. Even when quoting Psalm 29 in large chunks, however, most earlier iterations of the midrash did not include v.10.

Frame #6 indicates the homilist's open ideological disposition. We may best view this midrash's claim by comparing it to Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5, which parallels the beginning of the Frame #6 and argues that non-Jews were made aware of revelation so that they would be unable to plead ignorance: "Why was the Torah not given in the land of Israel? *So that the gentiles will not have opening to say* 'The Torah was given in their land and therefore we did not accept it upon ourselves.'" Frame #6 shifts that logic: the Torah was given publically and not in the land of Israel *so that the Jews could not divest the nations of it*. Anyone who wishes to accept the Torah could have.[77]

This argument continues in the Balaam Midrash, which clearly depends on the previous iterations discussed above. The homilist deploys the Balaam Midrash in summary, likely assuming prior knowledge of its entirety. Nonetheless, the Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1 iteration of the Balaam Midrash does not replicate the versions found in the other Mekhilta of R. Ishamel versions

[77] Lingering in the background, of course, is the fact that non-Jews did not ultimately accept revelation. Only a deeply cynical reading, however, would completely undermine its theoretical openness.

in either wording or tone. In those iterations, the nations walk away uninterested. The version of the Balaam Midrash currently under discussion more closely mirrors that found in the Sifre, where the gentiles acknowledge and sanction revelation. Unlike the Sifre version, however, here the gentiles do not respond with "if so" (*im ken*), but the much more effusive "they praised" (*shivḥu*). This iteration of the Balaam Midrash clearly falls at one end of the spectrum we are exploring. In a discourse about gentiles and the boundaries of revelation it erects the least number of obstacles between Jew and non-Jew. While the gentiles ultimately were not subject to revelation at Sinai, our homilist appears to leave open the possibility of accepting Torah for his contemporary gentiles.

The Balaam Midrash: Summary of Ideological Variation

Having explored every Tannaitic version of the Balaam Midrash, we are now capable of summarizing its main ideological variations and reconstructing – from the vantage of this midrash – a live issue within the Tannaitic period: the place of gentiles and the boundaries of revelation. At the most limiting end of the spectrum lies Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5. It combines Psalm 29 with other verses about revelation and paints a scene that makes partial experience of revelation inevitable. The gentiles, seeking Balaam, are told about the meaning of their experience during revelation and, once informed, ignore it. This midrash combines with the general context of BaḤodesh 5 to emphasize (and imagine) the gentiles as apathetic towards revelation. It is the strongest version of an ideological statement that distances gentiles from revelation. Mekhilta R. Ishmael Amalek 3 retains the body of the Balaam Midrash found in Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 5, but adds a frame that reworks its ideological conclusions. It attempts to answer the question of how Jethro found out about revelation. It implicitly imagines him as a foil to all other gentiles. They reject revelation and turn home. He turns to Moses. Sifre Deuteronomy 343, Midrash

Tannaim Deuteronomy 33:3, and Mekhilta R. Simon Yitro present an approach at the middle of the spectrum. They rework both the frame and body of the Balaam Midrash and all conclude with a line that signals gentile acknowledgement of revelation. In fact, Psalm 29:11b, "Let the Lord bless his nation with peace," is not cited as a prooftext, but rather placed *directly* in the mouth of the gentiles. Recitation of Psalm 29:11b replaces the more apathetic, "And everyone returned to his place." Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1 paraphrases the Balaam Midrash, changes its ending, and adds a frame that places it at the far end of the spectrum. It imagines gentiles as close to revelation and signals that the place of revelation was accessible to all so that *Jews* may not dispossess gentiles.

The various versions of the Balaam Midrash not only demonstrate the multiplicity of rabbinic opinions on the boundaries of revelation, but also the vitality of Psalm 29 in thinking about the issue. Psalm 29 constitutes the trunk of this midrash, without which the narrative could not blossom. Various verses, however, cycle in and out.[78] In total, nearly the entirety of Psalm 29 is cited in the Balaam Midrashim. We need not privilege splitting over lumping or lumping over splitting in thinking about rabbinic scholastic reading. At the same time that particular verses – or parts of verses – of Psalm 29 are unpacked and read 'atomistically,' the entire psalm collectively operates as a stable discursive framework. Psalm 29 as a whole became a useful locus to the Tannaim for thinking about revelation. These early sages could have interpreted Psalm 29 in numerous ways, but, as a whole, they took it as referring to the *boundaries* of revelation.

[78] Mekh. R. Ishamel BaḤodesh 5: Psalm 29:4-9, 10a, 12a; Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1: 29:4-11; Mekh. R. Ishmael Amalek 3: Psalm 29:9-11a; Mekh. R. Simon Yitro 18:1: Psalm 29:9-11a; Mekh. R. Simon Yitro 19:16: Psalm 29:3-9, 10, 11; Mid. Tan. Deuteronomy 33:2 Psalm 29:3-9, 10, 11; Sifre Deuteronomy 343: 29:3-4, 11. In total, every verse of Psalm 29 except the first two appears in one or more of the above sources.

Other Tannaitic Midrashim Involving Psalm 29 and Revelation

So far we have discussed the growth and development of one particular midrash. While saturated with Psalm 29, it alone cannot prove that early rabbis lumped this psalm into a discourse about revelation. The following examples, unrelated to the Balaam Midrash, clearly depict the Tannaim thinking with Psalm 29 about various aspects of revelation. Most of the examples below continue to operate within the framework of the boundaries of revelation, even if they discard the particular question about the place of gentiles.

Sifre Deuteronomy 343

The tension between exclusivity and inclusivity, and thus the boundaries of revelation, are at play in another midrash connected to Psalm 29. It, too, appears in Sifre Deuteronomy 343:[79]

> "From his right the fire of the law to them" (Deut 33:2): When the saying (i.e. of one of the Ten Commandments) went out from the mouth of God, it went out from the right side of God[80] to the left of Israel and encircled the Israelite camp 12 *mil* by 12 *mil*,[81] and it returned from the right of Israel to the left of God. God took it in his right hand and inscribed it unto the tablet, and his voice (or: its voice) would go from one end of the world to the other, as it is written, "The voice of God hews out flames of fire" (Ps 29:7).[82]

This midrash connects Psalm 29:7 and Deuteronomy 33:2 in order to depict the creation of the Tablets of the Law. It reads Deuteronomy 33:2 closely and describes how a fire of the words of

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[79] Translating from T-S C 2.21. See fragment in Kahana, *The Genizah Fragments of the Halakhic Midrashim*, 322.

[80] For the claim that אשדת indeed means "from his right, fire flew to them" see Richard C. Steiner, "דָּת and עַיִן: Two Verbs Masquerading as Nouns in Moses' Blessing (Deuteronomy 33:2, 28)," *JBL* 115 (1996): 693–99. For an attempt to trace this interpretation in Palestinian Targum see Richard C. Steiner and Sid Z. Leiman, "The Lost Meaning of Deuteronomy 33:2 as Preserved in the Palestinian Targum to the Decalogue," in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. Jeffrey H. Tigay et al. (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 157–66. For a comparison between our Sifre and the Targum see pgs. 161-2.

[81] This seems to be the typological distance of the Israelite camp. See the end of Sifre Deuteronomy 344. For further examples see Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 207 n.90.

[82] Michael A. Fishbane, "Midrash and the Nature of Scripture," in *Jewish Hermeneutical Theology*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Aaron Hughes, LCJP 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 81 claims that this narrative is "an old tradition." I am unsure why as he provides no philological or historical justification for this claim. I suppose theology plays by different rules.

Law (lit. *esh + dat*) would issue forth from the mouth of God and encircle the Israelite camp. The exegete also draws on Psalm 29:7 in crafting the scene. He plays off "hew" (*ḥatzav*) and depicts God inscribing the Tablets with a fiery utterance; although, admittedly, the midrash uses the more common verb "hew" (*ḥaqaq*). At that moment, "its voice," presumably the sound of inscription,[83] would go from one end of the world to another. Here the exegete may actually be reading the *qol* of Psalm 29:7 as "hark" instead of "voice," thus interpreting Psalm 29:7 as: "Hark (or: Boom), God is inscribing [the Tablets] with [commandments transmuted into a pen of] flames of fire".[84]

Along with the careful use of Psalm 29, this passage reflects an internal tension between inclusivity and exclusivity. The flame of speech encircles only the Israelite camp, but its sound goes from one end of the world to another.[85] As seen above, the ability of God's voice (or a voice) to travel long distances constitutes a basic motif common to most midrashim that read Psalm 29 as revelation. The boundaries of revelation are once again at play, and, in this midrash, so is the place of gentiles. They either hear the commandment secondarily, or simply a nondescript but frightening thunderous clap. This latter option best fits a synchronic redaction perspective, which would place this midrash in conversation with the Sifre Balaam Midrash found in the same section. The nations would hear strange sounds and be unable to discern their contents. Regardless, our midrash demonstrates that the boundaries of revelation and Psalm 29 are linked and at play beyond the Balaam Midrash.

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[83] The other option is to read the sound as the voice of the Lord, perhaps the commandment itself.

[84] I do not think it is "voice" because we have the imagery of God taking the flames and then the boom (*qol*) follows afterwards. It may be possible to read *qol* here in the sense of a שמועה.

[85] Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 45 also notes this tension as it pertains to gentiles, but focuses more on the midrash's claim that Israel received the commandments collectively in contrast to other midrashim that talk about individual reception. As expected, Fraade is more interested in the internal context of the Sifre while my analysis focuses on the role of Psalm 29.

Mekhilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 9

An alternative – and less elaborate – depiction of revelation appears in Mehkilta R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 9. In explaining the verse, "And the entire nation *saw* the sounds," (Exod 20:14) the Mekhilta cites two opinions, one attributed to R. Ishmael and one attributed to R. Akiva. According to R. Akiva, "They saw and *heard* that which was seen. They saw a word (*davar*) of fire go forth from the mouth of God and be engraved (*neḥtzav*) on the Tablets, as it says, 'The voice of the Lord hews flames of fire' (Ps 29:7)."[86] According to R. Akiva, Israel actually saw what can normally only be heard. They witnessed the flaming word of God being engraved on the Tablets. This midrash reads the Psalm 29:7 as: "The sound of the Lord's voice carves out the Tablets in fiery flames."[87] R. Akiva reads Psalm 29 through lens of revelation and fractures the limits and boundaries between the senses of sight and sound.[88] Note that R. Akiva's interpretation requires Psalm 29:7. The novel sensory experience in Exodus 20:14 is the ability to see sounds. In R. Akiva's interpretation of Psalm 29:7, however, it is the ability to hear sights, which is best exemplified by the imagery of a voice carving with a flaming pen. Regardless, that revelation need not be a sense-bending experience and that Exodus 20:14 need not be read to imply that Israel saw the words of God transmuted into visible flames of fire receives confirmation in the position of R. Ishmael. He reads, "And the entire nation saw the sounds" as, "They saw that which was seen and heard that which was heard." R. Ishmael does not quote a verse from Psalm 29 or any other part

[86] All the early manuscripts have the phrase ואין את הקולות. This is a minor corruption with the ר dropping from רואין. I do not see how this midrash can make sense with ואין.

[87] Note here that חצב is used in our midrash, which may suggest that Ps 29:7 is more than just a prooftext. It is the lexical source material of the midrash. The midrash could have used the more common חקק, which is precisely what happens in the Sifre Deuteronomy 343 passage discussed above.

[88] In this instance it is R. Ishmael who needs to force the verse to read against its 'plain sense.' On the interplay between sight and sound at revelation in general see Fraade, "Hearing and Seeing at Sinai," 501–22. He discusses this source on pp. 505-8. See Mekh. R. Simon Exod 20:15 for another interpretation of thunder that can be seen. Perhaps it is noteworthy that the Mekh. of R. Simon is an Akivan midrash. See Kahana, "The Halakhic Midrashim," 72.

of Scripture. Once again, at least according to R. Akiva, Psalm 29 is enmeshed in a discourse about the boundaries of revelation – this time collapsing the borders between senses.

The adjacent midrash in the Mekhilta also discusses Psalm 29:7 and the boundaries of revelation:

> "And All the People Saw the Thunderings (*qolot*) and the Lightnings (*lapidim*)," the thundering of thunders upon thunders and the lightning of lightnings upon lightnings. But how many thunderings were there and how many lightnings were there? It is simply this: They were heard by each man according to his capacity (*lefi koḥo*), as it is said: "The voice of the Lord was heard according to the strength (*bakoaḥ*)" (Ps 29:4).[89]

The exegete is troubled by the plural of "thunder" (*qolot*).[90] Why not singular *qol* as in the continuation of the verse, "and the sound (*qol*) of the ram's horn?"[91] The plurals, in his opinion, leave room open for the possibility of multiple types of thunders and lightnings. In this midrash, "man is the measure of all thing" in so much as revelation is limited by a person's individual capacity. Once again, Psalm 29 plays an important role in substantiating this interpretation. Nearly

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[89] Using Lauterbach's translation. On the issues presented by this passage within an ancient Israelite context see Azzan Yadin, "קול as Hypostasis in the Hebrew Bible," *JBL* 122 (2003): 620–21.

[90] Fraade, "Rabbinic Polysemy," 456 also notes that the exegete is interested in the plurals. Instead of explaining why they are problematic, he claims our exegete uses them to thematize interpretive polysemy in the context of revelation. If anything, Psalm 29 affirms that the voice is simply *one* "voice." It is humans who are fragmented. If this source tells us anything about polysemy it certainly does not crown it with acceptance. If anything, this source is better read within the context of the boundaries of revelation. In short, I agree with Yadin-Israel's critique that "hearing with one's capacity has nothing to do with divine polysemy." Azzan Yadin-Israel, "Rabbinic Polysemy: A Response to Steven Fraade," *AJS Review* 38 (2014): 135. See also the critique of Fraade's use of this example in Richard Hidary, *Dispute for the Sake of Heaven: Legal Pluralism in the Talmud*, BJS 353 (Providence, R.I: Brown Judaic Studies, 2010), 20 n.71. Hidary suggests that "this midrash does not necessarily reflect multiple conflicting interpretations but rather deeper or more superficial understandings of the single message of the voice." Fraade responds that Yadin-Israel ignores the midrash that follows, which claims Israel interpreted the commandment as soon as they heard it and thus we are talking about interpretive polysemy. Steven D Fraade, "Response to Azzan Yadin-Israel on Rabbinic Polysemy: Do They 'Preach' What They Practice?," *AJS Review* 38 (2014): 352. That our midrash must be read in light of another midrash the follows seems acceptable from a redactional perspective but problematic from a source-critical one. Why must one the meaning of one independent midrash be contingent on another independent midrash simply due to an editorial seam? I must make clear that I am not staking a claim in the debate about rabbinic polysemy. That would fall beyond the scope of this chapter. Rather, my concerns are more local, namely, the meaning of our source.

[91] One wonders if any reader had the same problem with לפיד. Why not the singular of לפיד? Perhaps it was built on the same assumption as קול.

every other exegetical comment about revelation employing Psalm 29:4 imagines the "strength" as that of God – the same strength that allows God's voice to be heard all around the world. The exegete reads the verse as inward-facing: "The voice of God (i.e. revelation) by strength (i.e. capacity of the individual)."[92] Psalm 29 is once again embedded in a discourse about the boundaries of revelation – this time highlighting the flexible borders between revelation and human will.

Sifra Dibbura Denedava 1

The opening chapter of the Sifra attempts to systematically demonstrate that Moses was the sole bearer of continued revelation after Sinai. It reads revelation through Psalm 29 and draws the narrowest boundary around its experience. After arguing that only Moses was privy to hear the "voice" (*qol*), the Sifra asserts that this sound would not exit the Tent of Meeting. In rejecting the possibility that perhaps this was because the voice was weak, the Sifra notes:

> But it says, "And he heard the voice speaking to him" (Num 7:89). It does not say "a voice," but rather "the voice," the one that is explained in the Writings (*ketuvim*, i.e. the final section of the rabbinic tripartite Bible.). And what is the voice expounded upon the Writings? "The voice of the Lord with strength, voice of the Lord with majesty, the voice of the Lord smashes cedars, the Lord smashes the cedars of Lebanon, the voice of the Lord hews with flames of fire" (Ps 29:4-7).[93] If so, why does the verse say, "From the Tent of Meeting"? To show that the voice stopped and did not leave the Tent of Meeting.

According to the Sifra, the voice that Moses heard during his meetings with God was the same strong voice of revelation, the same sound that could smash cedars and hew flames of fire. The homilist takes the identification of the "voices" of Psalm 29 as that of God at revelation for granted. This 'obvious' identification is triggered by a phrase that appears only twice in classical rabbinic literature: "to be expounded upon in the Writings."[94] This locution seems to indicate that vital

[92] The ב is not "with" but "by" here.
[93] Why stop at v.7 and not include the verse 8?
[94] The other is Sifre Numbers 143. In this passage as well something is taken for granted, namely that Moses is the voice of the entire Psalm 90 and that the words of Moses in Psalm 90 and shed light on a passage in the Pentateuch.

contextualization can be located only in another portion of Scripture. The other place where this phrase appears is prefaced by: "And even though it is not written in the Torah." In our case, the phrase indicates that the context of voice = revelation, while not obvious from Numbers 7:89, is made clear when read through Psalm 29, a psalm well-saturated with revelatory meaning. These voices, unlike those explored earlier, are heard by Moses alone and stop at the Tent of Meeting. Perhaps one could extrapolate that according to the Sifra any time "the voice" appears it refers to the same voice of Psalm 29?[95] Regardless, Psalm 29 once again appears within the discursive context of placing boundaries on revelation.

Sifre Deuteronomy 319

One more example from Tananitic midrash will demonstrate that early rabbinic readers were thinking of Psalm 29 in large chunks. This passage may not be tethered to revelation, but in light of our previous discussion it is suggestive. In listing various interpretations of Deuteronomy 32:18b: "And you forgot the Lord that *meḥolelekha,*" Sifre Deuteronomy 319 quotes an opinion attributed to R. Nehemiah: "That he makes you profane (*ḥullin*) in the eyes of the entire world when you are not keeping the Torah, as it says, 'The voice of the Lord on water' until 'The voice of the Lord makes hinds impure (*ḥll*)'[96] (Ps 29:3-9a)." The homilist reads the *ḥll* of Psalm 29:9 and Deuteronomy 32:18 as "to profane." God makes Israel impure when Israel forsakes the Torah. The hind stands in as a metaphor for Israel. The target verse of this midrash is clearly Psalm 29:9. Every manuscript available to me, however, records the phrase, "'The voice of the Lord on water'

[95] The boundaries of revelation here are set within the framework of the first chapter of the Sifra. Psalm 29 is used to think with, but does not function as the primary locus for a discussion, unlike the Balaam Midrash. In other words, this section of the Sifra would expound upon the boundaries of revelation anyways. It does, however, use Psalm 29 in thinking about and creating the borders.

[96] Translating midrashically, it actually does say עד. No significant manuscript variants.

until 'The voice of the Lord makes hinds impure.'" The homilist was clearly thinking – or at least citing – in chunks.

Are there any undertones of revelation in this midrash? Of all the interpretations offered of Deuteronomy 32:18b, only that of R. Nehemiah combines Torah observance, "nations of the world," and direct citation of Psalm 29.[97] In light of the string citation of Psalm 29, and the pervasive association of Psalm 29's "voice" with revelation, R. Nehemiah, a fourth generation Tanna, may have been exposed to the kinds of exegesis explored above. For R. Nehemiah (among others) what distinguishes Jews from non-Jews, what makes Jews holy, is the observance of the Torah commandments delivered through revelation. He may read Psalm 29:9a as: "The voice of God (i.e. revelation) profanes hinds (i.e. Israel) [if the commandments are improperly kept]." Namely, the same voice that sanctifies Israel can make them profane. Alternatively, this passage may not invoke revelation at all. It may simply read two instances of the root *ḥll* in light of one another. We must constantly remember that interpretive trends do not require uniformity. For early rabbinic readers, Psalm 29 could mean many things. Revelation is undeniably the thickest interpretive strand woven around this psalm, but certainly not the only one. Revelation aside, our example still exemplifies the trend of thinking – or at the very least quoting – in large units.

The Power of Torah: The Development of a Symbolic Equivalence

The remaining examples that connect Psalm 29 to revelation in Tannaitic midrash are quotations of Psalm 29:11. Each instance adduces Psalm 29:11 as a prooftext to establish that

[97] It must be noted, however, that the anonymous דבר אחר that precedes R. Nehemiah also talks about gentiles and quotes "I am the Lord your God," a verse intimately connected with revelation at Sinai. Of course, this דבר אחר might be chronologically later even if prior in redaction.

"strength" (*oz*) means Torah.[98] This symbolic replacement of *oz* with Torah becomes commonplace after the Tannaitic period. Even as the edifice of Psalm 29 as a discourse about revelation crumbles in later periods, this choice brick is placed in newer and more elaborate structures. In this section I will argue that the symbolic equation initially developed within the framework of thinking about Psalm 29 *in toto* as a psalm about revelation. More particularly, I contend that it developed within the confines of the Balaam Midrash.

The earliest coupling of strength and Torah does not appear in Tannaitic literature, but in the Dead Sea Scrolls. 11QPs[a] XVIII, 13 reads: "Their meditation is on the Law of the Most High / their words on making known his might (*uzzo*)."[99] This line comes from the non-MT Psalm 152. Naming this instance as the origin of the symbolic equivalence within rabbinic literature is implausible without either further evidence that the rabbis were directly aware of this composition[100] or additional examples of this coupling in Second Temple literature.[101] One example does not constitute a trend. Furthermore, even if additional examples within Second Temple literature exist, we must still be wary of positing them as the *genetic* origin of the equation in

[98] Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3; Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 9; Sifre Numbers 42.
[99] Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPsa)*, 64–65.
[100] Ample evidence demonstrates awareness of texts like Ben Sira. See Labendz, "The Book of Ben Sira in Rabbinic Literature." On Bel and the Dragon see Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, trans. Jacqueline S. Teitelbaum (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1999), 99–101. On 2nd Temple works appearing in later rabbinic literature see Martha Himmelfarb, "Some Echoes of Jubilees in Medieval Hebrew Literature," in *Between Temple and Torah: Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and beyond*, TSAJ 151 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 351–70; Martha Himmelfarb, "R. Moses the Preacher and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Between Temple and Torah: Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and beyond*, TSAJ 151 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 329–49.
[101] A search for *oz* using the Dead Sea Scroll Electronic Library reveals no other instance in which *oz* directly couples with Torah. It also more often appears as an adjective or an adverb than a noun. There are two example in which *oz* appears close to a word with legal nuances. Such examples include 1QS X:24: ומשפט עוז לצדקת אל and 4Q403 1 I:24-5]וברך ל[כול מרימי משפטיו בש[בעה דב]רי פלא למגני עוז: These data cannot be used as evidence for the symbolic equivalence of Torah with *oz*. Wisdom also appears close to *oz* in 11Q5 XVIII:1-6, but here wisdom makes known God's עוזו ותפארתו. A rabbi could no doubt read this as Torah, but we must not force this reading back unto a Second Temple text.

rabbinic thought. We cannot rely on the vagaries of 'in the air metaphors' or oral transmission to make historical claims.[102]

The genesis of strength as a symbol for Torah in rabbinic thought derives from rabbinic exegesis in general, and from the interpretation of Psalm 29 in particular.[103] The word *oz* appears numerous times in the Bible.[104] Many verses beyond Psalm 29:11 contain an *oz* that could readily be developed as a symbol for Torah, but are not cited in classical rabbinic literature as pertaining to Torah. Some of them even contain an *oz* that is particularly well-suited to be read as "Torah." Take Psalm 68:29 as an example. It reads: "Your God has commanded (*tzivvah*) your strength (*uzzekha*), the strength (*uzzah*) of God that you have made for us." Any rabbinic reader could have easily picked up on "command" and "made for us" and read "strength" as Torah. No rabbi – at least according to our extant evidence – does so. Some verses hospitable to the symbolic replacement of *oz* with Torah even appear in Tannaitic literature but are not interpreted in such a manner.[105] Psalm 62:12 provides the best example of this road not taken. It reads: "God spoke once,

[102] For further on this claim see the final two chapters of this dissertation.

[103] Thus, I disagree with Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process*, 78. He claims *oz* as Torah comes from either Psalm 78:61 or Psalm 132:8. As we will see, early rabbis simply did not use these verses in this manner. His argument from the Targum ignores the fact that Targum Psalms is clearly not Tannaitic.

[104] Judges 5:21; 9:51; 2 Samuel 6:14; Isaiah 12:2, 26:1, 45:24; Jeremiah 48:17, 51:53; Ezekiel 19:11, 12, 14, 24:21, 26:11, 30:6, 33:28; Amos 3:11; Micah 5:3; Psalm 21:14, 30:8, 46:2, 59:10, 17,18; 61:4, 62:8, 63:3; 68:29, 71:7, 77:15, 81:2, 86:16, 89:11, 90:11, 93:1, 96:7, 105:4, 110:2, 118:14, 132:8, 138:3, 140:8, 150:1; Proverbs 10:15, 14:26, 18:10,11; 18:19, 24:5, 31:17; Job 26:2, 41:14; Ecclesiastes 8:1; Ezra 8:22; 1 Chronicles 13:8, 16:11, 27, 28; 2 Chronicles 30:21.

[105] These include: Leviticus 26:19 (Sifre Deuteronomy 43), 1 Samuel 2:10 (Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3 and 9); Isaiah 49:5 (Sifre Deuteronomy 27), 51:9 (Mekh. R. Ishmael BeShallaḥ 4), 62:8 (Mekh. R Ishmael Shirata 9); Jeremiah 16:19 (Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3 and 8), Ezekiel 30:18 (Mekh. R Ishmael Shirata 5); Habakkuk 3:4 (Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 1. The context of this midrash is clearly one of revelation, giving the Torah and gentile exclusion. Although it quotes the full verses 3-6, which no doubt includes the *oz* of Habakkuk 3:4, it does not directly read or imply *oz* to be Torah.) Psalm 8:3 (t. Soṭah 6:2), 21:2 (Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3 and 9), Psalm 28:7 (Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3, Midrash Tannaim [ed. Hoffman], 222), Psalms 62:12 (Mekh. R. Ishamel Shirata 8, BaḤodesh 7, Sifre Numbers 42, 102, 111 and Sifre Deuteronomy 233. Each of these instances reads the verse within a context of revelation, but do not comment on *oz* as Torah. They are solely interested in the first half of the verse, "God spoke one, which I have heard as two." One can infer that the *oz* of "for power is the Lord's" is Torah, but none of these sources makes that explicit or strongly implied.), Psalms 68:35 (Mekh. R. Ishmael BeShallaḥ 6, but only appears in first printing), Psalm 74:13 (Mekh. R. Ishmael BeShallaḥ 5); Job 37:6 (Sifre Deuteronomy 39); 2 Chronicles 6:41

but two I have heard, for power (*oz*) is the Lord's." This verse is cited six times in Tannaitic literature, and almost entirely in passages that talk about revelation. None of these sources, however, implicitly connects *oz* and Torah and reads the latter half of the verse as: "Since Torah is the Lord's."

The equation of *oz* with Torah does appear in Amoraic literature. In most cases, the statement that equates *oz* and Torah is either unattributed or attributed to an Amora. Verses that contain an *oz* interpreted as Torah include: Exodus 15:13 (Pesiq. R. Kah. 19.2); Isaiah 62:8 (b. Ber. 6b);[106] Psalm 78:61 (Pesiq. R. Kah. *oz* = ark of the covenant); Psalm 84:6 (Lev. Rab. 17:1); Psalm 78:61 (Tg. Ps.[107], Gen. Rab. 54:4); Psalm 105:4 (Tg. Ps.); Psalm 132:8 (Tg. Ps.); Proverbs 31:25 (Gen. Rab. 59:2); and Ecclesiastes 8:1 (y. Shab. 8:1 11a wisdom). Only one Amoraic source, Lev. Rab. 31:5, connects *oz* and Torah in a passage that cites Tannaitic figures. The tradents, however, are fourth generation Tannaim. Thus, if the attributions are reliable the discourse that reads Psalm 29 as revelation would already be well-developed.

The *oz* of only four verses is interpreted as Torah in Tannaitic literature: Psalm 89:18, Psalm 99:4, Job 12:16 and Psalm 29:11. I will deal with each in turn. The *oz* of Psalm 89:18 may be read as Torah in Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3. One of the comments on "YH is my strength and song" presents a dialogue between God and his nation. Israel speaks and then God responds. Israel proclaims Deuteronomy 6:4, the Shema, and God responds with 1 Chronicles 17:21 – "Who is like you Israel"; Israel declares, "Who is like you among the mighty, O God" (Exod 5:11), and the holy spirit retorts with Deuteronomy 33:29 – "Who is like you Israel?" Israel declares, "The Lord is our

(Sifre Deuteronomy 343. Here the verse is cited in the section discussed above but does not take on any notes of revelation or Torah.)

[106] This is actually a modified use, in which Torah becomes *tefillin*.

[107] The Targum otherwise seems to translate עז as עשנא, "firmness."

God whenever we call upon him" (Deut 4:7), to which the holy spirit responds with Deuteronomy 4:8, "And what great nation is there that has statues and ordinances so righteous." Finally, Israel proclaims, "For you are the glory (*hadar*) of their strength (*oz*)" (Ps 89:18), to which God responds "Israel in whom I am glorified (*hadar*)" (Isa 49:3). If read as a continuous dialogue, then God's response of Deuteronomy 4:8, which highlights Israel's great laws and statues, is followed by Psalm 89:18. One could read this as: "You are the glory of their strength," i.e. you are the glory behind the aforementioned commandments. However, a parallel passage in Midrash Tannaim suggests that each Israel-God pair exists independently and as a self-contained unit. Midrash Tannaim not only contains alternative pairs, but also a different order in which Psalm 89:18 does not follow Deuteronomy 4:8. Thus, Psalm 89:18 does not relate *oz* to Torah (or commandments), but rather joins with Isaiah 49:3 in having God and Israel declare each other glorious. Perhaps an already extant identification of *oz* with Torah prompted a *redactor* to arrange the last four verses in its current sequence.

The *oz* of Psalm 99:4 becomes Torah twice in Tannaitic[108] literature.[109] The equation first appears in Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3: "'The Lord is my strength and song' (Exod 15:2): 'My strength' is Torah, as it says, 'God is giving strength to his people' (Ps 29:11) and it also says 'Mighty (*ve'oz*) King, lover of justice, you have established equity' (Ps 99:4)." The midrashic sense of Psalm 99:4 is likely: "And strength (i.e. the Torah), the God of judgment loves."[110] Unlike Psalm 68:29, which does not appear in reference to Torah but could have easily been read as if it

[108] In Exod. Rab. 30 it appears twice. First it is God will do *oz* with the idol worshippers at the end of days. The second time it appears it reads "you established judgments" as things people will fight over and make up. Neither of these read *oz* as Torah. It also appears in Lev. Rab. 36:4 discussing how righteousness of judgement of Abraham are connected to Jacob. Once again, *oz* and Torah are not connected.

[109] Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 3 and Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 9, each having parallels in Mekhilta of R. Simon.

[110] Alternatively, the midrash could be positing that עז, power, occurs in the contexts of Torah, in which משפט = תורה for our verse.

does, it is extremely difficult to infer Torah independently from Psalm 99:4.[111] It is more likely that the connection between Torah and strength originated elsewhere, as evidenced by the the implicit assumption of Torah in this passage and by position of this verse as second to Psalm 29:11. Psalm 99:4 here acts merely as an additional prooftext, one that may already take the equation of strength as Torah for granted.

The same midrashic logic appears in Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 9: "'You have guided them in your strength' (Exod 15:13). For the sake of the Torah which they were destined to receive, for 'your strength' here is Torah, as it says: 'The Lord will give strength to his people' (Ps. 29.11). And it says: 'The strength also of the king who loves justice' (Ps. 99.4)."[112] Here too Psalm 99:4 follows Psalm 29:11.

The *oz* of Job 12:16 becomes Torah only once in Tannaitic literature. This citation is embedded in the Balaam Midrash of Sifre Deuteronomy 343 and was explored above. To summarize our discussion there, the use of this verse's *oz* to symbolize Torah also requires an already working assumption that *oz* equals Torah. Furthermore, Job 12:16 is embedded within the larger framework of reading Psalm 29 as revelation, which directly quotes Psalm 29:11. Thus, the symbolic equivalence did not develop from an independent reading of this verse.

Sifre Numbers 42 also assumes *oz* equals Torah and quotes only Psalm 29:11 as a prooftext. It offers numerous interpretations of the "peace" at the end of the priestly blessing, "And place upon you peace" (Num 6:27b). One opinion is that of R. Judah: "Rabbi says this is the peace of Torah, as it says: 'The Lord is giving strength to his nation the Lord will bless his nation with

[111] Indeed, this verse serves as better prooftext for the next assertion in the Mekhilta, namely, that *oz* = kingship.
[112] Translating with Lauterbach, no variants.

peace' (Ps 29:11)."[113] R. Judah simply assumes that "strength" means Torah. What is novel about his interpretation is how he extrapolates Torah to the latter half of the verse, combines it with peace and produces the phrase: "the peace of Torah."[114]

All of these occurrences presume that Psalm 29:11's *oz* means Torah. I argue that the symbolic equivalence did originate with this verse, and more particularly was developed in the context of the Balaam Midrash. If in rabbinic imagination the whole of Psalm 29 refers to revelation – and we have shown above that it does – then what must God be giving to his nation in verse 11 if not Torah? From that moment, the *oz* of Psalm 29:11 was implicitly understood as Torah in other exegetical contexts. The interpretation additionally created a rolling effect in which the *oz* of *other* verses cited in proximity to Psalm 29:11 could also mean Torah. Ultimately the symbolic equivalence of *oz* as Torah was detached from Psalm 29:11 and gained an independent life. In sum, a holistic reading generated a moveable trope, one that gained an independent and influential life.

A Discourse on Revelation: Some Historical Suggestions

As seen from our discussion above, Psalm 29 appears deeply embedded in a discourse of revelation and its boundaries during the Tannaitic period. With the close of this era, however, this discourse almost completely dissipates. The Amoraim, for the most part, do not read Psalm 29 in the context of Sinaitic revelation. When they do, they often recycle and update statements already

[113] Text from Menahem Kahana, *Sifre on Numbers*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2011). I extended the verse quotation.

[114] Ibid., 2:328 calls attention to the various midrashim that equate *oz* and Torah. Kahana does not discuss how the phrase "peace of Torah" was generated, but is concerned about its meaning. He follows an earlier opinion which suggests it means: "That arguments in Torah may not be increased." This answer seems too theological to be correct. Perhaps it simply means, "the peace Torah provides." A full answer would require an extensive philological analysis of the construction שלום + x.

developed in earlier traditions. In short, no new readings of Psalm 29 as Sinaitic revelation appear in our extant corpus of Amoraic literature. In this section, I would like to suggest tentative answers to two questions raised by the evidence discussed in this chapter: In what context was this discourse developed? Why did it fall out of favor?

The first question may be answered by turning to gentiles and revelation in Tannaitic literature as a whole. As demonstrated by earlier scholars, the place of non-Jews during revelation was a live issue in this period.[115] In broad terms, some rabbis were more inclusive and others less so. Each, however, drew on a range of passages from all over the Hebrew Bible to substantiate his claim. With Psalm 29 so readily read as revelation it would most surprising if it were absent from the conversation.

Fully reconstructing the discourse about gentiles and revelation in the Tannaitic period exceeds the scope of this chapter. I will offer two suggestions as to the why such a conversation existed. The first is ideological. If a Torah life is ontologically the perfect existence, one must explain why the gentiles are not bound by the Torah.[116] Numerous narratives are thus spun that either displace gentiles from revelation or argue that they are closer to it than previously imagined. The second is historical. The Tannaim were so invested in a discourse about the place of gentiles during revelation because certain groups that they saw as gentiles understood themselves as the recipient of revelation. Early Christians, and especially early readers of Paul's Letter to the Galatians,[117] would claim that the revelation of Jesus displaced the revelation of the Law at Sinai.

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[115] Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*; Hirshman, *Torah for the Entire World*; Kahana, "Pages of the Deuteronomy Mekhilta on Ha'azinu and Wezot Ha-Berakha"; Joseph Heinemann, *Aggadah and Its Development: Studies in the Development of Tradition* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 117–29.

[116] For a more theological version of this argument see Petuchowski, "Qol Adonai," 19.

[117] I must stress that for the purposes of this argument I am not claiming to reconstruct the original opinion of Paul, but rather of his earlier readers, which tended to read Paul more radically than he may have intended. For Paul in his original context see the now-classic John G. Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

This discourse encouraged rabbis to actively think through the issue of gentiles at revelation. Do they belong? The fact that some sources veer towards "yes" suggests that we ought not reduce this discussion to polemic.[118] Sometimes the claims of the proximate other could lead to self-examination and not merely forceful polemic. Ultimately, the answers I have offered must be substantiated with further examination before exiting the realm of suggestion.

More perplexing for our purposes is the absence of Psalm 29 as a discourse about the boundaries of revelation in Amoraic literature. Conversations about gentiles and revelation did not cease, but only the use of Psalm 29 in those settings. What happened? As we will see in the following chapter, most Amoraic interpreters read this psalm within the context of rabbinic prayer practices, particularly the Amidah. As I argue there, these were often new practices that needed rhetorical justification to rabbis and non-rabbis alike. Perhaps the earlier connection of Psalm 29 to revelation made it especially suited for re-interpretation as rabbinic prayer. Sinaitic revelation and prayer, after all, are two expressions of a similar phenomenon. As other scholars have noted, prayer and revelation are phenomenologically similar: both are moments of intense and direct interaction with the divine presence.[119] Psalm 29 as a psalm about revelation did not quite fall out of favor; it was cleverly repackaged. This suggestion too must remain tentative for the time being.

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[118] In this sense I draw – but significantly differ – from Heinemann, *Aggadah and Its Development*, 117–19. In general, he reads this conversation as almost entirely driven by the need for expositors of *aggada* to prepare "simple Jews" with responses to claims that gentiles make. In short, polemic is the sole motivator. In particular, Heinemann does not read our Tannaitic sources as responding to Christians but rather Hellenism. This has to do with his hermeneutic in which anything that places the gentiles in a positive light is really a reaction to a Hellenistic claim of "if Torah has all wisdom why don't we have it" and anything that places the gentiles in a negative light is a response to the Christian claim of "we have the true Torah." This distinction is historically and hermeneutically tenuous.

[119] Uri Ehrlich, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer: A New Approach to Jewish Liturgy*, trans. Dena Ordan, TSAJ 105 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). This is especially the case for early Jewish mysticism, in which theophany and prayer are intimately connected. Michael D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah*, TSAJ 28 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992). Indeed, Peter Schäfer describes the purpose of Merkava Mysticism as *unio liturgica* Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). See a great example of the connection between prayer and revelation in b. Yoma 53b, where "from his right the fire of the law came out" becomes the prooftext for bowing to the right after the Amidah. Here also it comes in the context of the etiquette of conversation.

Conclusion

This chapter explored rabbinic scholastic reading, the type of psalm engagement for which there is the most evidence in our extant sources. By focusing on one psalm as a case-study, I highlighted an often ignored dimension of rabbinic scholastic reading: holistic reading. Previous scholars either examined rabbinic readers as 'lumpers' (usually by tracing a macro-theme across rabbinic literature) or as 'splitters' (focusing on how rabbis split and interpret parts of single verses). In contrast, this chapter argues that we best understand rabbinic engagement with Scripture when we analyze these processes simultaneously. With Psalm 29 as a case-study, I demonstrated that attention to holistic reading reveals the psalm as a site of a shifting discourse in the Tannaitic period about revelation in general and its boundaries in particular. Most rabbinic voices associated the psalm with revelation, but they differed with regards to the boundaries of revelation. A popular but shifting Balaam Midrash gave us a window into this dynamic discourse. The remaining Tannaitic sources afforded us a glimpse into a larger conversation about revelation's borders.

While this chapter examined nearly every citation of Psalm 29 in Tannaitic literature, several citations, unexplored above, fall outside the framework of revelation. We must constantly remember that just because a holistic discourse exists for a particular psalm in any given period does not mean that it completely effaced other discourses associated with that psalm. A text need not have only one meaning, especially in the hands of eager rabbinic readers. Furthermore, the lonesome seeds of one discourse could flourish in another era. Such is the working of tradition, and the case with Psalms 29. As noted earlier, the discourse that tethers Psalm 29 to revelation wanes in the Amoriac period. At the same time, however, one that reads Psalm 29 in relationship to rabbinic liturgy waxes. The origins of this interpretive trend traces to only one Tannaitic source:

t. Ber. 3:25. In this passage, the eighteen benedictions of Amidah are said to correlate to the eighteen mentions of God's name in Psalm 29. It is to the life of Psalm 29 in Amoraic literature and the history of Psalms in Jewish liturgy that we now turn.

Chapter 4: Reading Liturgically, The Place of Psalms in Daily Rabbinic Liturgy

> Closed are the portals of their Synagogue,
> No Psalms of David now the silence break,
> No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue
> In the grand dialect the Prophets spake.
>
> - *"The Jewish Cemetery at Newport," Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)*

In July of 1852, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, famous for his poem "Paul Revere's Ride," visited the town of Newport, Rhode Island, home of the oldest American synagogue. He composed a poem lamenting the diminished vitality of the its once thriving Jewish community, focusing his attention on the Jewish cemetery. Sandwiched between scenes depicting the graveyard is a stanza about the synagogue. Longfellow characterized its soundscape by appealing to the Decalogue and Psalms of David. The impulse is not entirely mistaken in the 19th century. Psalms were sung in the synagogue, even if a Jew contemporary to Longfellow would probably have instead pointed to the Shema, Amidah and Torah reading as the defining characteristics of organized Jewish prayer. By drawing attention to Psalms, however, Longfellow is heir to a longstanding assumption about the central place of Psalms in Jewish prayer, an assumption that this chapter will challenge and refine. In doing so, it will highlight another dimension of the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity, namely, the role of liturgy in framing and reading Psalms.

In this chapter, I seek to answer a group of related questions: when, how and why did Psalms become part of rabbinic daily liturgy?[1] These deceptively simple questions, however,

[1] There is a relative dearth of discussion on the role of Psalms in rabbinic literature. Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer: New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), does not discuss the place of Psalms in the Amoraic period. Rather he mentions that during the late Geonic period, blocks of psalm chapters "had come under control and a limited number were sanctioned for formal use in the synagogal context" (pg. 136). The most direct study is that of Günter Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie und Predigt

require further nuance. I will explain my use of "Psalms," "rabbinic," "daily," and "liturgy" in turn.

In light of the previous chapters, "Psalms" may seem obvious, which is precisely why it requires redefinition in this context. By "use of Psalms" or "psalmody" in this chapter I mean direct quotation of parts of verses, complete verses or entire chapters from the now-canonical Psalter. I thus exclude the recitation of liturgical psalm-like poems and instances of allusions to and echoes of Psalms in prayers and blessing.[2] In fact, my analysis will highlight the steady move from allusion to quotation, or, in other words, from the sporadic embedding of psalm-like features into prayer texts to the use of psalms as liturgy.[3]

By rabbinic, I mean: of and pertaining to the life of Jews who affiliated with rabbinic society and the literature they produced. In more concrete terms, I am asking: What does rabbinic literature tell us about the legislation of and use of Psalms in daily liturgy, and how might this reflect upon or intervene in the then current Jewish *status quo*? This question must, of course, be viewed upon the background of antecedents to the rabbis in the Second Temple period and

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in der rabbinischen Zeit," in *Judaica Minora: Teil I: Biblische Traditionen im rabbinischen Judentum*, TSAJ 133 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 221–33. Stemberger provides little analysis for the sources cited, and frequently misses those that would challenge the his claim that Psalms played a very limited role in both liturgy and individual prayer. The claim that Palestinian Talmud Berakhot is "unproductive" in the search for Psalms in Jewish liturgy is also mistaken (pg. 226). The claim by Louis Rabinowitz, "The Psalms in Jewish Liturgy," *Historia Judaica* 6 (1944): 110 that "there can be no question that during the whole period the Talmud, with one exception, the Psalms had no place at all in public worship," is likewise overdrawn. Furthermore, Benovitz's claim that rabbis added verses into prayer in the Amoraic period because they were discomforted by the fact that that their own established prayer replaced lofty biblical prayer misses that fact that Psalms played a very limited role in rabbinic liturgy initially. It also overplays the power of legislating rabbis. Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 152.

[2] On echoes and allusions see Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40-66*, Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). A good example of a strong allusion is the rabbinic blessing on bread in m. Ber. 1:6, which, concludes with: "He who brings forth bread from the earth" (המוציא לחם מן הארץ). As widely recognized, this blessing reworks and alludes to Psalm 104:14b: "To bring forth bread from the earth" (להוציא לחם מן הארץ). For an insightful but very introductory survey which focuses, *inter alia*, on rabbinic sources see Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Hallels, Midrash, Canon and Loss: Psalms in Jewish Liturgy," in *Psalms in Community: Jewish and Christian Textual, Liturgical, and Artistic Traditions*, ed. Harold W. Attridge and Margot E. Fassler, Symposium 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).

[3] I must note, however, that this will only be done in an *ad hoc* manner. I plan on providing a fuller treatment of this feature in both Jewish and Christian liturgies at a later date.

contemporary non-rabbinic Jews. And I will view it thus when possible. Nevertheless, my focus in this chapter will be on the rabbinic communities of late antique Palestine and Babylonia. When framed in this manner, an exhaustive account of rabbinic literature from its earliest exemplars (ca. 70 CE) through the era of the Geonim (ca. 650-1050 CE) reveals a startling portrait. Over the *longue durée* of history a dearth of daily liturgical psalmody is replaced by the unmistakable presence of Psalms in Jewish daily liturgy. It is my aim to tell the story of this historical shift and to explain the various motivations behind it.

By daily, I mean liturgical psalmody governed by a predictive – and in a Jewish context, solar – calendar. Thus, I include psalms and psalm verses said every day of the week, as well as those said once every week. I exclude occasional psalmody and seasonal psalmody, both of which appear in rabbinic as well as pre-rabbinic sources. Occasional psalmody refers to the recitation of psalms at non-regular events, such as the fast-day liturgy.[4] Seasonal psalmody refers to the use of psalms, such as Hallel (Pss 113-18), during holiday liturgy.

By liturgy, I mean the formal and mandated recitation of a text, usually, but not exclusively, in the context of a public gathering. For my purposes, I will take as evidence statements by various authoritative figures that something is said or should be said during these events. The more fluid and expansive category of prayer, in contrast, includes non-obligatory and private communication with God or other divine beings.[5]

With the questions clarified, I can now turn to the answers, which are likewise multifaceted and complicated. In this chapter, I will develop my solutions as follows. First, I will define the

[4] Described in m. Tan. 2:3, and discussed below.
[5] This understanding of prayer is informed by the most recent attempt to define prayer in rabbinic Judaism as: "Ritual devotional communication, with God as one of its essential illocutionary targets." See Yehuda Septimus, *On the Boundaries of talmudic Prayer*, TSAJ 161 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 255. The language of ritual studies is not useful for my purposes.

problem of daily psalmody in early rabbinic liturgy by placing late antique rabbinic sources in conversation with material from the Second Temple period on the early end of my timeline, and Geonic/Genizah texts on the later end. The juxtapositions will highlight the lack of daily liturgical psalmody in early rabbinic Judaism, an absence exacerbated by the use of Psalms in rabbinic occasional and seasonal liturgies, as well as the memory of daily psalmody at the temple. They will also highlight the proliferation of Psalms as liturgy in the period after the Talmud. Second, I will chart the slow rise of daily psalmody in the Amoraic period (ca. 200 - ca. 650 CE). Third, I will suggest and explore several motivating causes for the rise of daily psalmody in this period. They include the transition from justifying rabbinic liturgical innovations using Psalms to the use of Psalms as liturgy, the deepening connection between temple and synagogue, the use of Psalms in Christian worship and the place of Psalms in rabbinic preaching. While some of these factors are more coterminous than casual, they are nonetheless part of the larger story. All of these contributing causes must be viewed, of course, upon the backdrop of a tradition that already employs some psalms (notably Hallel) liturgically, albeit not in a daily context. We must not fall into the trap, however, of claiming that tradition develops through its own internal logic alone. It would be easy to posit that the move from seasonal and occasional liturgy to daily liturgy was the natural and organic result of tradition developing via analogy. This would, however, be constructing history teleologically, positing the conclusions of a lengthy and varied process as obvious or inevitable at its onset. Tradition may ramify in all sorts of manners; the historian must provide the contexts and causes that explain the particular direction a specific branch of tradition grew.

One final preparatory note is in order. While my interest in this chapter is the use of Psalms in *daily* liturgy, much of the analysis below could also indicate the absence of Psalms – save Hallel – from early rabbinic liturgy in general. This more radical claim will be examined in a future study.

Liturgical Psalmody Before Late Antiquity

Distinction only exists via comparison. A history of the development of daily rabbinic liturgical psalmody cannot be told, therefore, without first briefly sketching the use of Psalms as daily liturgy in the periods before and after Late Antiquity: the era of the Second Temple and the time of the Geonim. This exploration serves two purposes. First, it will highlight the striking lack of daily psalmody in the earliest stages of rabbinic liturgy. Second, it will demonstrate the profusion of rabbinic daily psalmody towards the end of Late Antiquity, thus setting up the questions: how, when and why did daily psalmody enter rabbinic liturgy?

In analyzing the daily psalmody of Second Temple period I will move along a spectrum from settings in which psalmody did not occur to locations where it certainly did. At various junctures, I will compare the situation in the Second Temple period to the portrait provided by early rabbinic literature.

Let us begin with the ancient synagogue. Frankly put, there is no evidence for the use of Psalms in the daily liturgy of the ancient Second Temple synagogue. Granted, we have little evidence in genral that details the practices of the Second Temple synagogue.[6] Nonetheless, many scholars of early Christianity simply assume that the early synagogue included daily psalmody,

[6] For a synthetic analysis of the evidence that does exist, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 135-73. His reliance on rabbinic sources to reconstruct this period is methodologically dated.

which naturally passed unto the early church.[7] These scholars often adduce as evidence the abundant citations of Psalms in the New Testament as well as passages like 1 Corinthians 14:26, Ephesians 5:18-9 and Colossians 3:16, which use the Greek *psalmos* (psalm, or hymn) in the contexts of Jesus movement gatherings. Citation is evidence of knowledge and fondness. It cannot be used to prove the existence of daily liturgy. The physical copies of Psalms at Qumran, such as 4QPs^{h}, 4QPs^{g}, 5QPs which likely only contained Psalm 119, and 4QPs^{l}, which likely only contained Psalm 104, demonstrate the popularity and use of Psalms for study and piety, activities that early followers of Jesus certainly practiced.[8] Furthermore, passages like 1 Corinthians 14:26, Ephesians 5:18-9 and Colossians 3:16 provide no evidence for fixed daily psalmody. I follow Paul Bradshaw, who has demonstrated that the context of these passages are informal gatherings, and that *psalmos* need not refer to the canonical psalms.[9]

Even scholars of Jewish liturgy sought to place the origins of daily psalmody in Second Temple Jewish gatherings. Ismar Elbogen, the great Jewish liturgist, argued that Psalms may have been part of the para-temple daily liturgy known as the *ma'amad*.[10] They are certainly present, according to Elbogen, in the post-70 synagogue: "With the Song of the Levites silenced, the psalms found a new home in the synagogue, and many of the pious made them a regular part of their daily prayers."[11] The absence of evidence renders Elbogen's suggestions pure speculation.

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[7] For a brief list of these sources see James W. McKinnon, "On the Question of Psalmody in the Ancient Synagogue," *Early Music History* 6 (1986): 180–82. See also Bradshaw, *The Search*, 23 n.45.

[8] Some New Testament psalm quotation do indeed reflect knowledge of Jewish liturgy. I am certain that any quotation of Psalm 118 must be read upon the background of the Hallel. We cannot, however, infer liturgy from quotation.

[9] Paul F. Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer in the Early Church: A Study of the Origin and Early Development of the Divine Office* (London: SPCK, 1981), 44. I would further tentatively suggest that, study – and not liturgy – may be at play in the passage in 1 Corinthians 14:26. In addition to *psalmos* lists other methods of knowledge production: "Lesson, revelation, tongue, interpretation."

[10] Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond Scheindlin (Philadelphia : New York: Jewish Publication Society ; Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993), 191: "Since these assemblies were attached directly to the Song of the Levites, it may be assumed that originally a few psalms were included in them."

[11] Ibid., 200. I highlight Elbogen because while McKinnon is correct that Jewish scholars have less to say about Psalms due to lack of evidence, they are still capable of wild speculations. He discusses Elbogen in Ibid., 182 n.83.

Scholars have also attempted to locate daily psalmody among the sectarian gatherings at Qumran with varying degrees of success. The various daily prayers at Qumran are undoubtedly indebted to Psalms and contain psalm-like features.[12] Additionally, whether the Psalm Scroll (11QPs^{a}) reflects liturgy or literature is still the subject of much scholarly controversy.[13] Furthermore, it is possible that Psalms were also part of Qumran liturgy, although nowhere are they conceptualized as distinct from other scriptural readings.[14] Could Psalms have been used in a liturgical manner at Qumran? Possibly. Were Psalms distinctively liturgical and set as part of a daily liturgy? Probably not.

Something similar may be said of Philo's description of the Therapeutae, another group that would meet for prayer and study in the Second Temple period. Philo describes the overall content of the Therapeutae's prayers, but does not point to the use of Psalms as a distinctive

[12] In general see Bilhah Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry*, trans. Jonathan Chapman, STDJ 11 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). See Alex P. Jassen, "Intertextual Readings of Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls: 4Q160 (Samuel Apocryphon) and Psalm 40," *RevQ* 22 (2006): 402–30.

[13] Nitzan claims that the Psalm Scroll was non-liturgical. For the history of scholarship on this question see Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 16–17 nn.51-2.

[14] For an argument in favor of the use of Psalms in Qumran daily worship see Russell C. D. Arnold, *The Social Role of Liturgy in the Religion of the Qumran Community*, STDJ 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 221–24. For a brief exploration of the place of Psalms in Qumran study, meditation and liturgy see Eileen Schuller, "Some Reflections on the Function and Use of Poetical Texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 183–88; Eileen Schuller, "Prayer at Qumran," in *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Jeremy Corley, DCLY (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 416, 21. She notes the current trend of rejecting the place of Psalms in the early synagogue, but nonetheless affirms the place of Psalms in Qumran liturgy: "Indeed, the more we see the worship practiced by the community of the Scrolls as fundamentally priestly in orientation and rooted in the Temple milieu, the more likely it is that singing of psalms—a Temple practice—would have been carried over into a non-Temple context" (pg. 188). There are several problems with this assumption. First, was psalmody truly priestly? Are Levites considered priests in the eyes of the Community? Second, what other aspects of temple worship remained at Qumran? Why retain the Psalms without sacrifice? For a relatively recent survey of the issue of Psalms as liturgy see Daniel K. Falk, "The Contribution of the Qumran Scrolls to the Study of Ancient Jewish Liturgy," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 629–30.

characteristic of their liturgical gatherings.[15] Additionally, Philo quotes Psalms only eighteen times in his corpus, none of which provide firm evidence for daily psalmody outside the temple.[16]

The current portrait sketched, which highlights the dearth of daily liturgical psalmody in the Second Temple period, is mostly consistent with an image of daily psalmody produced by early rabbinic literature. The primary feature of rabbinic liturgy was not the Psalter,[17] but rather two other prayers: Shema[18] and the Amidah.[19] The rabbis devote much time and energy to unpacking

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[15] *The Contemplative Life*. The "psalms" Philo does mention appear to be the independent compositions of members of the group. The argument that the "and hymns" of "taking with them nothing […] but the Laws and inspired sayings through the prophet, and hymns and the other texts, through which understanding and piety are increased and perfected" (*Contemplative Life* 25) is the Psalter requires special pleading. For such a claim see Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*, TSAJ 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 145. The division is clear not of a tripartite canon. And as Leonhardt mentions on that page, "Only a few paragraphs later, Philo mentions from outside the Psalter in the description of the writings used by the Therapeutae."

[16] *Contra* Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship* 173, who takes these quotations as evidence of extra-temple psalmody because Philo introduces some of them with the phrase "it is sung in the psalms." (pg. 151). Psalms are sung in the same way that prophets prophesy. The fact that the citation is in the present tense would only make sense if Philo only uses the aorist for scriptural citations, evidence that Leonhardt does not provide. Philo uses the present tense of *legw* "say" to introduce a Psalm quote in *Plant*. 29. Even if Leonhardt is correct, these quotations do not provide the context of current singing, and we cannot assume that it was extra-temple or daily. On Philo's Psalm quotations in general see Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship,* 142-56; Naomi G. Cohen, *Philo's Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings,* JSJSupp 123 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 139-56. For Philo's description of singing in the temple see, Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship,* 167-9.

[17] For Karaites, however, this was exactly the case. On the place of Psalms in Karaite liturgy see Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms: From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham Ibn Ezra* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 59–96.

[18] For an exhaustive analysis of this liturgical unit see Reuven Kimelman, "The Shema' Liturgy: From Covenant Ceremony to Coronation," in *Kenishta: Studies on the Synagogue and its World*, ed. Joseph Tabory, Kenishta 1 (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2001), 9–105.

[19] The term Amidah first appears in Sof. 16:9. In earlier rabbinic literature it is usually referred to as *tefillah* (prayer) or *shemonah esreh* (eighteen). I will use the term Amidah because *tefillah* is too general, and the liturgical unit does not always contain eighteen blessings. This prayer has been subject to numerous exhaustive studies. Perhaps the most important study representing the philological school is Louis Finkelstein, "The Development of the Amidah," *JQR* 16 (1925-26): 1–43, 127–70. For the classic form-critical study see Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns*, SJ 9 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), esp. pgs. 37-76, 218-50. For a revisionist view that assumes that the Amidah was a complete innovation with a fixed text see Ezra Fleischer, "On the Origins of Obligatory Prayer in Judaism," in *Statutory Jewish Prayers: Their Emergence and Development*, ed. Shulamit Elizur and Tova Beeri, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2012), 3–103. A good example of the rhetorical-theological approach is Reuven Kimelman, "The Daily 'Amidah and the Rhetoric of Redemption," *JQR* 79 (1988): 165–97; Reuven Kimelman, "The Messiah of the Amidah: A Study in Comparative Messianism," *JBL* 116 (1997): 313–20; Reuven Kimelman, "The Literary Structure of the Amidah and the Rhetoric of Redemption," in *The Echoes of Many Texts: Reflections on Jewish and Christian Traditions : Essays in Honor of Lou H. Silberman*, ed. William G. Dever and J. Edward Wright, BJS 313 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 171–218. For a sound historical approach that advocates slow historical development and from which this chapter aligns most closely with see Ruth Langer, "The Amida as Formative Rabbinic Prayer," in *Identität durch Gebet: zur gemeinschaftsbildenden Funktion insitutionalisierten Betens in Judentum und Christentum*, ed. Albert Gerhards, Andrea Doeker, and Peter Ebenbauer, Studien zu Judentum und Christentum (Paderborn: Schöningh,

how, when and where to say these prayers properly. The earliest rabbinic compilation, the Mishnah, begins with a conversation about when to recite Shema, not when to sing Psalms. Furthermore, early rabbinic literature, to my knowledge, contains no lengthy discussions pertaining to the place of Psalms in rabbinic daily or seasonal liturgy, with the exception of Hallel. This dearth of evidence leaves us with two possibilities. Either a) psalmody was so enmeshed in the fabric of liturgical life and its manner of recitation so obvious as to not warrant comment or elicit interest; or, b) liturgical psalmody was not a feature of rabbinic liturgy in its earliest stages. The second option, in my opinion, is the correct one. In addition to the fact that rabbis create rules for all sorts of practices that seem obvious and commonplace, they also legislate on and provide a framework for the one liturgical activity that indisputably existed in pre-rabbinic Jewish liturgy: Torah reading.[20] Thus, I generally agree with the critical approaches adopted by those who argue that the earliest synagogue liturgy (whether pre-rabbinic, non-rabbinic or rabbinic) contained no significant psalmody.[21]

2003), 127–56; Ruth Langer, "Early Rabbinic Liturgy in Its Palestinian Milieu: Did Non-Rabbis Know the Amidah?," in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, Daniel J. Harrington, and Jacob Neusner, vol. 2, 2 vols., JSJSup 85 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 423–39. For a methodological history of scholarship that discusses and critiques many of the trends mentioned see Reuven Kimelman, "Liturgical Studies in the 90's," *Jewish Book Annual* 52 (1994): 59–72; Richard S. Sarason, "On the Use of Method in the Modern Study of Jewish Liturgy," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. William S. Green, BJS 1 (Missoula, MT.: Scholars Press, 1978), 97–172; See also Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 1–21; Tzvee Zahavy, "A New Approach to Early Jewish Prayer," in *History of Judaism: The Next Ten Years*, ed. Baruch M. Bokser, BJS 21 (Chico, CA.: Scholars Press, 1980), 45–60; Lawrence A. Hoffman, "Jewish Liturgy and Jewish Scholarship," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity: Part I The Literary & Archaeological*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Alan J. Avery-Peck, and Bruce Chilton, HdO 53.1 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 239–66.

[20] See the fourth chapter of m. Meg. For an early literary example of Torah reading see Luke 4:16-21. For early epigraphic evidence for the liturgical reading of Torah in the synagogue see the Theodotus synagogue inscription. For a full discussion see Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 524–26.

[21] Bradshaw, *The Search*, 22–24; Rabinowitz, "The Psalms in Jewish Liturgy"; McKinnon, "On the Question." It is also important to note that there is absolutely no evidence that Psalms were even read as part of any scriptural cycle; *contra* J. A. Smith, "First-Century Christian Singing and Its Relationship to Contemporary Jewish Religious Song," *Music & Letters* 75 (1994): 1–2; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 88.

I offer two observations. First, daily psalmody certainly reverberated in the halls of the temple during daily sacrifices.[22] Second, it is virtually impossible to recover with any precision a list of specific psalms used.[23] That psalmody occurred is vouchsafed by both Second Temple sources and the historical memory of later periods. The earliest evidence for temple music comes from 1 Chronicles 15, where David tasks the leaders of the Levites to appoint fellow Levites as temple musicians. The first song sung in the presence of the Ark, according to 1 Chronicles 16:8-36, combines Psalms 96 and 105:1-15. The conclusion of 1 Chronicles 16 describes David's provisions for daily worship that include both sacrifice and music. As previous scholars note, this scene depicts the liturgical innovation of sacrifice with music during the Second Temple period more so than reflecting the historical circumstances of the First Temple.[24] Additional evidence for temple psalmody comes from the Qumranic Psalm Scroll, which contains a short poem that claims that David composed "songs to sing before the altar over the whole-burnt *tamid* offering every day for all the days of the year (11QPs^{a} XXVII:5-6)."[25] Jewish and Christian historical memory also frames the temple as a site of psalmody. M. Tam. 6:7, for example, contains a list of psalms from

[22] The place of psalms and music during the First Temple period is a subject of much controversy. For an argument in favor see Nahum M. Sarna, *On the Book of Psalms: Exploring the Prayers of Ancient Israel* (New York: Schocken, 1993). For an argument against see Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 148–64; Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From Its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. Moshe Grinberg (New York: Schocken, 1972), 108–10. For a recent and historically sensitive treatment see Gary Rendsburg, "The Psalms as Hymns in the Temple of Jerusalem," in *Jesus and Temple: Textual and Archaeological Explorations*, ed. Charlesworth, James H. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 95–122. I cannot, however, agree with his early dating of Tamid and the conclusions that follow.

[23] See the rather unconvincing form-critical conclusions of J. A. Smith, "Which Psalms Were Sung in the Temple?," *Music & Letters* 71 (1990): 167–86. The daily Levitical Psalms mentioned at the conclusion of m. Tam. must not be taken as positive evidence, let alone that they form a coherent liturgical text as posited by Peter L Trudinger, *The Psalms of the Tamid Service a Liturgical Text from the Second Temple*, VTSupp 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Later Jewish and Christian tradition spent a lot of energy attempting to correlate specific psalms with particular events.

[24] For a detailed analysis of the function and composition of this unit see Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), 309–24. For a discussion of the Chronicler's rhetorical aims in this unit, which combines prayer and sacrifice see Jeremy Penner, *Patterns of Daily Prayer in Second Temple Period Judaism*, STDJ 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 54–57.

[25] Text and translation from Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPsa)*, 92.

the canonical book of Psalms that it claims were sung by the Levites as daily liturgy.[26] Some Septuagint manuscripts also seem to preserve a roughly similar list if one surveys the psalm superscriptions; however, they may be exegetical instead of liturgical.[27] We cannot, however, blindly trust these sources to provide complete and accurate information about which psalms were sung in the temple. As seen from Chronicles and the Qumran Psalm Scroll, the liturgy in the temple was more varied than the contents of the now-canonical book of Psalms. At the same time, we cannot deny the use of psalms, some of which were undoubtedly also part of the now-canonical book of Psalms.

The clear presence of Psalms in the temple may further highlight their absence in early rabbinic daily liturgy. When the rabbis began to formulate the novel requirement of mandated prayer they do not consider psalms, even to reject them.[28] Contrast this with the Decalogue, a clear feature of temple liturgy according to m. Tam 5:1, and one actively removed from daily prayer according to y. Ber. 1:5 3c.[29] Other aspects of the temple service, such as *lulav*, *shofar* and the priestly blessing are actively incorporated into rabbinic liturgy. Why not Psalms? In formulating mandated liturgy why not adopt the temple's songbook?

[26] I intend on providing a full study of the use of Psalms in rabbinic memory at a later date.

[27] See the argument of Albert Pietersma, "Exegesis and Liturgy in the Superscriptions of the Greek Psalter," in *Proceedings of the Xth Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies Oslo July-August, 1998.*, ed. Bernard A. Taylor (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 99–138.

[28] Even Nitzan, who calls much attention to fixed daily patterns of worship at Qumran claims that, "Prayer only became a universal, fixed obligation during the tannaitic period." Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 45. Septimus, too, calls mandated statutory prayer an entirely new religious category. Septimus, *On the Boundaries*, 32–35. Biblical passages, such as the Decalogue and the Balaam portion, were considered and then excluded from mandatory liturgy. See y. Ber. 1:5 3c.

[29] On the Decalogue and its controversy see Ephraim E. Urbach, "The Role of the Ten Commandments in Jewish Worship," in *The Ten Commandments in History and Tradition*, ed. Ben-Zion Segal (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1990), 161–89; Ruth Langer, "The Decalogue in Jewish Liturgy," in *The Decalogue and Its Cultural Influence*, ed. Dominik Markal, Hebrew Bible Monographs 58 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 85–101. Of course, the Decalogue in m. Tam 5:1 was part of the Shema, an aspect of Jewish worship the rabbis were attempting to place their stamp upon.

Some scholars maintain that the rabbis did indeed craft their liturgy to include the daily psalmody of the temple.[30] These scholars often point to the daily Levitical songs (Pss 24, 48, 82, 94, 81, 93, 92) as recorded in a *baraita* appended to the end of m. Tam. as evidence.[31] According to this *baraita*, the Levites would sing these psalms during the burning of the daily sacrifice. This passage provides proof for a rabbinic memory of a Second Temple practice, nothing more. There is no evidence that these psalms were part of daily rabbinic liturgy until well after the talmudic period (ca. 650). No talmudic discussion regards the recitation of these psalms as anything other than temple practice.[32] Contrast this with other prayers that are initially imagined as part of temple ritual and are discussed elsewhere in terms of contemporary rabbinic liturgy, such as "True and Firm" (*emet veyatziv*) (m. Tam. 5:1; t. Ber. 3:6). The most compelling evidence for their absence in early rabbinic liturgy is the fact that even in the Geonic period these psalms appear to be non-liturgical.[33] *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* strangely claims that one recites the *baraita* about these psalms and not the psalms themselves,[34] and the prayer book of R. Sa'adyah contains no mention of them. The earliest positive evidence comes from Maimonides's prayer book, found at the end

[30] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 200 nn.96, 239; Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbinic Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism Volume 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven T Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 574; Alan Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalm Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 258 assume the daily psalms to be a part of early rabbinic liturgy. Levine sets the date in the Amoraic period. See also Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 200.

[31] On this appended *baraita* see Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 2:979.

[32] Rabbinic sources lavish much attention on the use of these psalms in temple ritual. In what is no doubt an innovation, the rabbis argue that the daily psalm is an integral part of temple liturgy and that anything which can jeopardize its proper recitation must be fixed. M. Rosh Hash. 4:4 begins with: "Originally, they would accept testimony regarding the New Moon all day, but once the witnesses delayed in coming and the Levites said the wrong psalm." The Levites had accidently sung the song of the day instead of that of the New Moon. On proper psalmody as an essential aspect of sacrifice see also y. Tan 2:2 67d, "Priests, Levites, Israelites and psalms can invalidate a sacrifice." I plan on exploring this and other passages in a future study about Psalms in rabbinic memory.

[33] Robert Brody, "Liturgical Use of the Book of Psalms in the Geonic Period," in *Prayers That Cite Scripture*, ed. James L. Kugel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 75; Israel Ta Shma, "Sources and Place of the Prayer 'It Is Upon Us to Praise' in the Prayer Book," in *Book of Remembrance for Ephraim Talmadge*, ed. Dov Lipschits (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 1993), 93–94.

[34] Daniel Goldschmidt, ed., *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1971), 40.

of his Book of Love, which claims: "And a small part of the nation has a custom to read after all of these supplications the psalm that the Levites would sing in the temple on that day" (section 34).[35] Even in the time of Maimonides, the daily recitation of these psalms was nothing more than a practice of the few.[36] The early rabbis clearly did not adopt the Song of the Levites into daily liturgy.[37]

Our discussion of Second Temple daily psalmody may be summarized as follows. Non-temple evidence tends to highlight the lack of citation of psalm verses and chapters as daily liturgy. Evidence pertaining to the temple indicates the use of Psalms in daily liturgy. This use serves to highlight the lack of psalmody in early rabbinic liturgy as many aspects of the temple and its rituals were adopted and reframed by the rabbis. The rabbis could have drawn directly from Psalms in formulating what was liturgically mandated but chose not to.

Liturgical Psalmody After Late Antiquity

When we shift our focus to the time of the Geonim (ca. 650- ca. 1150), more than half a millennium after the destruction of the Second Temple, we see a profusion of daily psalmody in both major centers of rabbinic Judaism and their environs: Babylonia and Palestine. I will deal with each center and its evidence in summary.

With regards to Palestinian daily liturgy, I follow Ezra Fleisher, who has convincingly demonstrated that the Palestinian rite regularly contained the entirety of the Songs of Ascents (Pss 120-134) during the morning service. Occasionally, one would read from Psalm 120 until the end

[35] On this I follow Brody, "Liturgical Use," 57 n.59 that mention of this custom in Sof. is a later addition.
[36] Who are these "few"? Is this a way Maimonides signals a common Palestinian custom?
[37] Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs*, 163 claims to find no mention and use of these daily Levitical psalms in any of the Genizah fragments he works with.

of the Psalter.[38] Furthermore, the evidence from the Cario Genizah he musters indicates that psalm selections accompanied every daily and seasonal prayer.[39] The specific psalms mentioned in the evidence he collects closely match those listed in Tractate Soferim, an eighth-century Palestinian compilation.[40] According to Soferim, after one recites the daily Psalms 97 and 98, one says the psalm of the season: Psalm 30 for Hanukkah, Psalm 7 for Purim, Psalm 135 for the first day of Passover, Psalm 29 for Pentecost, Psalms 79 and 137 for Ninth of Av, Psalm 47 for Rosh Hashanah, Psalms 103 and 130 for Yom Kippur, Psalm 76 for Tabernacles, and Psalm 6 for the Eight Day of Assembly. Additionally, Fleisher notes that several of his fragments attest to a liturgical blessing that preceded and concluded the recitation of this liturgical complex. Where this blessing is absent, one sees Psalm 106:48 introduce the liturgical unit and Psalm 146:10 conclude it. Furthermore, Ruth Langer, also examining Genizah evidence, has pointed to the rise of a daily *taḥanun* (supplication) liturgy, which almost invariably contained verses from psalms, in the period of the Geonim.[41] At this point in time, psalmody was an unmistakable characteristic of daily Jewish liturgy.

Evidence from Jewish Babylonia provides a similar portrait. *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, the earliest extant Jewish prayer book, and an influence on subsequent liturgies, inserts Psalms in numerous places. For example, before the Shema liturgy, Amram writes: "and before us in the

[38] Ibid., 215–57. See esp. 231-38.
[39] Ibid., 161–213.
[40] On the date and Palestinian provenance of Sof. see Myron Lerner, "The External Tractates," in *The Literature of the Sages, Part One: Part One: Oral Torah, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, vol. 1, 2 vols., CRINT 3a (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987), 397–400. On the complex composition see Brody, "Liturgical Use," 75–81. For a critique of the claim for Palestinian provenance, although focused on other chapters, see Debra Reed Blank, "Soferim: A Commentary to Chapters 10-12 and a Reconsideration of the Evidence" (PhD diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1998). For a catalogue of available manuscripts see Blank, "It's Time to Take Another Look at 'Our Little Sister' Soferim."
[41] Ruth Langer, "'We Do Not Even Know What To Do!': A Foray into the Early History of Tahanun," in *Seeking the Favor of God*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 39–69. This prayer, as Langer notes, also appears in Babylonian contexts.

academy this is the custom: the precentor stands and says:" Psalm 20:8-10, Psalm 104:31, Psalm 113:2-4; Psalm 135:13; Psalm 103:19; 1 Chronicles 16:31; Psalm 10:16; Psalm 93:1; Exodus 15:18 Psalm 10:16; Psalm 103:10; Proverbs 19:21; Psalm 33:11; Psalm 33:10; Psalm 132:13; Psalm 135:4; Psalm 94:14; Psalm 78:38; Psalm 20:10; Psalm 84:5; Psalm 144:15; Psalm 145; Psalm 115:18; and Psalms 146-150.[42] Moving beyond Amram, one sees that Psalm 78:38 introduced every evening service in Babylonia.[43] The central location of Psalms is unmistakable. This image is confirmed by subsequent prayer books, like that of Saʿadyah Gaon. By the time of the Geonim, daily liturgy that lacked psalmody would appear striking and strange. But it is only from the time of the Geonim and onwards that I can fully agree with Elbogen's remark: "The Psalms became communal songs dearly beloved by the people, and widespread among them. This explains their tremendous influence on the liturgy and religious life in all ages."[44]

Early Presence of Non-Daily Liturgical Psalmody in the Tannaitic Period

Thus far I have explored the history of daily psalmody before and after the times of the late antique rabbis, highlighting its early absence and eventual rise to prominence. To best understand the contours of when, why and how daily psalmody developed, we must briefly cast our attention to the ways that Psalms were used in early rabbinic liturgy. As mentioned above, in addition to

[42] Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 8–9. Although, it is always possible that these directions do not come from Amram, but a later editor. On the problems of using *Seder R. Amram* as a historical source see Robert Brody, "The Enigma of Seder Rav Amram," in *Knesset Ezra: Literature and Life in the Synagogue*, ed. Shulamit Elizur et al., 21-34 vols. (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1994), 30–32.

[43] On the controversy over whether to say it Friday night see Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 73–79. For use of the verse and its penitential afterlife see Richard S. Sarason, "The Persistence and Trajectories of Penitential Prayer in Rabbinic Judaism," in *Seeking the Favor of God*, ed. Mark J. Boda, Daniel K. Falk, and Rodney A. Werline, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 15–16.

[44] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 190.

alluding to various psalm verses in prayer and blessings, the rabbis include psalm clauses, verses and chapters as part of seasonal and occasional liturgies. Most of these appear to be holdovers from the Second Temple period.

The best example of early rabbinic seasonal psalmody is the recitation of Hallel, Psalms 113-118,[45] which is of both real and imagined antiquity.[46] Early evidence of a Hallel unit comes from its central location in the pre-destruction Passover *seder*.[47] It also appears to be among the earliest formal recitations of a set of psalms in the synagogue.[48] The rabbis discuss Hallel in the context of contemporary liturgy and legislate on it often.[49] Indeed, the amount of rabbinic energy spent on defining and discussing Hallel as a liturgical unit highlights the relative absence of daily psalmody from early rabbinic liturgy.

Another example of early rabbinic seasonal psalmody is subtly embedded in discussions about the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, a central feature of which was the recitation of verses pertaining to "Kingship," "Remembrances" and "Horn Blasts." Each set required verses from the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings. While the exact verses for each section appear to be somewhat fluid in this

[45] Psalm 136 may also have been part of early rabbinic liturgy.
[46] A lengthy sugya in b. Pesaḥ. 117a attributes Hallel to various early figures such as Moses, Deborah, Hezekiah, David and Mordecai. Equally as fanciful are the claims of those who place Hallel in the Hasmonean period, such as Louis Finkelstein, "The Origin of Hallel," *HUCA* 23 (1950): 319–37; Reuven Hammer, "Hallel: A Liturgical Composition Celebrating the Exodus," in *The Experience of Jewish Liturgy: Studies Dedicated to Menahem Schmelzer*, ed. Debra Reed Black, BRLJ 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 101. See also Tzvee Zahavy, *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, Studies in Judaism (Lanham: University Press of America, 1990), 103–9.
[47] Baruch M. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder: The Passover Rite and Early Rabbinic Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 43–44 argues that Hallel initially accompanied the sacrifice and was then transferred to the *seder*. He takes m. Pesaḥ 5:7 as historical evidence. Even if we do not accept this datum, Hallel was the focal point of the earliest *haggadah* as contained in the Tosefta. See Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts*, TSAJ 109 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 50–63.
[48] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 130.
[49] In contexts that do not refer to the Passover *seder* see: m. Meg. 2:5; m. Soṭ 5:4; t. Ber. 2:3, 4; t. Shab. 1:7; t. Suk. 3:2; t. Yad. 2:11. This is not an exhaustive list.

early period, those from Writings, as seen in t. Rosh Hash. 2:13, almost invariably come from Psalms.[50] The sound of Psalms was heard in the synagogue, even if not on a daily basis.

The fast-day ritual described in m. Tan. 2:2 also provides a snapshot of early, albeit occasional, psalmody. Psalms 120, 121, 130 and 102, along with unidentified verses pertaining to "Remembrance" and "Horn Blasts," constitute the core of this seven blessing prayer. The parallel Tosefta, t. Tan. 1:10, notes that these seven benedictions are inserted directly into the Amidah prayer between the blessings of "Redeemer" and "Healing the Sick."[51] If m. Tan. 2:5 may be believed, this liturgy was still in use during the Tannaitic period, albeit not without its rabbinic detractors.[52] Like Hallel, this liturgy may have Second Temple roots. Numerous scholars have demonstrated that the seven-blessing core of this ritual had an earlier and independent existence.[53] While they focus primarily on the blessings that accompany the psalms, their conclusions are valid for the psalms as well.

Our brief exploration of Hallel, Rosh Hashanah liturgy and the fast-day ritual provides a clear portrait. The sound of seasonal and occasional psalmody reverberated in the halls of Jewish gathering places in the Tannaitic period. Absent, however, was daily psalmody. It is worth noting, however, that the evidence for even seasonal psalmody is limited, and that an explosion of seasonal as well as occasional psalmody occurs in the time of the Geonim. The remainder of this chapter

[50] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 128, of course thinks this liturgy was a temple remnant.
[51] Note that the Tosefta does not list these psalms, but the Mishnah and Tosesftas are clearly parallel passages.
[52] For what exactly may have irked the rabbis see David Levine, "A Temple Prayer for Fast-Days," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 104 n.23.
[53] Most convincingly, see Shlomo Naeh, "The Role of Biblical Verses in Prayer According to the Rabbinic Tradition," in *Prayers That Cite Scripture*, ed. James L. Kugel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 53–59. See also Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 109–11; Levine, "A Temple Prayer," 102–8; Ezra Fleischer, "On the Beginnings of Obligatory Jewish Prayer," *Tarbitz* 59 (1990): 421–22 n.58. These studies do not deal directly with the question of whether psalms was an earlier part of the liturgy. In light of the above, it is more likely so than not.

will focus on when, how and why psalmody became a steady and stable feature of daily rabbinic liturgy.

Psalms in Daily Prayer in the Amoraic Period

Before exploring how and why, let us examine when: When does Psalms become a steady feature of daily rabbinic liturgy? As mentioned above, the absence of daily psalmody in early rabbinic liturgy gives way to a preponderance of daily psalmody in the post-talmudic era. The full-blown cycles of liturgical psalmody during the time of the Geonim and that of the Genizah have their roots in and owe their early development to the rise of daily psalmody in the Amoraic period (200 – ca. 650). The sources examined in this section will demonstrate both the presence of daily psalmody during the times of the Amoraim and the fact that it developed in fits and starts.

From Periphery to Center

Y. Ber. 4:4 8a contains one of the earliest snapshots of psalm verses being incorporated into daily liturgy. It also highlights the unsteady position of daily psalmody. The Palestinian Talmud examines R. Eliezer's injunction against "making prayer fixed."[54] What does "fixed" mean? Must one constantly invent new prayers? Or, perhaps, must one recite prayers with verve? After citing R. Abbahu in the name of R. Elazar to support the latter opinion, the Palestinian Talmud follows with two statements that support the former view: "Rabbi Eliezer would say a new

[54] In the Mishnah this likely means time, but here the notion seems to be expanded to include content. The placement of R. Eliezer's statement matters, and many have argued that it actually belongs to the previous Mishnah, in which case it could mean set formulas for blessings. For discussion see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Kefshutah: Part 1: Seder Zeraim* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1954), 32–33.

prayer every day; Rabbi Abbahu would bless a new blessing every day." It is within this context the Palestinian Talmud cites a tradition ultimately attributed to R. Yoḥanan:

> R. Yosi the Sidonian said in the name of R. Yoḥanan: Before his Amidah[55] one says:[56] "O Lord open up my lips and my mouth will tell over your praises" (Ps 51:17). And after his Amidah he says, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and redeemer" (Ps 19:15).
> R. Yudan said both of them before his Amidah.

R. Yoḥanan prescribes that one should surround his Amidah with appropriate psalm verses. R. Yudan, instead, began his with them. In isolation, this statement clearly demonstrates the incorporation of daily psalmody into rabbinic liturgy, either by prescription or practice. The use of these particular verses to either begin or surround the Amidah eventually became a fixed and stable aspect of rabbinic daily liturgy.[57]

Within the context of the Palestinian Talmud, however, the statement functions in a subtler manner, one that suggests the place of daily psalmody was in flux. The Palestinian Talmud uses R. Yoḥanan's statement to moderate between the poles of liturgical fixity and fluidity. It sets psalmody as a middle-ground option. Instead of reciting only fixed prayers or constantly inventing new ones, one may bracket the Amidah with scriptural verses. If moderating innovation is at stake

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[55] The word used here is "prayer," which often means Amidah in rabbinic literature. I will translate "prayer" as Amidah when the context is sufficiently clear.

[56] The phrase "he says" is somewhat difficult to unpack. In the Sifra and Sif. Deut., the term seems to be a technical one for citing Scripture, usually appearing as "And thus he said." In this instance, it could be a statement of personal practice, namely that R. Yoḥanan would bracket his Amidah with these psalm verses. Although, a better locution would have been הוא היה אומר – "he would say." הוא אומר as a prescriptive statement appears in m. Ber. 6:1 in the context of what blessings one must say for particular products. See also the liturgical complex in m. Tan. 2, where the precentor is told what to say with the locution: "On blessing x he says…" Whether rabbinic advice or prescriptions were immediately followed and adapted as standard liturgical practice is relatively unimportant for my purposes. What is important is the newfound role of Psalms. Thus, to discount these statements as worthless because "prayer in the synagogue must refer to the entire community," as Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 230 does, is to misread the evidence. Rabbis are advocating Psalm use and it is slowly gaining traction. Furthermore, even after the creation of a *siddur*, the liturgy remained quite varied. To only count as prayer that which the entire community follows is to abandon discussion of prayer in the talmudic period.

[57] Indeed, plurality seems to have struck root, at least in Palestine and its environs. Cambridge University Library, T-S Collection, H 18, 3 depicts an Amidah prayer in the tradition of R. Yudan. Ginzberg claims that one never finds Psalm 19:15 at the end of the Amidah in the Palestinian rite, Louis Ginzberg, *Commentary and Novella on the Yerushalmi*, vol. 3, 3 vols. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1940), 339. This, however, seems not to be the case, see the Genizah fragment #6 and #53 in Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs*, 27, 89.

for this discussion, then the psalm verses that R. Yoḥanan prescribes cannot be fixed from the perspective of the Palestinian Talmud. Stable verses would undermine the imperative to vary prayer. If this reading is correct, it would suggest that the use of specific psalms or psalm verses as a set feature of daily liturgy happened only in fits and starts. The Amoraic period was one of experimentation. I would further speculate that the inclusion of psalms in daily liturgy – at least from the perspective of this talmudic discussion – was driven, in part, by a desire to vary prayer and innovate.

The slow embedding of Psalms in daily liturgy comes to light if we trace the use of R. Yoḥanan's statement in the Babylonian Talmud. The dictum appears twice, once in b. Ber. 4b and once in b. Ber. 9b. As evidenced by its latest tradents and anonymous redactors, the Babylonian Talmud, in distinction to the Palestinian Talmud, understood R. Yoḥanan's psalm verses as both binding practice and as a fundamental part of the Amidah.

B. Ber. 4b[58] discusses the topic of joining the Redemption blessing to the Amidah. It contains a statement attributed to R. Yoḥanan, saying: "Who inherits the world to come? The one who follows the *evening* Redemption blessing immediately with prayer." Mar b. Ravina, reflecting on his own liturgical practice, notes that this is not the case, and that the benediction "Let us Rest" intervenes between Redemption and the Amidah. R. Yoḥanan's dictum cannot be followed. An anonymous voice responds that the "Let us Rest" prayer was "ordained by the rabbis" (*qav'e*[59] *rabbanan*) as part of the Redemption blessing and is thus not an obstacle to joining Redemption with the Amidah. As proof, it cites R. Yoḥanan's prescription to bracket the Amidah with verses

[58] See Abraham Weiss, *Studies in Talmud* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1975), 62–5 on the relationship between b. Ber. 4b and 9b and its variation between the Paris manuscript and print.

[59] In both this instance and the next, the printed editions read תקנו, while all the manuscripts read קבע. I suppose תקן was more familiar terminology and thus a later hand updated the phrase.

from Psalms. Would not the recitation of Psalm 51:17 break the connection between Redemption and the Amidah? The anonymous layer of the Babylonian Talmud rejects this challenge by claiming that Psalm 51:17 is fundamentally attached to the Amidah itself: "There since *the rabbis established (qavʿe rabbanan) that one say* 'Lord open up my lips' (Ps 51:17), it is like one long prayer." Note that R. Yoḥanan's statement about joining Redemption and the Amidah is said regarding the evening prayer only. He himself may have been untroubled with breaking up Redemption and the morning Amidah. The Babylonian rabbis, manifested here as the anonymous redactors, could not accept that assumption, and transmute R. Yoḥanan's solitary but demanding voice into that of the plural legislating rabbis. In doing so, they set Psalm 51:17 as a fundamental part of the Amidah. I am unsure whether this conversation *creates* or *reflects* the steady and stable use of Psalm 51:17 in the daily Amidah. I am certain, however, that this conversation is one of the final stops in the long journey of inserting Psalms into daily liturgy.

B. Ber. 9b contains a similar discussion.[60] It, too, begins by praising those who connect Redemption and the Amidah: "If one joins Redemption to the Amidah he will not meet a mishap for the whole day." As in the passage above, the statement of R. Yoḥanan creates a problem. R. Elazar successively suggests that R. Yoḥanan's dictum to surround the Amidah with psalm verses applies to the evening Amidah, and then the afternoon Amidah. Thus, one would not follow R. Yoḥanan's command to begin the Amidah with Psalm 51:17 during the morning. R. Ashi, disagreeing, claims that R. Yoḥanan's dictum applies to every Amidah, and "since the rabbis instituted (*qabʿuah rabbanan*) it in Amidah, it is considered one long Amidah." This is the same

[60] Indeed, these two *sugyot* may be a great example of differing performances stemming from the same building blocks. On this phenomenon see Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah*; Jaffee, "What Difference Does the Orality of Rabbinic Writing Make for the Interpretations of Rabbinic Writing?"; Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*.

logic employed above. The Talmud then continues with a discussion of Psalm 19:15, asking "Why did *the rabbis institute it* after the 18 blessings? Let one say it before!"

If a historical portrait may be drawn from both of these discussions, it is that towards the end of the Amoraic period in Babylonia a requirement to say Ps 51:17 and Ps 19:15 during every Amidah was established, and that the requirement was to be imagined as authorized and legislated by the rabbinic collective. This is not evidence that that all rabbinic Jews followed this practice, but it is clear support for the observation that psalm verses have been incorporated into the central rabbinic prayer itself, and do not just surround its periphery. When put in conversation with the use of R. Yoḥanan's dictum in the Palestinian Talmud, it exemplifies the long process of incorporating Psalms into the daily Amidah.[61]

Before moving away from R. Yoḥanan (and R. Yudan), it is pertinent to ask: Of all verses to choose, why Psalms 51:17 and 19:15? The former is cited nowhere else in classical rabbinic literature, and it is thus difficult to solidly identify why it was chosen. Perhaps an implicit midrash reads "your praise" (*te**h**illatekha*) as "your prayer = Amidah" (*te**f**illatekha*)?[62] The choice of Psalm 19:15, however, is clearer. It is the only biblical verse to contain the "May it be the will" (*hyh + rtzn*) formula that appears at both the beginning and end of numerous recorded rabbinic prayers.[63]

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[61] The process of fits and starts can also be witnessed when one traces the use of Psalm 28:10 in the classical rabbinic literature. I will not provide a full discussion here, but only note that one sees a psalm verse initially embedded into an occasional prayer find its way into a version of the Amidah, albeit in an indirect and uneasy manner.

[62] The suggestion that this verse opens the Amidah because of mystical and prophetic resonances associated with the action of "opening a mouth" seems entirely implausible, *contra* Gregory Glazgov, "The Invocation of Ps. 51:17 in Jewish and Christian Morning Prayer," *JSJ* 46 (1995): 167–82. I also reject Kimelman's supposition that these verses are meant to frame the Amidah as a replacement for sacrifice, Kimelman, "Rabbinic Prayer in Late Antiquity," 586. Scholars should resist the urge to reduce anything prayer related to sacrifice. For complexity and nuance regarding this supposition see Stefan C. Reif, "Approaches to Sacrifice in Early Jewish Prayer," in *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, ed. C. T. R. Hayward and Brad Embry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 133–50.

[63] Some examples include: m. Avot 5:20, m. Ber. 9:3, m. Tam. 7:3, t. Ber. 3:7, and numerous others.

It is no surprise that the psalm verse with the most affinity to a common prayer pattern was to become itself part of a central rabbinic prayer.[64]

The *hyh* + *rtz* formula, however, can appear either at the beginning or end of a blessing or prayer.[65] Why does R. Yoḥanan place it at the conclusion while R. Yudan places it at the beginning? With regards to R. Yoḥanan, the aesthetic element of bracketing is not beyond consideration. Alternatively, one could possibly read R. Yoḥanan's choice in light of b. Ber. 9b, which suggests that R. Yoḥanan was aware of the tradition that linked the Amidah to the first 19 Psalms. The last verse of the final psalm is 19:15, and thus a fitting end to the Amidah. Another explanation for R. Yoḥanan's practice draws on the phenomenological perspectives of Uri Ehrlich and Lawrence Hoffman, who argue that scholars must pay attention to the non-verbal and sociological aspects of prayer.[66] Adopting this perspective, I suggest that both verses are part of the two key points of an "access ritual" – its beginning and end – during a dialogic encounter with God.[67] The psalm verses thus provide a ritual frame. The opening verse sets the tone for the divine encounter as deferentially hopeful. The concluding verse expresses the hope that the encounter was successful.[68]

What about R. Yudan? He may be drawing on an earlier tradition cited in y. Ber. 1:1 2d that is attributed to R. Zera in the name of R. Abba b. Jeremiah. This tradition is also the only other place where Psalm 19:15 is cited in rabbinic literature. It begins by stating that there are three pairs

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[64] See also b. Ber. 17a, where Mar b. Ravina concludes his prayer with our psalm verse. Another example of this phenomenon is the use of Psalm 28:10, which bears much similarity to the שומע תפילה benediction.
[65] For this phrase at the end of a prayer see t. Ber. 6:2 (on the elimination of idolatry), and more clearly in t. Ber. 6:16.
[66] Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Beyond the Text: A Holistic Approach to Liturgy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Ehrlich, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer*.
[67] I draw on Goffman's terminology and theory from Uri Ehrlich, "'In the Last Benedictions He Resembles a Servant Who Has Received a Largess from His Master and Takes His Leave' (B. Ber. 34a)," in *The Experience of Jewish Liturgy: Studies Dedicated to Menahem Schmelzer*, ed. Debra Reed Blank, BRLJ 31 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 41–61. He deals with the conclusion of the Amidah and not our verses.
[68] On the potential connection between this verse and the *retzeh* prayer see Ibid., 56 n.57.

of things that must be joined. The final one is: "The joining of Redemption and the Amidah. 'Let the words of my mouth be acceptable' (Ps 19:15) and what is written after that? 'The Lord will answer you in a day of trouble' (Ps 20:2)." Psalm 19:15 is the scriptural mirror to the Redemption blessing that precedes the Amidah, here imagined in terms of Psalm 20:2.[69] For R. Yudan, the verse used to justify the pre-Amidah redemption blessing itself becomes a petition to be said before the Amidah.[70] Regardless of whether this interpretation is correct, Psalm 19:15 seems to be exegetically primed for discussions about the Amidah.[71] Its use by both R. Yudan and R. Yoḥanan are unsurprising when properly contextualized.[72]

From Center to Periphery

In the the Amoraic period, psalm verses were also included in the center of the Amidah and not just placed at its periphery. A prescriptive statement attributed to R. Huna in y. Ber. 1:1 2c provides evidence not only for the development of daily psalmody, but also for the requirement of the listening audience to actively participate in it. Once again, just because a rabbi demands something does not mean it is followed, even by most rabbinic Jews. Nevertheless, this is good evidence for reconstructing the place of psalms in daily rabbinic prayer:

> R Huna said: He who sees the priests in the synagogue – during the first blessing he must (*tzarikh lo'mar*) say: "Bless the Lord, O his messengers" (Ps 103:20) During the second: "Bless the Lord, O his hosts" (103:21). During the third: "Bless the Lord, O all his creation" (Ps 103:22). During the additional prayer – during the first blessing he must say: "Song of Ascents, behold bless the Lord, O all servants of the Lord, those who stand in the

[69] This will also be the case for our discussion of y. Ber. 4:3 8a below.
[70] Benovitz suggests that R. Yudan said Psalm 19:15 after the *ge'ulah* blessing and before Psalm 51:17 because the Palestinian version of the *ge'ulah* blessing contained the phrase: "Rock of Israel and its redeemer." This seems overly speculative, but intriguing. Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 152. Was this version extant during the Amoriac period?
[71] On exegetical priming see the previous chapter.
[72] In the future I hope to provide a fuller study of the relationship of scriptural verses and prayers cited in rabbinic literature.

> house of the Lord at night" (Ps 134:1). During the second: "Raise your holy hands,[73] and bless the Lord" (Ps 134:2). During the third: "From Zion, he will bless you Lord,[74] the one who made the heaven and earth" (Ps 134:3). If there are four, he goes back. The third is like the first, and the fourth is like the second.

According to R. Huna, the priestly benediction towards the end of the daily Amidah was not a passive affair.[75] Instead, it requires a dialogic response. This model mirrors and may draw inspiration from the responsive refrains required for prayers such as the Shema and Hallel.[76] After each individual blessing, the audience responds with an appropriate statement. It is noteworthy, however, that the proper response to the priestly blessing comes exclusively from Psalms. Psalm 103:20-22 compliments the daily priestly blessing, and Psalm 134:1-3 accompanies that of the additional prayer. The three consecutive verses of Numbers 6:24-6 that constitute the priestly blessing are mirrored by three consecutive psalm verses. These particular psalms are chosen because they contain three consecutive verses that each contain the word "bless." Psalm 134 may have been of particular interest because its second verse commands a group to "lift your hands," the exact action of the priests during the blessing. The ritual is often simply called: "lifting of hands."[77] Of note as well is the fact that as the priests bless the people with statements about God providing blessing and peace, the people respond with verses that highlight the praise given to God by his creations. Blessing causes blessing.

If one could dismiss R. Yoḥanan's injunction above as private and non-binding, that attributed to R. Huna is clearly imagined as authoritative (*tzarikh*), as well as publically situated

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[73] Translating here with the likely midrashic intent.
[74] Again, translating with the likely midrashic intent.
[75] On the place of the priestly blessing in the liturgy of Qumran, see Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 145–71. Elsewhere in rabbinic literature the priestly blessing was understood as an opportune time to nullify bad dreams, see b. Ber. 55b, Septimus, *On the Boundaries*, 96–106. It also appears in magical amulets in this period, Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993), 25–27.
[76] This of course, depends on what exactly *pores* may mean. Nonetheless, see t. Soṭ. 6:2, describes some sort of responsive event.
[77] See for example y. Tan. 4:1 67b.

in the synagogue (*bet keneset*).[78] Unlike with regards to R. Yoḥanan's statement, however, not all later rabbis view this practice as authoritative, as the parallel discussion in b. Soṭah 39b-40a will demonstrate.

B. Soṭah 39b-40a both extends the practice of responding to the priestly blessing with verses and tests its limits. It demonstrates that R. Huna's demand gained only a limited following. B. Soṭah 39b-40a begins by mirroring the passage in the Palestinian Talmud, primarily differing with regards to the third response during the priestly blessing of the additional service. Instead of Psalm 134:3, it suggests Psalm 135:21: "Bless the Lord from Zion, O dwellers of Jerusalem." The reason for the swap is due to the fact that Psalm 134:3 is read as God blessing the people and not the people blessing God: "Since we began with blessing God we conclude with blessing Him." From here onwards the Babylonian Talmud completely differs from the Palestinian one. It suggests verses for other occasions in which the priestly blessing is recited, such as Jerermiah 14:7-9 during a fast day, and Psalm 128:4-6 during the closing service of Yom Kippur.[79] It then follows with a discussion that clarifies exactly when the audience should recite these verses: between each benediction, or at the mention of the divine name? It concludes by citing three different opinions as to whether one responds to the priestly blessing with scriptural verses in contemporary rabbinic liturgy. R. Ḥiyya b. Abba claims that one should not say these verses outside the temple. R. Ḥanniah b. Papa suggests that even in the temple one does not recite these verses. R. Aḥa b. Ḥanniah retorts that one must say them even outside the temple. Ultimately, while the details of

[78] For the dismissal of R. Yoḥanan's statement see Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie." Stemberger seems to be unware of this R. Huna source. Additionally, the statement assumes a reality in which not everyone was actually able to *see* the priest in some ancient synagogues. Compare this with the parallel passage in the Babylonian Talmud, which simply asks: "What do people say?"

[79] It attributes this to a Tannaitic statement that is otherwise unattested.

and the legal force behind the practice are inconclusive, there is no doubt that Psalms has made its way once more into a central part of daily rabbinic liturgy.

As I mentioned earlier, the entrance of psalm verses into daily rabbinic liturgy progressed in fits and starts. The statements by R. Yoḥanan and R. Huna, both early Amoraim, show this process in action. Each statement was selectively adopted, modified or rejected. Psalm verses entered the Amidah, but their stability in that context was uncertain. Sources from the end of the Amoriac period, however, clearly demonstrate the relative fixity of some psalm verses in central rabbinic prayers.

Psalms and *Piyyut*

Evidence for this comes from liturgical poetry (*piyyut*), a generally underutilized source of information for the study of ancient Judaism. An ornate scripturally suffused style characterizes these poems.[80] They mimic, draw from and repackage biblical verses, constantly building allusive and often elusive bridges to biblical texts. Within this scriptural polyphony, however, some types of *piyyut* will consistently quote particular verse in a specific location. I follow those scholars who suggest these verses were an integral part of regular prayer,[81] and that their function was to draw the listener of the poem to the prayer it embellishes. Within the classical period of liturgical

[80] For the classic study of *piyyut*, see Ezra Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2007). On the development of biblical citation, and particularly that of the ornamental use of Scripture, see Shulamit Elizur, "The Use of Biblical Verses in Hebrew Liturgical Poetry," in *Prayers That Cite Scripture*, ed. James L. Kugel (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 83–100. On the radical thesis that chain verse citation in *piyyut* actually demonstrates that these verses were a set part of rabbinic prayer see Shulamit Elizur, "The Chains of Verses in the Qedushta and the Ancient Benediction," *Tarbitz* 77 (2008): 425–73. If correct, it would mean the preponderance of all sorts of verses, including psalm verses, in rabbinic prayer of the Amoraic period. Her arguments are interesting but speculative. For the purpose of this chapter, I will only deal with concrete evidence. I acknowledge, however, that more psalm verses may be hiding under the surface.

[81] Fleischer proposes this logic with regards to the chain of verses that accompanies the end of the *magen* and *meḥayyeh* section of the *Qedushta*. I wish to extend this supposition to all the frozen verses. Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry*, 142. For this logic see also Elizur, "The Chains," 456; Elizur, "The Use of Biblical Verses," 84.

poetry,[82] which begins with Yannai,[83] the third poetic composition (*meshalesh*) of nearly every liturgical poem for the Sabbath morning or holiday Amidah (*qedushta*) ends with either Psalm 146:10 or Psalm 22:4.[84] One of these verses will almost always bridge the poem and the Sanctification of the Name blessing. Indeed, the Cambridge T-S 8H 14 Genizah fragment attests to the use of Psalm 22:4 in this part of the Amidah, even if unadorned by a liturgical poem. Likewise, the poem designed to ornament the liturgical complex of Shema (the *yotzer*) contains stable psalm bridges. Psalm 136:7 almost always accompanies the Creator of Light (*yotzer or*) blessing, and Psalm 135:4 the poem embellishing Love (*ohev ammo*).[85] With the exclusion of Isaiah 47:4 at the conclusion the Who is Like You (*mi kamokhah*) section of the Creator of Lights (*yotzer*) poem,[86] a majority of stable verses appear to come from Psalms. Altogether, these "frozen verses"[87] were an integral part of established liturgy that were then incorporated without much modification into liturgical poetry. By the time of Yannai, then, it appears that psalm verses were not only incorporated into daily liturgy as temporary embellishments, but also as fixed and stable entities.[88]

[82] Fleischer keeps the dates of this period uncertain, but claims that it begins with Yannai and ends with R. Pinḥas HaKohen. For the fundamental attributes of this period, see Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry*, 117–275.
[83] On Yannai in particular and the only real English study of *piyyut* in general see Laura S. Lieber, *Yannai on Genesis: An Invitation to Piyyut*, MHUC 36 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 2010).
[84] Fleischer, *Hebrew Liturgical Poetry*, 143.
[85] Ibid., 225.
[86] Ibid., 230, 48.
[87] I adopt this language from Fleischer.
[88] Additionally, although beyond the scope of this current chapter, I would tentatively suggest that the evidence of liturgical poetry attests to the widespread appeal and use of psalms in daily prayer by non-rabbis. I will examine this elsewhere.

Ashre and Liturgical Psalmody

Thus far we have explored the use of particular psalm verses as part of daily rabbinic liturgy. Full psalms, however, also make an appearance in daily liturgy during the Amoraic period.[89] One underappreciated example is *ashre*, a liturgical unit that precedes Shema and of which the core is Psalm 145.[90] It derives its name from the psalm verses that introduce it, such as Psalms 84:5 and 144:16, which begin with the word "Fortunate" (*ashre*).[91] It also concludes with Psalm 116:18, making it a veritable psalm-informed unit.[92] While some scholars maintain that *ashre* is a post-talmudic prayer,[93] a clear reading of b. Ber. 4b proves this claim false.[94] I will

[89] Another example of the incorporation of a full psalm into prayer may be the combination of Psalms 92-3 during Sabbath liturgy. Evidence for this comes from the poetry of Qillir. For a discussion of this evidence see Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs*, 178.

[90] It is interesting to note that Psalm 145 seems to have some liturgical resonances in the Qumran Psalm Scroll, where each line of the poem is accompanied by an antiphonal response. Of course, I read no genetic connection here.

[91] These were not the only verses containing *ashre* used to introduce the unit. Other possible verses include: Pss 94:12; 106:3; 112:1; 119:1, 2; 128:1, 2. For an examination of a Genizah fragment that contained all of these see Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs*, 283.

[92] It is possible, though, that this conclusion is a later development.

[93] This is done by harmonizing it with the mention of "Praise of David" the line before and assuming it was simply a pious practice. I thus disagree with Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 162 who claims that the verses preceding Psalm 145 are post-talmudic. I also disagree with Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 229 who argues that *ashre* made its way into liturgy in the post-talmudic period because of the pious prescription to read it three times a day. The phrase "three times a day" is clearly a later manuscript addition that was based on common liturgical practice. Stemberger evidently based his analysis on the Vilna edition only.

[94] Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 158–60 casts complete doubt on the authenticity and integrity of the statement by R. Yoḥanan. 1) He claims that the use of *ashre* is strange especially as the line before reads "*tehillah leDavid*." I argue that this is not strange but demonstrates the blurry boundary of liturgy and piety. For a full discussion see the following chapter. Benovitz agrees that if there was a scribal change it would have occurred to the "*tehilliah leDavid*" of the line before as well. 2) He is surprised regarding the interpretation that *nun* drops because of a verse in Amos 5:2, should all *nun*'s be abandoned? Benovitz does not sufficiently appreciate the fact that R. Yoḥanan needs to explain a text that exists in front of him. This is not a programmatic midrash, but a localized one. The very fact that the midrash is so forced actually demonstrates that the text in front of him lacked a *nun* and was important enough to receive comment. 3) *Contra* Benovitz, R. Naḥman's midrash makes perfect sense. It claims that even though the *nun* is absent because of R. Yoḥanan's logic, David nonetheless hinted to it and its reason in the following verse: "God makes steady those who fall." 4) The argument that the *nun* verse appears in Qumran and other versions and therefore absent only in later Masoretic texts is inconclusive. This argument could be extended to nearly every place the MT diverges from the other versions, and it is certainly not the case that these instances are due to the lateness of the MT. Additionally, there is good reason to think that the *nun* dropped out *before* the version in the Psalm Scroll. The conclusion of the *nun* verse "and pious in all his actions" appears in the *tzade* verse. Indeed, this supposed *nun* verse seems to be slightly modified version of that entire verse, in which "*ne'eman*" replaced "*tzadiq*," "Elohim" replaced "YHWH," and a slight shifts turns "*derakhav*" into "*devarav*." 5) There is no reason to harmonize our statement with another saying of R Yoḥanan whether it is found in b. Meg. 10b or b. Ber. 9b-10a. The former simply attests to the fact that there are a host of midrashim that focus on "what is not there" but really ought to be! Benovitz's argument from b. Ber. 9b-10a

discuss the first mention of Psalm 145 on this folio in the next chapter and focus here on the second time it appears. The Babylonian Talmud cites an opinion attributed to R. Yoḥanan: "Why is there no *nun* verse in *ashre*? Because the downfall of Israel is in it…." R. Yoḥanan calls attention to a problem in Psalm 145 – that an otherwise perfect acrostic is missing a *nun* – by referring to the psalm as "*ashre*," or rather to a liturgical unit of which the psalm forms a part of, since Psalm 145 does not contain the word *ashre*. Furthermore, only one manuscript, Paris 671, deviates from the norm and cites R. Yoḥanan as asking his question about "A Praise of David" (*tehillah leDavid*), the true opening of Psalm 145.[95] The majority reading, however, is to be preferred on two grounds. First, Paris 671 showcases a clear instance of harmonization, as the psalm is called "A Praise of David" (*tehillah leDavid*) two lines before in the discussion of the Babylonian Talmud. Second, if the word *ashre* were a late intrusion on the basis of post-talmudic liturgy it is surprising that no manuscript updates the first mention of "A Praise of David" in folio 4b to "*ashre***.**" This would be the more logical site of scribal intervention for two reasons. First, the Talmud discusses the daily recitation of Psalm 145, something closer to liturgy than a homily. Second, the line *was* updated! The original line of "once a day" was changed to "three times a day" in light of later liturgical developments in which Psalm 145 was sung thrice daily.[96] The scribe of Paris 671 likely realized that R. Yoḥanan's homily was directly on Psalm 145 and not on *ashre* and revised his manuscript

falls apart because why would R. Yoḥanan ask about opening Psalm 145 with *ashre* and not about concluding it with *ashre*, as per his statement later? 6) Benovitz's hypothetical reconstruction makes little sense as well. If any psalm that contains violence against non-Jews would not be surrounded with *ashre* then much explaining needs to go into the *only* example of a psalm that is surrounded by *ashre*, namely Pss 1-2, both of which contain lines of violence against the 'enemies of the Jews.' Ultimately, there is no reason to conjecture a completely different base text that no manuscript supports.

[95] Paris 671. Against Florence, Oxford and Munich.

[96] Munich lists "three times"; Florence has "three times," but a scribe erased it – acknowledging that one time a day was the original reading. The printed editions read "three times."

accordingly. Thus, sometime in the Amoraic period a full psalm was both incorporated into daily prayer and well enough known to be cited – like other prayers – by the unit's opening word.

The sources discussed in this section clearly demonstrate two key facts. First, the Amoraic period witnessed the rise of daily psalmody in rabbinic liturgy in the form of both specific verses and entire psalms. Second, the process of incorporating Psalms into daily liturgy was slow and not entirely predictable or consistent.

Now that the use of Psalms in rabbinic daily liturgy has been firmly established, let us turn to the question of causes; namely: what mechanisms – both internal and external to rabbinic Judaism – facilitated and contributed to the growth of daily psalmody in the Amoraic period?

Psalm Verses: From Justification to Liturgy

History is not monocausal. As such, the remainder of this chapter will explore a wide variety of mechanisms that contributed to the rise and development of rabbinic daily psalmody. This particular section will examine what I think was the most important internal cause for the development of daily psalmody, namely, how the use of Psalms as a primary prooftext for justifying rabbinic innovations in daily liturgy set the stage for the eventual incorporation of Psalms into daily liturgy.[97] The process of using Psalms to justify liturgy began during the time of the Tannaim and flourished during that of the Amoraim. We will explore both epochs in-depth.

Historians are well aware of the fact that innovation balances with and requires tradition. To create change in many ancient and modern societies is to rhetorically structure the new on the

[97] One should think about this in light of symbolic systems which are meant to structure a reality and eventually become one. This is certainly the case with ritual violence and actual violence. See, for example, narratives in which the violence surrounding tales about the desecration of the host eventually spills into actual violence against Jews, Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 48–57.

basis of the old, to decorate novelty with an ancient façade. While daily psalmody was not a feature of early rabbinic liturgy, the rabbis did not abandon the book of Psalms. Rather, they carefully read it with an eye towards providing scriptural justification for nearly every aspect of liturgy, from the structure of daily prayer to its surrounding practices.[98]

We must proceed, however, with one note of caution. Appealing to Psalms was not the *only* strategy the rabbis use in conceptualizing and justifying prayer. To claim it was would be to imagine the rabbis as a monolith. Psalm-based rhetoric, nonetheless, is important and distinctive for several reasons. First, it highlights the relative absence of daily psalmody from rabbinic liturgy. Second, daily psalmody may have been common in non-rabbinic late antique circles, thus giving added force to the focus on and use of Psalms. I will examine the evidence for non-rabbinic Jewish psalmody below. Third, a rough overview of scriptural verses used to justify prayer clearly highlights the dominance of Psalms. In reality, however, a rabbi would use as many tools at his disposal as possible to convince other rabbis as well as non-rabbis of the validity of his opinions and practices.

Psalm Prooftexts in Tannaitic Literature

When seeking to create, justify and promote their own prayer practices the rabbis begin by mining scriptural precedent, transforming the prayers of earlier biblical figures into legal exempla. An early example of this phenomenon appears in t. Ber. 3:6:

[98] See the classic statements in Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, Canto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–14. It may also be worth bearing in mind the advice of Reif: "It should not be forgotten that by its very nature liturgy tends to present more problems for the historian that other areas since novelty of practice is not only rarely acknowledged but also re-interpreted as established custom," Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 354–55 n. 11.

> Perhaps a person can go and pray all day? It is explained through Daniel, "Three times a day" (Dan 6:11).[99] Perhaps that is because of the exile? Thus it says, "Everything that was done before now" (Dan 6:11). Perhaps the person's voice must be heard [during prayer]? It is explained through Hannah,[100] "And Hannah spoke in her heart" (1 Sam 1:13). Perhaps he can say all (three) prayers at the same time? It was explained through David, "Evening, morning and afternoon I speak and moan" (Ps 55:11). Evening – this is the evening Amidah;[101] morning – this is the morning Amidah; afternoon – this is the afternoon Amidah. Perhaps he can ask his needs and then stop? It is explained through Solomon, "To listen to the jubilation and prayer" (1 Kings 8:28). Jubilation is jubilation, as it says, "Rejoice, righteous ones, in the Lord; for the upright praise is pleasant" (Ps 33:1). Prayer – this is request.

Each of these prooftexts is drawn from earlier biblical *figures* at prayer. Within classical rabbinic literature, the phrase "it is explained through character X" (*parash b* + character) is unique to our Tosefta passage. It is the clearest, and rarest, example of exemplarity. Collectively, these figures supply the rhetorical basis necessary to undergird both older practices and even some new and innovative ones. Requiring an individual to pray three times a day was perhaps a less controversial demand than positing that the necessary supplication was the rabbinic Amidah.[102] In the words of Ezra Fleischer, "The *shemoneh esreh* was an utter innovation on all levels, whether institutional, functional, or theological."[103]

As the passage above demonstrates, David's prayerful voice resounded loudly and forcefully in rabbinic legal hermeneutics. Indeed, one mode of reading the Psalter in rabbinic culture was to frame the entire book as David's prayer. Any chapter of Psalms, therefore, becomes ready source material upon which rabbinic authorities may imprint or mold new prayer practice.

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[99] This reading is not unique to Jews. Origen, as well, derives the requirement to pray three times a day from this verse in his *De oratione*, 32.

[100] I translate with Ms Vienna, except in the cases where it has "as it says," which I omit like Ms Erfurt and the first printed edition. There is no "as it says" in the first citation in Vienna, and the remainder were likely scribal additions.

[101] The text says "*tefillah*," but there is no doubt that it means the Amidah.

[102] For the history of opinions regarding the origins and development of prayer three times a day in the period before rabbinic Judaism see Penner, *Patterns of Daily Prayer*, 1–33.

[103] Ezra Fleischer, "On the Origins of the 'Amidah: Response to Ruth Langer," *Prooftexts* 20 (2000): 382. I do not accept his claim, however, that it can be traced back to a moment at Yavneh.

Thus, even if early rabbinic daily liturgy lacked psalmody, the rabbis imagined their prayers built upon a sturdy psalm-suffused scaffolding.

This is nowhere more evident than when rabbis discuss the scriptural underpinnings of the Amidah, that novel and innovative creation of the rabbinic period. The origins and history of this prayer are mired in scholarly controversy. Early scholarship from Zunz to Heinemann accepted at face value the claim that Simon Hapaquli ordered and fixed a preexisting prayer that was established sometime during the Second Temple period.[104] Weinfeld, working with a similar assumption, attempted to correlate much of the prayer with biblical and Second Temple literature.[105] These connections are phenomenological at best. They may highlight shared themes,

[104] For the most part, they took legendary tales such as that in b. Meg. 17b–18a as historical fact. Of course, to varying degrees. See Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 218–29; Finkelstein, "The Development of the Amidah"; Leopold Zunz, *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge Der Juden Historisch Entwickelt. Ein Beitrag Zur Altertumskunde Und Biblischen Kritik, Zur Literatur- Und Religionsgeschichte* (Berlin: Asher, 1832), 166–69.

[105] See Moshe Weinfeld, "Traces of Qedushat Yozer and Pesuke De-Zimra in the Qumran Literature and in Ben-Sira," *Tarbitz* 45 (1975): 15–26; Moshe Weinfeld, "The Prayers for Knowledge, Repentance and Forgiveness in the 'Eighteen Benedictions'—Qumran Parallels, Biblical Antecedents and Basic Characteristics," *Tarbitz* 48 (1979): 186–200; Moshe Weinfeld and Uriel Rappaport, "Prayer and Liturgical Practice in the Qumran Sect," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research*, ed. Devorah Dimant, STDJ 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 241–58; Moshe Weinfeld, "The Angelic Song over the Luminaries in the Qumran Texts," in *Time to Prepare the Way in the Wilderness: Papers on the Qumran Scrolls by Fellows of the Institute for Advanced Studies of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1989 - 1990*, ed. Devorah Dimant and Lawrence H Schiffman, STDJ 16 (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 131–57; Moshe Weinfeld, "The Litany 'Our God in Heaven' and Its Precedents in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 263–69. Shemaryahu Talmon, "The Order of Prayers of the Sect from the Judaean Desert," *Tarbitz* 29 (1959): 1–20. For an attempt to relate the central blessings of the Amidah to the prayers in 2 Maccabees see Daniel K. Falk, "Prayers and Psalms," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism Volume 1 - The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid, WUNT 140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 20–22. Falk is careful to posit a strong thematic correspondence and not a genetic relationship, although the intent seems clear. See also Daniel K. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 199–201. For a somewhat less genetic attempt to connect the Amidah to Ben Sira Joseph Tabory, "Prayers and Berakhot," in *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shmuel Safrai et al., CRINT 3b (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 302–6; Joseph Tabory, "The Precursors of the ʿAmidah," in *Identität durch Gebet: zur gemeinschaftsbildenden Funktion institutionalisierten Betens in Judentum und Christentum*, ed. Albert Gerhards, Andrea Doeker, and Peter Ebenbauer, Studien zu Judentum und Christentum (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003), 123–24. While he claims to be searching for "precursors" one sees the real desire to search towards origins. Indeed, for many of these examples it is important to realize that with enough abstraction or stock-themes and images anything can be made to seem like the precursor to the Amidah. The fact that no stable text for the Amidah exists makes this pursuit all the more tendentious. Esther Chazon also attempts to draw links between Qumran prayer and rabbinic liturgy, often relying on "common Judaism" as a channel of transmission, Esther G. Chazon, "Prayers from Qumran and Their Historical Implications," *DSD* 1 (1994): 265–84; Esther G. Chazon, "The Qedushah Liturgy and Its History in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *From*

but this is a far cry from proving the Amidah's antiquity or a direct genetic connection between the Amidah and earlier forms of prayer.[106] With enough abstraction almost anything can be thematically connected.[107] Furthermore, the numerous and conflicting attempts to locate an origin for the Amidah demonstrates rabbinic discomfort with discovering its origins and their inability to do so.[108] Ezra Fleisher, in an innovative thesis, not only argued against any notion of obligatory communal prayer before the destruction of the temple,[109] but also posited that R. Gamliel both created and set a fixed text for the Amidah.[110] This prayer, he argued, was immediately accepted and promulgated. Fleisher's historical revision, however, does not go far enough. Ruth Langer rightly points out that Fleisher still assumes that rabbinic texts accurately represent history and that

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Qumran to Cairo: Studies in the History of Prayer. Proceedings of the Research Group Convened under the Auspices of the Institute for Advanced Studies of The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997, ed. Joseph Tabory (Jerusalem: Orhot, 1999), 7–17. The most sober and compelling discussion of these analogs appears in Richard S. Sarason, "The 'Intersections' of Qumran and Rabbinic Judaism: The Case of Prayer Texts and Liturgies," *DSD* 8 (2001): 169–81. In my opinion, the similarities are due mostly to shared biblical background and not to an evolutionary relationship.

[106] For critique see Stefan C. Reif, "The Second Temple Period, Qumran Research, and Rabbinic Liturgy: Some Contextual and Linguistic Comparisons," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 139–42.

[107] See most recently Menahem Kister, "The Prayers of the Seventh Book of the 'Apostolic Constitutions' and Their Implications for the Formulation of the Synagogue Prayers," *Tarbitz* 77 (2008): 205–38. Kister's postulation of an early Jewish version of the Amidah behind the Apostolic Constitution can be criticized with the same critique leveled against those who wish to "recover" Jewish Second Temple texts by excising Christian references and finding a similar enough sounding Jewish parallel. See Robert A. Kraft, "The Pseudepigrapha in Christianity," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. John C Reeves (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 55–86; Robert A. Kraft, "The Pseudepigrapha and Christianity Revisited: Setting the Stage and Framing Some Central Questions," *JSJ* 32 (2001): 371–95. I do agree, however, with his suggestion that blessings do not develop linearly, and that a version attested later may in fact be early.

[108] From where does the Amidah come from? The Patriarchs? Moses? The Men of Great Assembly? R. Gamliel? See, for example, b. Ber. 26a, 33b, 48b and b. Meg. 17b. Indeed, the entire notion of a "council at Yavneh" may be a pious fiction. See Daniel Boyarin, "The Yavneh-Cycle of the Stammaim and the Invention of the Rabbis," in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, TSAJ 114 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 237–89.

[109] Fleischer, "On the Beginnings," 401–25. He argues that the temple was absolutely central and therefore no obligated prayer was necessary. Sectarian groups like Qumran, who viewed the temple as problematic, are the exception that proves the rule. The innovation of obligated prayer is most recently echoed in Septimus, *On the Boundaries*, 31–32. For the purposes of my argument I think the approach of Falk, "Contribution," 628 is correct. Fleischer is correct about the uniqueness and distinctive obligatory nature of rabbinic prayer post 70. Nevertheless, he underestimates the scrolls and overestimates the importance of Yavneh.

[110] Fleischer, "On the Beginnings," 426–28; Ezra Fleischer, "The Shemoneh ʿEsreh: Its Character, Internal Order, Content and Goals," *Tarbitz* 62 (1993): 179–223.

one can take claims of success at face value.[111] Historical reconstructions that rely on rabbinic councils that legislate and communities that are completely obedient reflect a dated historiography that assumes a mode of rabbinic authority which simply did not exist in ancient world.[112] Instead, Langer suggests, the Amidah first grew gradually among rabbinic elites and was only slowly adopted by ancient Jews over many long centuries. "The important question then becomes not what were its origins but how and when did it (and the rest of the Rabbinic system) come to influence and shape the religious life of the larger Jewish world?"[113] By focusing on the justificatory scaffolding provided by psalms we can begin to fill in one piece of "how" the Amidah gained popularity. The book of Psalms, a popular text with liturgical resonances, was intentionally mined by some rabbis to furnish evidence and convince others – both rabbis and perhaps the wider community – of the legitimacy and biblical underpinnings of the Amidah. In short, what is the Amidah if not Psalms itself?

Before exploring the role of Psalms in underpinning the Amidah, let us first note that the tactic of claiming that a contemporary prayer mirrors and essentially is another now-defunct prayer text is not completely foreign to the rabbinic toolkit. As seen in m. Tam. 5:1, the rabbis imagined the Decalogue to be part of an early Shema liturgy. At some point, in some rabbinic circles, it was no longer recited. This gap, or perhaps the attempt to create it, received comment.[114] Y. Ber. 1:8

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[111] Ruth Langer, "Revisiting Early Rabbinic Liturgy: The Recent Contributions of Ezra Fleischer," *Prooftexts* 19 (1999): 190.

[112] For the revisionist trend see Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*; Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

[113] Langer, "Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 2:427.

[114] For the Decalogue in Jewish liturgy and rabbinic sources see Langer, "The Decalogue in Jewish Liturgy," 87–89; Urbach, "The Role of the Ten Commandments in Jewish Worship." I am partial to Langer's claim on pg. 89 that the general populace likely wanted the Decalogue to remain part of liturgy, and that what we witness here is a tug-of-war. I build on this claim by highlighting the rabbinic tactic used to convince people that all one needs is the Shema liturgy. Urbach, on pages 167-8, claims that our midrash was recited when the Decalogue was no longer said. I disagree, as he tends to read rabbinic statement such as these as historical fact and not as arguments. His claim that there were efforts to revive the liturgical use of the Decalogue are better understood as a continually failing rabbinic attempt to quash an existing practice.

3c contains a lengthy discussion that attempts to prove that the Shema and its associated paragraphs are essentially the Decalogue. It proceeds by sequentially correlating each commandment with a specific portion of Shema. Thus, "I am the Lord your God" corresponds to "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God"; "You should have no other Gods" is contained in "the Lord is One"; not taking the Lord's name in vain mirrors "you will love your God" etc…. The overall argument is evident. The absent Decalogue is not missing at all. It is the Shema. Perhaps something similar is at work when some rabbis imagine the Amidah in terms of Psalms. The occasional and seasonal use of Psalms brings to the fore the question of why the Psalms were not simply adopted into daily liturgy. One answer: the Amidah is sanctioned by Psalms. The cases of the Decalogue/Shema and Psalms/Amidah are not entirely analogous. The Decalogue and Shema are both scriptural texts, although this very analogical tension may really just highlight the rabbinic desire to normalize the Amidah. As we will see later, some rabbinic sources line up the blessings of the Amidah and Psalm 29 in a manner very similar to the way that y. Ber. 1:8 3c connects the Decalogue and Shema. Indeed, the Amidah and Psalm 29 are just about as deeply connected as the Decalogue and the Shema.

The earliest justification for the number eighteen for Amidah's blessings, and the *only* one that appears in Tannaitic literature, rests on a holistic reading of Psalm 29, a psalm the rabbis otherwise, and almost exclusively, employ in this period to discuss the Sinaitic revelation.[115] Could our source be implicitly attempting to mold a relationship between revelation and the requirement for eighteen benedictions, a number not set in stone even within rabbinic circles? As we move

[115] For a full discussion of this, as well as an explication of "holistic reading" see the previous chapter.

from this Tannaitic source to Amoraic ones we will see that nearly every Amoraic comment on Psalm 29 will relate it to the Amidah and other prayer practices.

This process begins with t. Ber. 3:25:

> The eighteen blessings that the sages said, they correspond to the eighteen times God's name is mentioned in "Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings" (i.e. Ps 29). One combines the blessing against the *minim* with that of the *perushim*, and combines the one regarding converts with the one regarding the elders. If he said each one of them separately, he fulfilled his obligation.

The first source to imagine Psalm 29 as the backbone of the Amidah is not without its own tensions. The very proof meant to scripturally undergird the number eighteen actually demonstrates the problem of variation.[116] During this period there clearly were more or fewer than eighteen blessings.[117] Why force the number eighteen? Heinemann claims without much evidence that the number "must have crystalized sometime before the destruction of the Temple."[118] Fleischer suggests that that eighteen was chosen because it was divisible by three, and oral culture shows a preference for memorization in triads.[119] This suggestion leads one to ask: Why not six, nine, twelve or fifteen. Langer speculates that the number eighteen relates to the symbolic value of 'life,' which has the numerical equivalency of eighteen.[120] One is hard-pressed, however, to find early rabbinic sources that subscribe to this numerology. A simple and more elegant solution, in my opinion, would be to take the Tosefta's claim seriously. Psalm 29, as seen in the previous chapter,

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[116] For the purposes of my argument I need not delineate the exact nature of each blessing. It is sufficient to note that there were more than eighteen. For a detailed discussion of these blessings, and particularly the one for the *minim* see Lieberman, *Tosefta Kefshuto: Seder Zeraim Volume 1*, 53–55. Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 57–59; Teppler, *Birkat Haminim*. Ginzberg notes that because this *baraita* is cited in the name of Amorim in later literature he cannot tell whether this Tosefta is of Tannaitic or Amoriac origin. Ginzberg, *Commentary*, 3:268. Fleischer, "On the Beginnings," 436–7 n.101 argues that our passage is coming to lend support for an already established pattern of eighteen. See here also with regards to the problem of variation in blessings. Ultimately, I agree that this *baraita* points out the radical nature of the number eighteen.

[117] For the most part, the prayer is not called the *shemonah esre*, but rather *tefilliah*. For acknowledged early variation see m. Ber. 4:3-4.

[118] Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 224.

[119] Fleischer, "The Shemoneh 'Esreh," 183–84.

[120] Langer, "The Amida," 135.

was an important unit of discourse in the Tannaitic period, and the only psalm to contain eighteen mentions of God's name. In attempting to promote the Amidah, at least one rabbi sought to draw from this psalm and set it as a template. I suggest that appealing to Psalm 29 was not a post-fact justification of why the Amidah has eighteen blessings, but rather a generative argument that encouraged the molding of an amorphous Amidah into eighteen benedictions.[121] Even if my suggestion is incorrect, it is clear that for at least one rabbi a reading of Psalm 29 undergirds a central aspect of the Amidah. Prayer and Psalms are intimately related.

Psalm Prooftexts in Amoraic Literature: Correlating the Amidah with Psalm 29

As we move from Tannaitic sources to Amoraic ones we witness two processes. The first, explored above, was the introduction and growth of daily psalmody in the rabbinic liturgy. The second, which we will explore here, was an increase in the use of Psalms as a key to the lock of rabbinic prayer. I argue that these two developments must be viewed in tandem. The constant justification of liturgy through psalm interpretation encouraged the incorporation of Psalms into liturgy. This interpretation, in turn, likely promoted the further use of Psalms to underpin liturgy. While numerous examples exist,[122] I will focus on the use of Psalms to undergird the very fabric and structure of rabbinic liturgy, beginning with the reception of Psalm 29 in Amoriac literature.

As just discussed, the only extant justification for the number eighteen in Tannaitic literature comes from Psalm 29's eighteen mentions of God's name.[123] It is no surprise, therefore,

[121] In this sense, I disagree with Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 57 who argues that our Tosefta knew that the Amidah needed eighteen blessings and knew that there were more and thus sought to harmonize.
[122] One way to approach this task, which I have not done here but plan to do in the future, is to trace the relationship between actual verses used as rabbinic justification and see how they are set in rabbinic liturgy.
[123] The parallel passages to our Tosefta all contain addition proofs that the Amidah has eighteen blessings. Perhaps appealing to Psalm 29 alone was not as effective as the rabbis would have liked? See y. Ber. 4:3 8a, y. Tan. 2:2 65c, b. Ber. 28b, Lev. Rab. 1:8, Tanḥ. Vayera 1, Mid. Ps. 29:2.

that later tradents attempt to sequentially correlate the blessings of the Amidah with these names. In fact, if in the previous Tannaitic source the number eighteen was blurry and uncertain, the Amoraic sources that follow assume that the number of benedictions in the Amidah must be eighteen and simply argue about how *exactly* their order correlates to Psalm 29. Additionally, verses from Psalm 29 become interpretive fodder for other prayers and liturgical practices. Thus, to borrow a concept developed in the previous chapter, Psalm 29, as a whole unit of discourse, was exegetically primed to be read in the context of prayer in the Amoraic period.

Y. Ber. 2:3 4d-5a contains the earliest evidence that Amoraic rabbis attempted to find exact sequential correlations between the eighteen mentions of God's name in Psalm 29 and the blessings of the Amidah. We must remember, however, that the Palestinian Talmud, like all rabbinic documents, is a redacted work. Thus, while the sugya as a whole treats the entire Amidah in a linear manner, discussing each of the eighteen blessing only once, it is actually composed of at least two distinct and independent sources.[124] These earlier sources are each interested in the Amidah, but for different reasons. Luckily, they are distinguishable from one another when we pay attention to terminology. One source, let us call it List A, begins with the formula: "Why did they (the rabbis) see fit to connect" (*mah ra'u lismokh*) and is interested in understanding why one blessing of the Amidah is connected to another. Thus: Why did rabbis connect the blessing of Forgiveness (*slḥ*) to that of Redemption (*g'l*)? Because of the connection between forgiveness and redemption in Psalm 103:3-4: "Who forgives (*slḥ*) all of your iniquity, who heals all your ailments;

[124] A third source exists in this sugya, namely the narrative about the birth of the messiah. It does not concern me here. See Martha Himmelfarb, "The Mother of the Messiah in the Talmud Yerushalmi and Sefer Zerubbabel," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer, vol. 3, 3 vols., TSAJ 93 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 369–89; Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 214–35. For further bibliography see ibid., 313 n.8.

who redeems (*g'l*) your life from the Pit."[125] The second source, let us call it List B, begins with the formula "Why did they establish blessing x as blessing number x" (*mipnei mah hitkinu x berakhah y*) and is interested in understanding the biblical origins of blessings of the Amidah. At the very least, it is clear to me that the redactor of this longer passage had two complete and independent lists in front of him that he selectively spliced together. He uses List A for fourteen blessing and List B for only four.

Psalm 29 appears two out of the four times List B is used. For the ninth blessing, the blessing of the Years, List B contains a statement attributed to R. Alexandri: "For what reason did they establish the blessing of the Years as the ninth blessing? It corresponds to 'The voice of the Lord smashes cedars' (Ps 29:5), for in the future he will destroy all the possessors of wealth." For R. Alexandri, the prayer hints at the fact that the financially powerful will be broken by God in the future. Regardless as to whether we find the interpretation compelling, "The voice of the Lord smashes cedars" is the ninth time that the name "YHWH" appears in Psalm 29. Something similar occurs for the fifteenth blessing, this time attributed to R. Tanḥuma: "For what reason did they establish 'Hearer of Prayers' as the fifteenth blessing? It corresponds to 'The Lord sat on the flood' (Ps 29:10) for he prevents bad things from coming into the world." "The Lord sat on the flood" is in fact the fifteenth time the name "YHWH" appears in Psalm 29. R. Tanḥuma's exegetical logic draws on the well-known connection between water – and the flood in particular – with evil and chaos.[126] By sitting on the flood, and thus holding it back, God is able to hear prayers and prevent the destructive force of chaos.

[125] This may be an example in which the original creator of the list did not have the clause "who heals your ailments" in his Psalter.

[126] For the currency of the motif, and especially that of chaotic waters, in rabbinic literature see Michael A. Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112–31.

Thus far we have seen two instances in which Psalm 29 is correlated to the Amidah. The fact that these connections rest in an ordinal relationship – with blessing nine matching name nine and blessing fifteen matching name fifteen – suggests that List B was itself a composite work. The other two examples from List B do not come from Psalm 29. I propose that an independent source existed, one that that correlated in a sequential manner each blessing of the Amidah with the mention of YHWH in Psalm 29. Let us call this List C.

Proof of List C's existence comes from b. Meg. 17b, which contains a discussion that mostly mirrors that of the Palestinian Talmud. It begins, however, by correlating the first three blessings of the Amidah with Psalm 29:[127]

> Our rabbis teach: from where do we know one should say Patriarchs [i.e. first blessing of Amidah]? Scripture says, "Ascribe to the Lord, O, of sons of angels" (Ps 29:1a). From where do we know one should say Strength [the second blessing]? Scripture says, "Ascribe to the Lord honor and strength" (Ps 29:1b). And from where do we know that one must say Sanctification? Scripture says, "Ascribe to the Lord the honor of his name" (Ps 29:2a).[128]

In this rabbinic statement, the first three mentions of "YHWH" in Psalm 29 correlate to the first three blessings of the Amidah. The patriarchs are imagined here as the "sons of angels" who praise YHWH. The second blessing, called Strength is correlated with the command to give YHWH honor and "strength" (*oz*). The third blessing, Sanctification, short for *qedushat haShem* (Sanctification of the Name), is related to the command to ascribe to YHWH the "honor of his name (*shem*)." At the very least, Psalm 29 once again stands at the center of justifying the contents

[127] I suggest that the guise of a Tannaitic statement really just indicates citation from a complete earlier list.

[128] There is some manuscript variation regarding whether only the first part of the verse is quoted or the entire verse. This question is important because it relates to whether the Babylonian Talmud is deriving the Qedushah from the first three mentions of God's name, or from some other exegetical tactic. For b. Meg. 17b those that list the full verse include: Munich 140, Colombia X 893, Oxf Opp fol 23, Pesario Print, Venice Print. Those that list the first part include Goettigen 3 and London BL Harl. Those that only list the second include Munich 95, Vat 134 (although this Ms is clearly corrupted). For the parallel passage in b. Rosh Hash. 32a those that cite the full verse include: JTS Rab 180, Oxf Opp fol. 23., Oxf Bod heb. b. 13., Cambridge T-S F1 95, Cambridge T-S F2162. Those that cite the first part include: London BL Harl., Munich 140, Munich 95 [added], JTS Rab. 1608, Vat 134. None contain just the second half. Regardless of whether our source is using the same hermeneutical key, Psalm 29 is at its center.

of the Amidah. I suggest, however, that this source is merely another fragment of List C. Indeed, the entire List C, or at least a later attempt to reconstruct it, appears in Mid. Ps. 29.

Psalm 29 also closes the discussion about the blessings of the Amidah in y. Ber. 2:3 4d-5a. The final appearance of Psalm 29 suggests three things, two certain and one more speculative. First, the Palestinian Talmud's discourse is highly redacted. Second, Psalm 29 stands at the center of justifying the Amidah. Third, List C was unavailable to the redactor. The Palestinian Talmud finishes its discussion with the following statement: "And one concludes with Peace for all blessings end with peace. R. Simon b. Ḥalafta says, there is no vessel that holds on to blessing other than peace. What is the reason? 'YHWH gave strength to his nation, YHWH blesses his nation with peace' (Ps 29:11)." This simple saying is also a composite. It contains two elements: 1) the redactor's comment that "one concludes with Peace" and 2) an independent statement by R. Simon b. Ḥalafta, which correlates the notion of peace with Psalm 29:11. R. Simon's statement exists on its own, and initially did not refer to the Amidah. It becomes enmeshed in the Amidah only in the hands of a redactor, who reads R. Simon's "blessing" as the final benediction of the Amidah. There are two reasons why I think this was the case. First, as seen above, all quotations of Psalm 29 reflect the ordinal correlation of names of YHWH with blessings in the Amidah. R. Simon b. Ḥalafta quotes the entirety of Psalm 29:11, which mentions YHWH twice, thus breaking the pattern. In fact, the entirety of Psalm 29:11 operates in R. Simon's statement. The "holds on to" (*maḥaziq*), I suggest, directly builds on the mention of "strength" (*oz*) in Psalm 29:11a; indeed, the locution "holds on to blessing" (*maḥaziq berakhah*) is distinctive to R. Simon's statement.[129] Second, evidence for the independence of R. Simon's statement comes from Lev. Rab. 9:9, which begins with a statement by R. Simon b. Yoḥai, who is R. Simon's contemporary: "Great is peace

[129] It only appears independent of R. Simon in Songs Rab. 8:1.

for all blessings are contained in it, as it says 'YHWH gave strength to his nation, YHWH blesses his nation with peace.'" I argue that a redactor reframed R. Simon's statement about blessing in general as one about the final blessing of the Amidah in particular. In fact, the concluding benediction of the Amidah – the blessing for Peace – perfectly correlates with the final mention of YHWH in Psalm 29: "YHWH *blesses* his nation *with peace*." The redactor was interested in reading the Amidah in light of Psalm 29, but did not have List C to help him do so.

The end of the weekday Amidah is not the conclusion of the story of Psalm 29's reception. As the connection between the Amidah and Psalm 29 grew, later interpreters sought to read other rabbinic prayers it in light of Psalm 29. After discussing the various reasons why there are eighteen blessings in the weekday Amidah, y. Ber. 4:3 8a continues to inquire about the seven blessing of the Amidah for the Sabbath: "From where do we know the seven of the Sabbath? R. Isaac said it corresponds to the seven 'voices' (*qolot*) in 'Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings' (Ps 29)." Indeed, Psalm 29 mentions the word "voice" (*qol*) seven times. Thus, Psalm 29 in the Amoraic period appears to have been an exegetical magnet for discourses about prayer in much the same way it was in the Tannaitic period for conversations about Sinaitic revelation.[130]

Psalm 29 during the Amoraic period not only structured prayer, but also informed surrounding practices.[131] In commenting on the prescription of m. Ber. 5:1: "A person should not

[130] On this see the previous chapter. Furthermore, I would argue that the methodology employed in unpacking Psalm 29 had impact on later interpreters. Y. Ber. 4:3 8a continues with an opinion attributed to R. Yudan Antondria: "It corresponds to the seven mentions of YHWH in 'A Psalm, a Song for the Sabbath day' (Ps 92)." A Psalm, this time the Sabbath Psalm, appropriately structures prayer. The interpretive methodology, however, is clearly indebted to previous discussions of Psalm 29. The operative term, "mentions of YHWH" (*azkarot*) first appears in the t. Ber. 3:25 passage discussed above. Throughout rabbinic literature it frequently occurs in the context of establishing something "corresponding to the *x* mentions of YHWH in place y." In addition to the various references in our Palestinian Talmud passage, see y. Ḥag. 3:8 79d, b. Ber. 28b-29a. Additionally, as this tradition developed, what counted as a divine name became the object of examination. Psalm 29 contains the name "*el*," did that count? Indeed, this is the question of R. Elazar b. R. Yosi in y. Ber. 4:3 8a. See further in Ginzberg, *Commentary*, 3:268–71, 75–76.

[131] For another great example of a psalm at the center of a prayer practice tied to the Amidah see Lev. Rab. 7:2, in which the blessing for the *avodah* it tied directly to Psalm 51:19. For the early history of *avodah* blessing see Uri

pray until level-headed," y. Ber. 5:1 8d cites an opinion attributed to R. Joshua b. Levi: "'Bow down to the Lord in the splendor (*hadrat*) of holiness' (Ps 29:2) – in holy trembling (*ḥadrat*)." By reading a *hey* as a *ḥet* – a common phonetic shift – R. Joshua links Psalm 29 to the Mishnah and constructs the ideal type of prayer, reading Psalm 29:2 as: "Bow down to the Lord (i.e. pray) in holy trembling (i.e. seriousness)." The Palestinian Talmud emphasizes this point by subsequently citing a statement attributed to R. Yosi b. Ḥannina: "Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice in trepidation (Ps 2:11)." Service of the Lord, understood here as prayer, must be done seriously. The Mishnaic prescription receives support from two tradents, both engaged in psalm interpretation, and both who read "seriousness" in relationship to fear and trembling.[132]

We began our discussion of the use of Psalms to justify innovations in rabbinic liturgy with microscopic attention to the reception of Psalm 29, which demonstrated that a close affinity was crafted between the psalm and the Amidah throughout the early history of the rabbinic movement. I focused on Psalm 29 not only because it was the earliest and clearest example of psalm-based justification, but also because it too was imagined as liturgical by the rabbis and eventually became part of liturgy in the Middle Ages. Psalm 29 thus exemplifies the very process by which the use of a psalm to underpin liturgy can lead to its entrance into liturgy.

Within rabbinic literature, Psalm 29 appears as liturgical in rabbinic reconstructions of temple psalmody. As I noted above, it is impossible to truly reconstruct which psalms were sung in the temple. We do know, however, that the temple songbook was more varied than the now-

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Ehrlich, "The Earliest Versions of the Amidah - The Blessing about the Temple Worship," in *From Qumran to Cairo: Studies in the History of Prayer*, ed. Joseph Tabory (Jerusalem: Orhot Press, 1999), 18.

[132] Compare this to the discussion earlier in the Palestinian Talmud where the Talmud treats the requirement to pray seriously as the prescription to begin prayer with a discussion of a halakhic matter. See also a little further where R. Huna, basing himself on Psalm 12:9, calls wicked anyone who prays behind a synagogue or one who does not enter a synagogue. It is important to note, as mentioned above, that the rabbis do not exclusive draw from Psalms, but they do so quite often.

canonical book of Psalms. Rabbinic memories of temple psalmody, however, almost always point to the book of Psalms. In line with recent scholarship, we must understand these instances as attempts to reconstruct the past and not true preservations of it.[133] Within the context of temple memory, Psalm 29 appears twice. B. Sukkah 54b cites an otherwise unattested Tannaitic statement that posits that the entire psalm was sung during the first day of Tabernacles, and b. Rosh Hash. 30b cites a tradition in the name of R. Aḥa b. R. Huna which claims that Psalm 29:8 was sung by Levites during the afternoon sacrifice. I suggest that the widespread practice of reading Psalm 29 to justify rabbinic prayer slowly trickled into rabbinic imagination of temple liturgy.[134]

The rabbinic reception of Psalm 29 is not the only instance that illustrates the use of Psalms to underpin rabbinic liturgy. I will conclude this section with two more examples. The first will zoom in and demonstrate how a single psalm verse underpins the structure of an entire liturgical complex. The second will zoom out and show how large portions of the book of Psalms legitimize the number of blessings in the Amidah.

Psalm Prooftexts in Amoraic Literature: Macro and Micro Exegesis

The use of Psalm 17:1 in y. Rosh Hash. 4:8 59c demonstrates this first strategy. The Palestinian Talmud attempts to explain why the ritual of blowing a ram's horn on Rosh Hashanah appears during the additional prayer (*musaf*) of the holiday and not during the morning one.[135] One

[133] *Contra* Trudinger, *The Psalms of the Tamid*. I follow in this regards Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *The Mishnaic Sotah Ritual: Temple, Gender and Midrash*, trans. Orr Scharf, JSJSup 160 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Naftali S. Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). I would not, however, reduce memory to authority.

[134] It is, of course, *possible*, that Psalm 29 was sung at the temple. In which case, we would need to flip the portrait: a liturgical psalm underpins innovation in rabbinic liturgy.

[135] On this topic in general see Joseph Tabory, *Jewish Festivals in the Times of the Mishnah and the Talmud* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995), 247–48. Tabory's discomfort with the conclusion of the midrash is part in parcel of why I think it need not be initially connected to Rosh Hashana.

suggestion, based on a detailed exposition of Psalm 17:1, is attributed to R. Joshua b. Levi in the name of R. Alexandri:

> Learn It from here: "Hear the just, O Lord" (1a) – this is the reading of the Shema. "Heed my cry" (1b) – this is the murmuring of Torah. "Listen to my prayer" (1c) – this is prayer (i.e. Amidah). "Without lips of deceit" (1d) – this is the additional prayer. And what is written after it? "Let my judgment come out from before you" (Ps 17:2).

This homily hangs on the ready identification of the psalmist's "prayer" (*tefillah*) with the rabbinic prayer (*tefillah* = Amidah), and the clever reading of the plea to listen (*shima*) as the Shema. Interpreting "cry" (*rinnan)* as Torah initially appears strange, but is best understood as the scriptural passages located between the opening of the Shema and the Amidah.[136] Most forced is the final part of the homily, which reads "without lips of deceit"[137] as the additional prayer. Once the exegete exhausts Psalm 17:1, he moves to the opening of the next verse and argues that at this point judgment comes before God. In the context of our passage, this is presumably the blowing of the ram's horn, perhaps linking the judgment of the verse to the tenor of the holiday. However, nothing in this homily demands that particular context. Indeed, this homily may be an earlier exposition on the structure of prayer in general that gets repackaged by the redactors into one about Rosh Hashanah liturgy. Regardless, the verse itself becomes either the blueprint for the Rosh Hashanah prayer service in particular or holiday prayer in general.[138]

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[136] This likely draws on an earlier conceptual category that imagined the Shema liturgy is itself simply as Torah. See m. Ber. 5:2, which states that if one reads the Shema outside the bounds of its proper time, "there is no loss, it is as if a person is reading from the Torah." On the early history and diversity of Shema see Sarit Katan Gribetz, "The Shema in the Second Temple Period: A Reconsideration," *JAJ* (2015): 58–84.

[137] For an interesting parallel that connects prayer and deceitful lips see b. Ber. 17a, where Mar b. Ravina concludes his Amidah with a prayer that includes this verse. Additionally, for a similar reading of a psalm verse as the structure of prayer see b. Ber. 16b. See also b. Ber. 12a, and b. Yoma 53b.

[138] The awkwardness of this homily inspired a later reworking now present in Pesiq. Rab. 40: "R. Pinḥas in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi in name of R. Alexandri: Why was *shofar* moved to the additional prayer? So that when Israel stands they be excellent in commandments and found innocent. David said: 'A Psalm of David' – first prayer (i.e. morning prayer) 'listen to my prayer' – second prayer (i.e. additional prayer). Why? 'Without lips of deceit' – we do not stand to pray with nullity or deceit but rather with Torah, commandments and good deeds. Therefore, 'Before you my judgment will go forth' – do not look towards the evil deeds that we have, but the merits and good deeds that we have 'your eyes will see the straight.'" This homily contains several salient differences. First, it is cited in the name of an additional tradent, R. Pinḥas. Second, it incorporates the Davidic superscription. This tactic makes the move to

The rabbis not only imagined psalm verses or complete psalms as the foundation of their prayers. The Psalter itself – as a book – was understood as a base upon which to build the Amidah. The very opening of y. Ber. 4:3 7d-8a, which comments on the Mishnahic requirement to say eighteen blessings every day, begins: "And why eighteen? R. Joshua b. Levi said: 'it corresponds to the eighteen psalms from the beginning (*ro'sho*)[139] of the Psalter until 'may the Lord answer you on a day of trouble' (Ps 20).'" The Palestinian Talmud preemptively solves the problem of ending at Psalm 19 for an eighteen blessing prayer by commenting: "And if someone tells you there are nineteen psalms, tell them 'Why do the nations rage' (Ps 2) is not part of them."[140] Ultimately, in the eyes of R. Joshua, the Psalter and Amidah are one of the same type. Unlike with regards to Psalm 29, no extensive exegetical derivation is required. Furthermore, no other book of the Bible gets treated in this manner. Psalms and prayer are fundamentally and intimately related.

The continuation of the Palestinian Talmud, which draws a further connection between the Amidah and the first nineteen psalms, elaborates on this sentiment: "From here they say that if one prays and is not answered (*anah*) one needs to fast." Namely, if one's prayer – an Amidah theorized on the basis of the first nineteen psalms – is successful then what follows in the opening lines of Psalm 20 must also be true: "The Lord will answer (*anah*) you on a day of trouble (Ps 20:2)." Thus, if no answer follows prayer one must fast because it means that the prayer was ineffectual.

In the brief remainder of this chapter I will tentatively and briefly suggest other forces that may have promoted the eventual incorporation of daily psalmody into rabbinic liturgy. As no one explanation is definitive, admitting that all these factors were in play allows us to paint a richer

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derive the morning and additional prayers easier, because now both have "prayer" (*tefillah*) as an exegetical hook. This then allows a more cogent reading of deceitful lips.

[139] This may be a scribal term, as we are dealing with a scroll.

[140] See further in Ginzberg, *Commentary*, 3:234–36.

portrait of ancient Jewish life. I must also caution against the correlation-causation fallacy latent in the following discussion. It is difficult to determine if any of the following factors necessarily *caused* Psalms to enter daily liturgy. What is certain, however, is that they combined to create an environment that would encourage, foster and strengthen already existing historical processes and trends. Our discussion will bounce back and forth between internal and external factors, first discussing the factors latent within the discourses of the rabbis themselves, and then contextualizing them upon the backdrop of emerging trends in ancient Judaism and early Christianity. Because I cover a large amount of ground within a limited amount of space, the following discussion should be seen as suggestive as opposed to definitive.

Psalms and the Rabbinic Sermon

In addition to the use of psalm prooftexts to undergird liturgy, another internal rabbinic factor that may have fostered a hospitable environment for the rise of daily psalmody is the non-liturgical use of Psalms within the confines of the late antique synagogue. Psalms, more so than other biblical books, opened the classical homiletical form known as the proem (*petiḥta*). In this style of homily, which first appears in Amoraic literature, the preacher would begin by citing and interpreting what would appear to be a random verse. He would connect it with other verses and eventually conclude with the first verse of that week's lection. According to the count of Wilhelm Bacher, within the corpus of Gen. Rab., Lev. Rab., and Pesiq. R. Kah., Psalms features in at least 186 of the 559 proems. This large number overshadows the next biblical book on the list, Proverbs, which occurs 112 times. Both combined cover over half of the extant proems.[141] A scholarly debate

[141] Wilhelm Bacher, *Die Proömien der alten jüdischen Homilie: Beitrag zur Geschichte der jüdischen Schriftauslegung und Homiletik* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913), 105, 11. Stemberger underappreciates the rhetorical

rages over whether our extant collections of Midrash contain actual synagogue sermons,[142] fragments of learned discourse heavily reworked by redaction,[143] or a combination of both.[144] Regardless, *some* of these proems were imagined to be delivered in a synagogue setting.[145] Furthermore, sermons were undoubtedly a key feature in ancient synagogue ritual since its earliest manifestation.[146] In addition, the sermon was likely one of the key ways that the rabbinic movement sought to assert its influence and control. Thus, even if the extant proems were later redacted and reorganized, their origins should be taken seriously for our argument, namely, that the constant preaching involving Psalms correlates with the incorporation of Psalms into liturgy. The rise of the *petiḥta* and daily psalmody appear coterminous, thus they likely had a mutual influence on one another, with psalm-based liturgy encouraging the use of Psalms for synagogue preaching, and psalm-based preaching further embedding psalms into liturgy. Our appreciation for the life of Psalms in the ancient synagogue can only be enriched if we view these two processes in tandem.

Re-conceptualizing the Synagogue as Prayer-Space

Another factor that may have encouraged the rise of daily psalmody in rabbinic liturgy was the slow reconceptualization of the synagogue by the amoraic rabbis as a place of prayer. Pre-

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value of these proems. Just because they are in service of another verse does not mean they cannot be used as evidence for the growth of liturgical psalmody. *Contra* Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 231.

[142] Joseph Heinemann, "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim: A Form-Critical Study," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 100–122; Avigdor Shinan, "Between Oral and Written Tradition," *Jeruslaem Studies in Folklore* 1 (1981): 44–60.

[143] Martin S. Jaffee, "The 'Midrashic' Proem: Towards the Description of Rabbinic Exegesis," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 4 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1983), 95–112; Richard S. Sarason, "The 'Petihtot' in Leviticus Rabba: 'Oral Homilies' or Redactional Constructions," *JJS* 33 (1982): 557–67.

[144] Arnon Atzmon, "'The Same Fate Is in Store for the Righteous and the Wicked:' Form and Content in Midreshei Aggadah," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 58–77.

[145] See, for example, Lev. Rab. 3:6.

[146] For synagogue sermons in Second Temple and rabbinic sources see Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 157–58, 493, 580–83.

rabbinic sources tend to imagine the synagogue as a gathering place for education and reading of the Law.[147] Tannaitic sources mention the synagogue as a place of prayer, but eclipse that characterization of the synagogue with discussions of other activities performed there.[148] Indeed, a reader of Mishnah and Tosefta Berakhot would not likely get the pressing sense that Shema and the Amidah were synagogue-dependent, or even preferably said there.[149] This situation changes in the Amoraic period, where a new stress is placed on prayer.[150] In the words of Steven Fine: "The centrality of prayer within the synagogue was expanded during the Amoraic period, prayer becoming equal in significance to Torah study."[151] As prayer became the center of synagogue life for the rabbis, so did Psalms, its key archetype.

This slow shift in the rabbinic conceptualization of the synagogue from a gathering place to prayer space may, in fact, be part of a larger trend within late antique Judaism. I will provide only one architectural example here; as such, I would caution against building an entire historical model based upon it. The remodeling of the Maʿoz Ḥayyim synagogue in Scythopolis illustrates well the movement from meeting place to prayer space.[152] Initially built at the end of the third century, the

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[147] For the pre-Tannaitic synagogue see Steven Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period*, Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity 11 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 25–33; Fleischer, "On the Beginnings," 400–414. On the problem of pre-rabbinic Sabbath synagogue liturgy see Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Workship in Ancient Judaism*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 122 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). And response and affirmation of Sabbath worship pre-70 by Pieter van der Horst, "Was the Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship before 70 CE?," in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 16–37.

[148] Fine, *This Holy Place*, 36.

[149] Zahavy, *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, 49–52. While Zahavy makes this observation, I disagree that it can be explained by the fact that the rabbis were interested in the individual more than the community. I think it more readily reflects the ambiguous place of the synagogue as a *liturgical* institution for the rabbis.

[150] Fine, *This Holy Place*, 62–67.

[151] Ibid., 85. Indeed, one of the key tensions in this period was the proper relationship between the values of prayer and that of Torah study. See Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 95–98.

[152] For the full publication of this synagogue see Vassilios Tzaferis, "The Ancient Synagogue at Maʿoz Ḥayyim," *IEJ* 32 (1982): 215–44. For the synagogue itself see pp. 215-27, and 242-44, where he places the developing structure of this synagogue in conversation with other exemplars. On the architectural relationship between Maʿ oz Ḥayyim and the local church see Marilyn J. S. Chiat and Marchita Mauck, "Using Archeological Sources," in *The Making of Jewish*

synagogue hall was a near square 12.5x14 meters. A platform of unhewn stone in the middle of the south wall could have been a *bema* upon which a Torah ark rested. The floor was unadorned. This simple public building was likely a multi-purpose meeting room that included the reading of the Torah. By the end of the fourth century or beginning of the fifth century, however, the building was completely remodeled. The hall was lengthened by four meters to become 16.4x14 meters, and now included a central nave that flanked two rows of five columns. It was also furnished with a raised semicircular apse that faced Jerusalem,[153] as well as an elaborate and exquisite mosaic floor that included depictions of birds, grapes, a *shofar*, an *etrog* and a *menorah*.[154] There was no room for a *bema* in the new design, so the apse itself may have served as one.[155] While this change may be the result of a new era of prosperity, as Tzaferis proposes, it is also clear that the building had been carefully restructured to emphasize its new function – prayer.[156] As time went on, the synagogue was once again remodeled, likely in the sixth century. No external changes were made, but a new and aniconic mosaic was laid down, and a *bema* protruding from the nave was now enclosed by chancel screens.[157] The residents of Maʿoz Ḥayyim clearly updated their synagogue with the times. While we should not build an entire historical model on the basis of one synagogue, Maʿoz Ḥayyim represents the developments in Scythopolis region well and gives us insight into the interaction between culture and architecture.

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and Christian Worship, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 78–80.

[153] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 355 notes that this feature is usually due to Christian influence. The Maʿoz synagogue was near a church.

[154] Tzaferis, "The Ancient Synagogue at Maʿoz Ḥayyim," 219, 24–25.

[155] Ibid., 220.

[156] For a general summary of the evolution of synagogue architecture see Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 378–79.

[157] Ibid., 367.

Synagogue and Temple

As mentioned above, Psalms were almost certainly a part of temple worship. Another factor that may have promoted the adoption of Psalms into rabbinic daily liturgy was the strengthening of the bond between temple and synagogue in Amoraic rabbinic thought. As other scholars have amply demonstrated, while the origins of reading the synagogue as temple can be traced back to the times of the Tannaim,[158] the Amoraim elaborate, refine and extend the analogy.[159] I suggest that mentality and practice are intimately related; the intensification of thinking with the temple provides context for adopting parts of the temple's songbook.

Synagogue art may also have encouraged some rabbis to build on the analogy between temple and synagogue and thus to introduce daily psalmody into their liturgy. Synagogue art is a subject of much scholarly contention, with competing understandings about the rise, spread, significance and rabbinic involvement in the creation and interpretation of artistic symbols.[160] It is clear, however, that numerous synagogues feature artistic motifs that have the *potential* to draw a congregant's attention to contemporary liturgy and the Jerusalem Temple simultaneously. These include symbols such as the *shofar*, *lulav*, *etrog* and the *menorah*.[161] For some rabbis, I suggest, these symbols provided planks in the mental bridge from temple to synagogue, which ultimately encouraged the slow incorporation of daily psalmody into rabbinic liturgy. It is worth noting also that some synagogues contain images and inscriptions that can only be viewed in terms of the

[158] Indeed, the Tannaim placed limits of this analog where the Amoraim did not. See Fine, *This Holy Place*, 57–58.
[159] Kimelman, "Rabbinic Prayer in Late Antiquity," 573–75; Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 236–42.
[160] This literature is vast. For the moment see Steven Fine, *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Lee I. Levine, *Visual Judaism in Late Antiquity: Historical Contexts of Jewish Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012); Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*; Zeev Weiss, "Were Priests Communal Leaders in Late Antique Palestine? The Archaeological Evidence," in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History?: On Jews and Judaism before and after the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss, AJEC 78 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 91–111.
[161] For an exhaustive discussion of these symbols in their respective locations see Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 285–338.

temple. Bands 3 and 4 of the Sepphoris synagogue mosaic, which contains an image of the first-fruits basket, the ceremonial sacrifice trumpets (*ḥatzotzrot*),[162] and the daily sacrificial offerings, provides one example. The twenty-four priestly courses listed in artistic representations in synagogues in Caesarea,[163] Ashqelon and Kissufim[164] provide another. Whether such art represent acts of biblical interpretation or a desire to reconstitute the synagogue as temple by those who laid the mosaics is not my concern. What I would suggest, however, is that such temple-based imagery would aid in the rabbinic mental transfer of Psalms from temple to synagogue.

Non-rabbinic Jews and the Psalter

The rabbis constituted only one type of the many kinds of Jews who lived in Late Antiquity. It is possible that non-rabbinic Jewish liturgy also had an impact upon the way that rabbis imagined and constructed their own daily prayers. Unfortunately, evidence for non-rabbinic Judaism in general, and non-rabbinic Jewish liturgy in particular, is sparse. The following examples could suggest that Psalms were part of the liturgy of some non-rabbinic Jews in Late Antiquity. These data are not conclusive, and almost all of them come from regions with minor or no significant rabbinic presence: Rome, Aphrodisias (in modern Turkey) and Gaza.

The first two pieces of evidence are carved in stone. A third or fourth century inscription in the Jewish catacombs Rome memorializes the tomb of "Gaianos, secretary, psalm-singer (*psalmōdos*), lover of the Law. May his sleep be in peace."[165] While this inscription is unique, *psalmōdos* appears over 100 times in Christian literature, and is often used to introduce a quotation

[162] Zeev Weiss and Ehud Netzer, *The Sepphoris Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2005), 77–104.
[163] Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 122.
[164] Ibid., 311.
[165] See Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, 115.

from the book of Psalms with the phrase "as the psalmist says," or something similar.[166] Could Gaianos have been responsible for the liturgical recitation of Psalms in a late antique Roman synagogue?

Another epigraphic clue may come from the much-discussed Aphrodisais God-Fearer inscription.[167] The inscription opens with a list of Jewish figures who donated money to the community. Among the bevy of names is "Benjamin, the Psalm-Singer (*psalmo*^{s})." Reynolds and Tanenbaum, in their *editio princeps* of the inscription, note that an "s" appears above the line to the right of the omicron to denote an abbreviation, which they restore as *logos,* thus reading *psalmologos*. As they note, however, the word *psalmologos* appears very infrequently.[168] I prefer resorting *psalmodos*, reading with a second suggestion offered by Reynolds and Tanenbaum that the omicron was a misspelling. Regardless, could Benjamin – like Gaianos – be responsible for singing Psalms in Jewish liturgy? As I will soon discuss, the liturgies of early Christians during the third to fifth centuries began to contain an increasing amount of material from Psalms. Regardless, this inscription may provide another piece of the largely missing puzzle of non-rabbinic Jewish liturgy.

Synagogue art may also hint at the use of Psalms in liturgy, although its polysemy makes any definite conclusion impossible. An image of David enchanting animals by playing a harp appears on the floor of a sixth century synagogue in Gaza. The head of David is enclosed with a nimbus, and his pose renders him artistically similar to Orpheus. We know this is an image of

[166] According to the TLG, the word appears 130 times.
[167]For inscription and further bibliography see http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/iAph110055.html#edition. Most scholars are interested in the God-Fearer section of this inscription.
[168] See Joyce Marie Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, *Jews and God-Fearers at Aphrodisias*, Supplementary Volume 12 (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1987), 9.

David because an inscription rests on top of the character's head that reads: "David."[169] Could the presence of David playing a harp indicate liturgical psalmody in this not-necessarily rabbinic synagogue? Another possible image of David appears in a fifth century synagogue mosaic at Meroth, in the Galilee. Many scholars suggest that the mosaic depicts David surrounded by Goliath's weapons, the spoils of David's victory in 1 Samuel 17:51-4. Some scholars, such as Hachlili, argue that a lyre is best reconstructed in the broken space to the right of the figure.[170] If so, could the visual images of David's songful praises reflect the oral utterances of the Jewish worshippers? Biblical characters, however, frequently appear on floor mosaics, and the depiction of David as a singer may be too generic to provide any historically specific meaning. In sum, our evidence for non-rabbinic psalmody is suggestive but inconclusive.

Christian Space and Christian Psalmody

Another historical factor that may have encouraged the rabbis to adopt Psalms into daily liturgy was the use of Psalms by various early Christian communities in worship and preaching. Unlike the psalmody of non-rabbinic Jews, positive evidence for the use of Psalms by Christians in their liturgies exist, but in a scattered manner. While I collect and synthesize some the data below, we must bear in mind that psalmody in early Christianity – like ancient Judaism – developed in various communities at differing times and at a non-uniform pace. A full and detailed analysis of Christian psalmody must be reserved for another occasion. For the purposes of my argument, however, the evidence allows for the claim that Christian liturgical psalmody was

[169] On David at Gaza see Fine, *This Holy Place*, 125; Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 414–17. A liturgical interpretation should precede a messianic one, although the latter, as we will see next chapter, should not completely be discounted.
[170] For detailed discussion see Hachlili, *Ancient Synagogues*, 417–18.

widespread enough – in whatever particular manifestation it took – to catch the attention of Jews affiliated with the rabbinic movement.

As discussed above, the Jesus movement did not employ the book of Psalms for organized worship.[171] As the first century became the second, some evidence for the use of Psalms at major liturgical events such as the Eucharist and meals manifests. The second century *Acts of Paul* 9, for example, describes a Christian meal thus: "And immediately, when the Spirit that was in Myrta was at peace, each one took of the bread and feasted according to custom <…> amid the singing of psalms of David and of hymns."[172] The mention of "Psalms of David" likely indicates that the now-canonical Psalms were being sung. Other early evidence does not use the word "David" and thus what kind of 'psalm' was sung is unclear. Tertullian, for example, mentions liturgical psalmody in his description of a female Montanist: "Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions."[173] More directly related to prayer, he also claims: "Those who are more diligent in praying are accustomed to include in their prayers Alleluia and this type of psalms, with the endings of which those who are present may respond."[174] Davidic psalms also appear at the center of the Eucharist ceremony

[171] Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 43–45.

[172] Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, trans. R. McL Wilson, vol. 2, 2 vols., Rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 258. For the evidence of Christian music, and extant evidence for Psalms see, Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 111–34.

[173] *De anima* 9.2 (*ANF* 3:188). See McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 85.

[174] *De oratione* 27. Translation from Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 64. According to Bradshaw, this is early evidence for Psalms being recited by one person and the rest then join in for a refrain, Ibid., 57. He cites Tertullian as evidence that, "This use of the psalms was also beginning to spread from these occasions to the regular times of prayer, at least when they were offered in a context where there were others present to listen and respond to the psalmody." Ibid., 64. Tertullian does not tell us the exact identity of these Psalms. Arguing that they come from the Jewish Hallel is overdrawing the evidence. Cf. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 116. Taft suggest Ps 110-118 or perhaps Ps 145-50, Robert F. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), 18.

in chapters 25-26 of the Apostolic Tradition, a third century early Christian church order.[175] Regardless, as time goes on the Davidic Psalter became an ever-growing part of Christian worship.[176] By the fourth century, liturgical psalmody explodes, making its presence known in at least two manifestations: monastic prayer and daily worship . The rise of monasticism expanded the life of Psalms in early Christianity. Both desert and urban monks, in different manners at varying paces, would gather at set times to recite the Psalter. The ultimate goal was to complete the Psalter and live a life of constant psalmody.[177] This incessant liturgical psalmody provided Late Antiquity with a new psalm-suffused ambiance, the effects of which were directly felt in the second important area of Christian psalmody – daily liturgy. By the fourth century both the morning and evening liturgies of many Christian communities consisted of both set and rotating psalms.[178] Indeed, Bradshaw argues that, "the use of prayer to mean Psalm followed by prayer is common at this period."[179] Egeria, the fourth century Spanish pilgrim to Jerusalem, confirms this by constantly mentioning that "hymns, psalms and antiphons," accompanied every liturgical event. Even pre-liturgical events, such as waiting for the church to open on Sunday, contained psalmody. In the words of Egeria: "Those who are afraid they may not arrive in time for the cock-crow come early, and sit waiting there singing hymns and antiphons, and they have prayers between."[180] Unfortunately, she never mentions exactly which psalms were sung. Nevertheless, she often

[175] Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 55–57; Taft, *The Liturgy*, 26; McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 51, 116–17. On the complications involved in using the church orders, and Apostolic Tradition in particular see Bradshaw, *The Search*, 88–92.
[176] Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 64, 71; Taft, *The Liturgy*, 26. It is interesting that the psalms that do stick early on in both communities are those that contain "hallelujah." A full accounting of this, and whether it goes back to the recitation of hallelujah-type psalms in the Second Temple period will be given on another occasion.
[177] Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 93–110; Taft, *The Liturgy*, 57–92; Bradshaw, *The Search*, 187–89. For more on the monastic use of Psalms see the next chapter.
[178]Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 72–92; Taft, *The Liturgy*, 31–56.
[179] Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 87.
[180] John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 3rd ed. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999), 144.

declares that they were always suitable for the time and place.[181] A potential accounting of the exact psalms sung in fourth century Jerusalem may exist in the Jerusalem Armenian lectionary. Regardless, the fourth century witnesses an explosion of Christian liturgical psalmody and then the slow attempt to solidify into lectionaries which psalms were sung on what occasions. In this period one also detects the rise of a church "singer" (*psaltes)* as distinct from a "reader" (*lector*).[182] Could the popularity of Psalms in Christian worship have impelled rabbinic Jews – and perhaps other ancient Jews – to include Psalms in their own liturgy at a more rapid pace? Could the selection of specific psalms for particular occasions ultimately have provided the impetus for a Jewish Holiday psalm cycle? These questions deserve careful study. As a whole, however, it is clear that Jewish and Christian daily psalmody gained momentum at roughly the same time and should thus be studied comparatively.

An additional piece of this puzzle, one that would strengthen the liturgical connection between Judaism and Christianity, could be the design and structure of synagogue art and architecture during the fourth to seventh centuries. As scholars such as Lee Levine and, more recently, David Milson, argue, church and synagogue in these centuries began to more closely reflect one another.[183] Levine notes that synagogues in Palestine built or remodeled in regions with significant Christian presence – such as the Sea of Galilee, Bet Shean as well as the coast and near Jerusalem – began to mimic the Christian basilica.[184] Milson, in a detailed monograph, demonstrates that by the sixth century almost half of the securely dateable synagogues in Palestine "bear features typical of the early Byzantine church: in layout, in architectural ornamentation, in

[181] Ibid., 146, 50, 51, 53.
[182] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 228.
[183] On the relationship between synagogue and church with regards to art, architecture and conception of holy place see Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 242–48; David Milson, *Art and Architecture of the Synagogue in Late Antique Palestine: In the Shadow of the Church*, AJEC 65 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).
[184] Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 246.

floor mosaics, in furniture, or occasionally in combinations of these features."[185] I suggest that the bridge built by art and architecture may have been used by liturgy. All three are key features of the synagogue/church experience, and ought not be artificially separated from one another.[186] Thus, the church – from both its liturgy and structure – may provide another partial context for the rise of daily psalmody in rabbinic liturgy. It may also account, in part, for the explosion of Jewish liturgical psalmody as late antiquity slowly transitioned into the early Middle Ages.

Conclusion

Without casting a spotlight on liturgical psalmody the story of the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity would be incomplete. This chapter illumined and examined one region of ancient liturgical psalmody: the place of daily psalmody in rabbinic liturgy. It first described its rise and then sought to set it within as many viable contexts as possible.

The chapter began by offering a corrective to the widespread assumption that ancient Jewish liturgy must have included psalmody by demonstrating that daily psalmody outside the Second Temple played a very limited role, and was nonexistent in early rabbinic liturgy. Only after the times of the talmudic rabbis does one find psalm verses and chapters present in almost every major Jewish prayer. This chapter described how dearth became fecundity. It tracked the rise and growth of daily liturgical psalmody in the liturgy of Amoraic rabbis, and argued that the inclusion of daily psalmody in rabbinic liturgy did not occur in one meteoric moment, but rather in fits and starts.

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[185] Milson, *Art and Architecture*, 2.

[186] For this argument with regards to placing rabbinic literature in conversation with synagogue art see Steven Fine, "Archaeology and the Interpretation of Midrash," in *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?*, ed. Matthew Kraus, Judaism in Context 4 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 199–217.

The chapter then examined the contexts that best explain this historical process. It suggested several possibilities: the justification of liturgical innovation by appealing to Psalms; the use of Psalms in rabbinic sermons; the reconceptualization of the synagogue as a place of prayer; the increased analogizing between synagogue and temple; the use of Psalms as liturgy by non-rabbinic Jews; and the rise of liturgical psalmody in Christianity. Only an amalgam of these factors provide an adequate background upon which to view the messy and non-linear historical development of daily psalmody.

The combination of multiple causal contexts acknowledges the fact religious developments do not occur in a vacuum or with regards to a single point of reference. Center/periphery, elite/non-elite as well as Jew/Christian must be viewed in light of one another. More particularly, rabbinic Jews were enmeshed in a religio-cultural matrix that wove together the development of their own traditions, the practices of non-rabbis, and the socio-religious ambiance created by the tangible presence of Christians. Daily rabbinic psalmody developed within this matrix, and thus provides a small window into its mechanics.

The story of liturgical psalmody is still incomplete. This chapter intentionally ignored one final factor that also aided the rise of daily psalmody, namely, psalm piety. It too cuts across the boundaries just discussed, and it is to this trend we now turn.

Chapter 5: Reading Pietistically, Psalm Piety in Late Antiquity

> It was wonderful to see the Change soon made in the Manners of our Inhabitants; from being thoughtless or indifferent about Religion, it seem'd as if all the World were growing Religious; so that one could not walk thro' the Town in an Evening without Hearing Psalms sung in different Families of every Street.

- *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

The Reverend George Whitefield, an iterant preacher from Ireland, reached the shores of Philadelphia in 1739. His sermons and eloquent orations drew crowds from many of the local Philadelphian churches, and his fire and brimstone rhetoric sparked a religious revival. In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin characterizes the new Philadelphian atmosphere by setting psalm piety as a barometer of religion. The increased presence of Psalms in daily life meant a growth in religious fervor.[1]

Psalms also acted as an index of piety in Late Antiquity. This chapter will reconstruct how Jews and Christians interacted with the Psalter during in daily life. I will call this particular form of reading "Psalm piety." I define Psalm piety as the ritualized practice[2] of non-legislated behavior.[3] What I mean in particular is the interaction with Psalms that is neither scholastic nor

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[1] Quotation in epigraph from Benjamin Franklin, *Franklin: The Autobiography and Other Writings on Politics, Economics, and Virtue*, ed. Alan C. Houston, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 88. Franklin also describes engaging his friends in a poetry competition that centered around paraphrasing Psalm 18 (pg. 30). Further, in his *Apology for Printers*, Franklin laments that: "I have known a very numerous Impression of Robin Hood's Songs go off in this Province at 2 s. per Book, in less than a Twelvemonth; when a small Quantity of David's Psalms (an excellent Version) have lain upon my Hands above twice the Time" (pg. 160).

[2] My understanding of ritual and practice are informed by Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Psalm piety is a performative and strategic mode of expression that can and must be differentiated from other actions, such as liturgy. The aims of Psalm piety, of course, vary by context.

[3] For this chapter I draw on the sense of piety developed in Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety*. Like her study, this chapter will privilege practice over intellectual engagement, and focus on widely held beliefs (pg. 214) and "quotidian piety"

liturgical, namely, instances in which Jews and Christians quote Psalms for purposes other than scriptural interpretation and legislated public worship. Psalm piety does include practices that are iterative and formative, such as reciting Psalms for protection and staying up all night reciting the Psalter. My definition of piety frames it as a mode of living that characterized much of the ancient world and eschews an understanding of piety that imagines those engaged in it as extremists or sectarians.

This is not to deny the existence of extreme forms of behavior in ancient world. Our litmus test for radical activities, however, must be the texts themselves. Within rabbinic literature, for example, exceptional and unexpected behavior is often denoted by the term *ḥassidut*.[4] I will render this term in the pages below as "exceptional piety" and not the traditional translation: "piety." I do so because piety was the rule and not the exception of daily religious life. "Exceptional piety" thus indicates behavior that an average pious person would deem extraordinary. Psalm piety may take both forms.

(pg. 213). Thus, I eschew a definition of piety that imagines those engaged in it as extremists or sectarian. For the former see Gershom Scholem, "Three Types of Jewish Piety," *The Israel Yearbook* (1974): 104–8. Scholem's understanding of the *ḥasid* as radical does not do enough justice to the regularization and normalization what he calls extreme patterns of behavior. Nevertheless, the *title* of his article gives more theoretical latitude. Piety is a mode of existence that can include multiple types, such as the scholar, just man, and *ḥasid*. Thus, although unexpressed, Scholem properly divorces piety from extremism. It is this reading of Scholem that this chapter will adopt. For piety as sectarianism see Peter Schäfer, "The Ideal of Piety of the Ashkenazi Hasidim and Its Roots in Jewish Tradition," *Jewish History* 4 (1990): 9–23. Of course, Schafer deals with piety in a particular localized group and would not use piety as sectarianism as an essentialist archetype. Schafer's article is further useful in demonstrating that piety and asceticism need not be intrinsically entwined (pg. 20).

[4] Earlier studies of this term particularly focus on the miraculous nature of the extremely pious person and the connection of this social type to Jesus. For use of *ḥasid* in rabbinic literature as exceptionally altruistic, holy and miraculous see Louis Jacobs, "The Concept of Hasid in the Biblical and Rabbinic Literatures," *JJS* 8 (1957): 145–54. For the relationship between *ḥasidim* and rabbinic society see Shmuel Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," *JJS* 16 (1965): 15–33. On the relationship between the *ḥasidim* and Jesus see David Rokeah, "The Am HaAretz, Early Pious Ones and Jesus the Nazarene," in *Studies on the Talmud 3*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 882–87. These works are fairly dated either chronologically and/or methodologically and do not discuss the phenomenon of piety in relationship to Psalms. The most up-to-date examination of the phenomenon of the *ḥasid* in the Tannaitic period is Tzvi Novick, *What Is Good, and What God Demands: Normative Structures in Tannaitic Literature*, JSJSup 144 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 141–48.

With the definition of Psalm piety set, let me now outline the numerous interwoven arguments that constitute this chapter. While it examines both Jewish and Christian manifestations of Psalm piety, the chapter at its core responds to and revises three previous stances adopted towards Jewish Psalm piety. As will be clear, some of my methodological interventions apply to both Christian Psalm piety and Jewish Psalm piety. In fact, one of the key contentions of this chapter is that the differences between Jewish and Christian Psalm piety are outweighed by their similarities. Jewish and Christian Psalm piety developed in the same late antique matrix.

The first position I seek to build upon was articulated by Ismar Elbogen in his magisterial tome, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*.[5] Elbogen describes the growth of the beginning of the morning service as follows: "At first, psalms customarily recited by individual pietists were brought into the service, and then other passages were added...."[6] Who were these individuals? What psalms did they recite? What evidence do we have of this practice? Elbogen does not tell us. We catch one further glimpse of Elbogen's reliance on Psalm piety in his description of prayer during the Tannaitic period: "With the Song of the Levites silenced, the psalms found a new home in the synagogue, and many of the pious made them a regular part of their daily prayers."[7] As we have seen in the previous chapter, the Song of the Levites did not enter synagogue liturgy until well after Late Antiquity. Nevertheless, Elbogen's assumption about the existence of Psalm piety

[5] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*. Originally published as Ismar Elbogen, *Der Jüdische Gottesdienst in Seiner Geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig: G. Frock, 1913). For a modern review of both Elbogen and his translator see Kimelman, "Liturgical Studies in the 90's," 61–67. Kimelman is unduly harsh on Elbogen, who certainly could not have written anything but a philological history and had little recourse to the Cairo Genizah, which had just been discovered. On the importance of Genizah for liturgical studies and a history of scholarship see Stefan C. Reif, "Modern Study of Medieval Liturgy," in *Problems with Prayers: Studies in the Textual History of Early Rabbinic Liturgy*, SJ 37 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 229–54. For the most recent contribution of the Genizah to the study of liturgy see Stefan C. Reif, *Jewish Prayer Texts from the Cairo Genizah: A Selection of Manuscripts at Cambridge University Library, Introduced, Transcribed, Translated, and Annotated, with Images*, ESJM 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
[6] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 214.
[7] Ibid., 200.

in ancient Judaism and its *eventual* connection with the synagogue is correct. This chapter will provide firm material and textual support for the existence of Psalm piety, as well as for the transmutation of pious practice into public prayer. The boundaries between piety and liturgy are in constant flux.

This chapter also seeks to reconstruct Psalm piety as practiced by non-elite Jews and Christians. It does so by paying attention to material evidence, which often affords us a quick glimpse into the lived reality of those who did not produce and preserve ancient literary texts. When combined with textual sources, material evidence provides firm footing for the existence of Psalm piety and challenges scholars who claim that a dearth of evidence renders any confident statement about Psalm piety in the ancient world speculative.[8] Inscriptions, magic bowls and amulets – evidence examined in this chapter – highlight the centrality and inescapable reality of Psalm piety in Late Antiquity. This chapter thus aligns methodologically with scholars who claim that the reality of Late Antiquity can best be appreciated by bridging the gap between literary and material evidence.

This chapter does not limit its scope to the non-elites. It is all too easy to artificially segregate rabbis and church fathers from average Jews and Christians, to posit that Psalm piety was the province of the uninformed and ill-educated masses, and to assert that the intellectualism of the elite would naturally force them to oppose and resist Psalm piety. In fact, this argument has

[8] "Confident statements about their use in both communal and private settings, especially in antiquity, are fraught with problems and often founder for lack of clear evidence." Cooper, "Some Aspects of Traditional Jewish Psalm Interpretation," 258. Further, his remark that "the projection of later liturgical practice back to ancient times is anachronistic, and one might say the same with regard to the contemplative, meditative, and magical practices that characterize later popular use of psalms" (pg. 258) is correct but too broad. While the projection of later practices into the past is definitionally anachronistic, pietistic and magical engagement with psalms characterize our period. Cooper's arguments are entirely constructed on his reading of rabbinic literature, which rarely puts Psalm piety at the center of discourse. Including material from magic bowls and amulets significantly alters his conclusions.

been made about late antique Psalm piety.[9] Such a position has the unfortunate tendency to homogenize rabbis, church fathers and other elites into a monolithic group, and to reinforce the outmoded stereotype of the elite as anti-magic intellectuals.[10] In the pages below, I will take the rabbis as an example of a self-styled elite social group and demonstrate that many rabbis were deeply involved in the cultural field of Psalm piety, constantly contributing to and being in turn shaped by it.[11] Many rabbis commend those who recite psalm verses, imagine earlier figures

[9] "Overall, it appears that Psalms first found wider dissemination in prayer and liturgy by way of popular piety, against which the Rabbis vainly resisted; [understanding] what grounds the Rabbis could have had for their resistance (many Psalms were already used in early magic) would require first closer examination, as far as the sources will allow." Translation of German original, "Insgesamt scheinen die Psalmen erst auf dem Weg über die Volksfrömmigkeit weitere Verbreitung in Gebet und Liturgie gewonnen zu haben, wogegen sich die Rabbinen vergebens zur Wehr setzen; welche Gründe die Rabbinen für ihren Widerstand haben konnten (viele Psalmen sind schon früh magisch verwendet worden), wäre erst näher zu erforschen, soweit das die Quellen zulassen." Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 233. Stemberger, unfortunately, does not explore these pietistic practices. He appears to base his entire claim on the one instance in which the Babylonian Talmud rejects the recitation of Hallel every day. We will explore this source below. This argument is also proffered by Rabinowitz, "The Psalms in Jewish Liturgy," 110. Rabinowitz's colorful language regarding the contested Hallel practice is worth citing in full: "Such vigorous reproof can only be understood on the grounds that there was in fact a growing movement to recite these Psalms daily, and it is in the highest degree probable that we have the first extension of the use of Psalms in daily prayer, nipped in the bud by the forceful objection" (pg. 112). For an attempt to pit the rabbis against the 'non-elite' in a slightly later period see .

[10] For a classic and clear expression that pits rabbis against magic see Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages*, trans. Israel Abrahams, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 97–123; Ludwig Blau, *Das Altjüische Zauberwesen* (Budapest: Jahrsbericht der Landes-Rabbinerschule, 1897). Contemporary scholarship has mostly dismissed this binary in search of more productive modes of analysis. On the complicated relationship between rabbis and magic, particularly as it relates to establishing rabbinic authority see Yuval Harari, "The Sages and the Occult," in *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Shmuel Safrai et al., CRINT 3b (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2006), 521–64. See more recently Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah*. For another synthetic analysis see Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 351–425. Note that healing, protection and making of amulets was usually acceptable within rabbinic circles (pgs. 365, 70). It is in this context one finds Psalm piety. See also the influential article by Peter Schäfer, "Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism," in *Envisioning Magic*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Hans Kippenberg, Numen Book Series 75 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 19–43. I follow the claim that rabbinic Judaism did not distinguish between magic and religion, even when prohibiting some contested practices under various categories that modern scholarship has bundled together as magic. For a recent and compelling reading of rabbinic literature within the context of magic see Septimus, *On the Boundaries*, 45–88 esp. 59-61. The only study I could find that is devoted to psalms and magic in ancient Judaism focuses most of its attention on *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim*, an early Medieval compilation, See Bill Rebiger, "Die magische Verwendung von Psalmen im Judentum," in *Ritual und Poesie: Formen und Orte Religiöser Dichtung im Altern Orien, Im Judentum und im Christentum*, ed. Erich Zenger (Freidbrug: Herder, 2003), 265–81. His assumptions that psalms were always liturgical (pg. 268) is problematic. It is worth noting that even the Tosafists, the great scholastic dialecticians of the Middle Ages, have been fruitfully reexamined in light of the reality of Medieval magic and mysticism. See Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

[11] On the notion of cultural field see Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York:

engaged in constant psalmody, and even employ particular psalms for protection. A methodological lens that acknowledges rabbinic Psalm piety could easily be refocused on other elite groups.

In addition to collapsing the border between elite and non-elite Psalm piety, this chapter also highlights the blurred boundaries between protective magic and piety. Ancient Jews and early Christians did not neatly divide these areas into independent epistemological concepts and then play one off the other, scorning the former and lauding the latter. That is the work of modernity. The humans of Late Antiquity suffused their life with "magical piety," which they may have distinguished from other dangerous and forbidden practices.[12] Magical piety in Late Antiquity was also not merely an individual practice, but a veritable social fact that found expression in communal dimensions.[13]

Finally, this chapter is a reconstructive project. It attempts to paint a portrait of Jewish and Christian scriptural encounter rarely depicted in scholarship, one that situates the Bible as an object of lived reality. In the sources that follow, Psalms are important not because of "what they mean"

Columbia University Press, 1993), 29–73. This is not to say that there are never tensions between some pietistic and liturgical practices, but these need to be carefully situated within a complex cultural system.

[12] I borrow this turn of phrase from Michael D. Swartz, "Magical Piety in Ancient and Medieval Judaism," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki, RGRW 129 (Leiden: Brill, 1995). Unfortunately, he does not define piety and focuses more on the magician than the community of magic. I agree, however, that scholars should stop dichotomizing magic and religion. He challenges this through an exploration of the motifs of chain of transmission and memory practices. For the purposes of piety, exploring psalm use is more productive. For collapsing religion and magic with regards to divine names see John G. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 12, 24–25.

[13] For this concept see Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method*, ed. Steven Lukes, trans. W. D. Halls Halls (New York: Free Press, 1982), 20–28. In his own words: "*A social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint*; or: *which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations*" (pg. 27, italics in original). I am intentionally reading Durkheim against himself, for Durkheim famously claims that magic is an individual affair. In his own words, magic "does not result in binding together those who adhere to it, nor in uniting them into a group leading a common life. *There is no Church of magic*." Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 44. As we will see below, magical Psalm piety can be a communal endeavor that takes place *in the Synagogue* and provides social cohesion. Similar, of course, can be said of monastic magical piety.

(i.e. how does interprets psalms) but rather because of "how they mean" (i.e. how one uses psalms to create meaning.) In other words, Psalm piety allows us to view the Bible beyond interpretation and reconstruct it as an object of practice. There is little doubt that the evidence mustered in this chapter represents but a small fraction of what once existed.

In summary, the claims this chapter seeks to substantiate are as follows: 1) Psalm piety exists in Late Antiquity; 2) it is the province of both elite and non-elites; 3) it is best appreciated by examining literary and material sources in tandem; 4) Jews and Christians engage with it in fundamentally similar manners; 5) it shares a blurred boundary with magic on one end and liturgy on the other; 6) it allows us to view the Bible in Late Antiquity as an object of practice and not just interpretation; and 7) it demonstrates the widespread appeal of and engagement with the Psalms. This chapter will not argue each claim in an independent and ordinal manner, but rather provide a synthetic narrative that provides proof for multiple arguments simultaneously.

The chapter will do so in two parts. The first will explore the use of Psalms in early Christianity. It will demonstrate the existence of Psalm piety in a variety of Christian circles and unpack how Psalm piety functions. It will examine the use of Psalms in education, non-mandated liturgy, demonic combat, protective amulets, and church inscriptions. It will also explore how Christians used the book of Psalms for the purposes of identity formation. The discussion will not only demonstrate the widespread appeal of Psalm piety, but also highlight its fundamental patterns. The second part of this chapter will shift our attention to ancient Judaism, where the existence of Psalm piety is contested and its practice less well-documented. It will provide an in-depth discussion of both rabbinic sources and material evidence to demonstrate the existence of ancient Jewish Psalm piety, its commendation by the rabbis and its relationship to liturgy and magic.

Psalm Piety in Early Christianity: An Overview

Attention to early Christian sources readily reveals a widespread and deeply entrenched culture of Psalm piety as well as its relationship to liturgy and magic. The best, and most obvious, place to find psalm culture in late antique Christianity is the sands of Egypt. The numerous Psalters and psalm fragments found in this region indicate their common use in education, prayer and piety.[14] Additionally, the Egyptian desert contained numerous monastic communities. Unlike the slow-developing daily liturgy, in which select psalms were sung on specific occasions, monastic worship featured seriatim psalm recital.[15] Many monks regularly completed the entire Psalter in the course of formal monastic worship. Eventually, the origins and structure of serial psalmody became the subject of legend. According to John Cassian (360-435 CE), monastic leaders gathered to discuss how many psalms ought to be recited at each formal meeting. When time for the evening prayer came, they began to sing from Psalm 1. After concluding the twelfth psalm, the cantor

[14] For Egyptian Psalters and psalm fragments see Gregg Schwendner, "A Fragmentary Psalter from Karanis and Its Context," in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon*, ed. Craig A Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, LSTS 70 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 125. The Psalter seems to be more popularly copied than the Gospel. See also Larry W. Hurtado, *The Earliest Christian Artifacts: Manuscripts and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2006), 19–21. Of all Christian Greek manuscripts dating between the second and early fourth centuries (325 CE), Hurtado counts eighteen Psalm manuscripts. Matthew comes in second with twelve manuscripts. Within the Old Testament, there are eight manuscripts of Genesis and eight of Exodus. On pg. 28 he calls this figure for Psalms "unsurprising." On the use of private study Psalms see pp. 54-55, 58-59 although he claims that two of the five Psalm rolls discussed may be of Jewish origin. For further material evidence of Christian Psalm piety see also the great example of P. Lond. Lit. 204, which is a Psalm codex that measures 6.3 x 7.3 cm and was likely carried and used by one person. Ibid., 160. On the intersection between Christian psalm piety and materiality in a slightly later period Georgi R. Parpulov, "Psalters and Personal Piety in Byzantium," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino and Robert S. Nelson, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia 2 (Washington, D.C: Harvard University Press, 2010), 77–105. Parpulov demonstrates that many monastic Psalters were dedicated for personal use. For the material residue of psalms in education see the numerous examples in the catalogue at the end of Raffaella Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, American Studies in Papyrology 36 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996). Material evidence for reading and writing psalms in early education is not limited to an Egyptian context. A Syriac clay tablet found in Panjikent suggests that that Syraic speaking Christians also used psalms for early education. See A. V. Paykova, "The Syrian Ostracon from Panjikent," *Le Museon* 92 (1979): 159–69. I develop the place of Psalms in East Syrian education in the final chapter of this dissertation. Additionally, it is quite possible that beginning education with psalms in Late Antiquity preserves a much older practice of placing psalms at the forefront of literacy. See Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 99–102.

[15] See particularly Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 93–110; Taft, *The Liturgy*, 57–73.

mysteriously disappeared. Monastic leaders understood that the cantor was an angel and thus twelve psalms each at morning and evening service was divinely approved. While this story, of course, does not provide evidence for the earliest monastic worship, it does highlight the development of a fixed pattern of psalmody and the justification for it.[16]

Formal monastic liturgy owes its roots to Psalm piety, the primary occupation of monastic daily life.[17] Memorizing Psalms was the first step towards becoming a monk.[18] According to Cassian, the monk must, "Take in to himself all the thoughts of the psalms and sing them in such a way that he utters them with the deepest emotion of the heart not as compositions of the prophet but as if he himself were their author, as his own prayer, or certainly consider them to have been directed at himself and recognize that their words were not only already fulfilled through the prophet or in the prophet but as realized and accomplished daily in himself."[19] The process of recitation sometimes left material residue. Jabal al-Tarif, the location where the Nag Hammadi

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[16] John Cassian, *Institutes,* 2.5. On Cassian's Bethlehem liturgy see Taft, *The Liturgy*, 76–80. On the twelve psalms see Anselem Davril, "La psalmodie chez les peres du desert," *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 49 (1987): 138–39. Pachomian worship seems to have had less Psalmody, Taft, *The Liturgy*, 64; McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 207. For liturgical psalmody as reflected in the *Saying of the Desert Fathers* see Douglas Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 117–18.

[17] On the role of Scripture in early monasticism see Christie, *The Word in the Desert*; Derek Krueger, "The Old Testament and Monasticism," in *The Old Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Paul Magdalino and Robert S. Nelson, Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Symposia and Colloquia 2 (Washington, D.C: Harvard University Press, 2010), 199–221. Psalms, expectedly, is the most cited Old Testament book in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (pg. 97). For more on Psalms in monastic community see Lorenzo Perrone, "Scripture for a Life of Perfection. The Bible in Late Antique Monasticism: The Case of Palestine," in *The Reception and Interpretation of the Bible in Late Antiquity: Proceedings of the Montréal Colloquium in Honour of Charles Kannengiesser, 11-13 October 2006*, ed. Lorenzo DiTommaso, Lucian Turcescu, and Charles Kannengiesser, Bible in Ancient Christianity 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 401–3; Davril, "La psalmodie chez les peres du desert."

[18] Among the Pachomian rules for admittance into the community the pledge ought to "learn the Lord's Prayer and so many Psalms as possible." Upon entering the novice is expected to "learn twenty psalms or two letters of the Apostle or another part of Scripture." Ultimately, every monk is supposed to memorize the entirety of Scripture, particularly the Psalms and New Testament. For this data see Perrone, "Scripture for a Life of Perfection," 401 n.23. Both Sabas and his student Cyril of Scythopolis begin their monastic journey by memorizing psalms.

[19] John Cassian, *Conferences*, 10.11. Translation from Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, 95. For a similar sentiment see also Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1980), 101–29.

codices were unearthed, contains a cave that bears graffiti of the incipits of Psalms 51-93. These were likely used as a memory aid for pious recitation or scribal activity.[20]

The connection between monastic office and David's prayer is both highlighted and parodied in the humorous, *Life of Symeon the Holy Fool* (ca. 600 CE). When Symeon and John leave the monastery in order to become wandering monks it suddenly occurs to John that, "We have learned neither Psalms nor rules." How could Symeon and John be proper monks? Symeon responds: "He who saved those who were well pleasing to him before David will also save us. If we are worthy he will teach us as David when he was with his flock in the desert."[21] Even in parody, monks imagine monastic office in terms of Psalms and themselves as types of David.

The constant demand to recite Psalms led to the thematization of concentration during prayer and comprehension of it. The *Syriac Book of Steps* (late fourth century), for example, excoriates those who pray without heart in a lengthy passage that employs at least thirteen verses from Psalms. It begins with a call to reform mindless psalmody: "Look, my son, consider how much power is hidden in the praises of our Lord, yet we repeat them by rote without passion. Because of this, the words of God do not effect in us good deeds, for we do not give them a place in our soul to lay down roots in us."[22] Words of power need to be understood and slowly encoded into monastic DNA, otherwise they are useless.[23] Lack of comprehension undermines the entire monastic educational project: "When one of us teaches his brother a psalm, saying to him, 'Refrain from rage and cease from anger,' and if that teacher does not take it to heart, nor even does that

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[20] For argument and further information see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 39–40.
[21] Derek Krueger, *Symeon the Holy Fool: Leontius's Life and the Late Antique City*, TCH 25 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 141.
[22] Memra 29. Translation from Robert A. Kitchen and Martien F. G. Parmentier, trans., *The Book Of Steps: The Syriac Liber Graduum* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 2004), 324.
[23] This sentiment is also likely at the base of a monastic narrative involving Abba Pambo, who would learn one verse of a psalm, wait many months, and then learn the next one. For source see Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, 156.

disciple consider what his master is teaching him, look, are we not going though the motions without passion or knowledge?"[24] Our author reacts viscerally to a culture that he thinks condones mindless psalmody. Psalm piety must be affective to be effective.

The author of the *Book of Steps* is neither the first nor the only person to discourse on this problem. A textual addition to the *History of Monks in Egypt* by Rufinus (340-410) relates a story about a monk named Macarius. A demon attempts to persuade him that, "Without us there is never any meeting or gathering of monks."[25] When Marcarius attends that night's vigil, he asks God to let him know if the demon told the truth. Immediately, he sees that little demons are tormenting the monks: putting their fingers into the monks' mouth, and transforming into food or women. The other monks seem oblivious. Macarius, however, notices that some people get distracted by the demons while others "repel them as if by force." The difference, he eventually discovers, was that the latter pray with concentration and the former do not. The ultimate lesson was: "He who joins his heart to God and remains intent at the time of prayer, can receive into himself noting that is alien or superfluous."[26]

The problem of concentration is connected to the requirement of maintaining a life of ceaseless Psalmody. The requirement leads to various creative solutions. On one extreme was the literal fulfillment of this ideal by the monastic movement centered around Alexander the Sleepless (*vita* ca. 460). Alexander read Psalm 1:2, "For if the law of the Lord is his delight, then he should meditate on the his law day and night," as an injunction to never stop singing psalms. Thus, he

[24] Memra 29. Translation from Kitchen and Parmentier, *The Book Of Steps*, 324.
[25] Translations from Taft, *The Liturgy*, 67–68.
[26] John of Gaza attempts to tackle the issue from another direction. He claims that psalm prayer should be done with lips and not merely the intellect. Parpulov, "Psalters and Personal Piety in Byzantium," 83. Contrast this to the approach of Evagrius Ponticus, who claims: "Chant psalms from your heart, and do not so much as move your tongue in your mouth." Evagrius, *To the Virgin*, line 35. Translation from A. M. Casiday, *Evagrius Ponticus*, The Early church fathers (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 169.

divided his followers into multiple groups so that just as one finished chanting psalms another would begin. This activity, among others, made Alexander the target of both monastic and ecclesiastical ire.[27]

The solution of many other monks was to engage in psalmody while performing daily rituals, such as work. In the eyes of Abba Lucius, a monk enshrined in the alphabetical collection of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (ca. 450), psalmody and work are harmonious activities. According to Abba Lucius: "I sit down with God, soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes, and I say, 'God, have mercy on me; according to your great goodness and according to the multitude of your mercies, save me from my sins' (Ps 50:1)."[28] This entwined activity was both fiscally and spiritually productive.

Deeply connected to this pietistic behavior was the efficacy of Psalms in exorcising demons. Like some rabbis we will discuss below, monks practiced magical piety. According to the *Life of Alexander the Sleepless*, "He [Alexander] was not able to express his thoughts from the start, for the time was not right. First he waited to receive his full spiritual armor, which was the Psalter."[29] The book of Psalms was a protective shield against preternatural threats. In fact, the

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[27] Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, TCH 33 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 137–57.

[28] Benedicta Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 121. On the issue of work vs. prayer in monastic communities see Peter Brown, *Treasure in Heaven: The Holy Poor in Early Christianity*, Richard Lectures (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2016). For further on psalms and manual labor see John Cassian, *Institutions*, 3.2: "For manual labour is incessantly practised by them in their cells in such a way that meditation on the Psalms and the rest of the Scriptures is never entirely omitted. And as with it at every moment they mingle suffrages and prayers, they spend the whole day in those offices which we celebrate at fixed times" (NPNF^2 11:213). The themes of work and prayer are in constant tension in monastic literature. For this tension in the thought of Basil the Great see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 104–6.

[29] Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 254. For further examples of psalm verses as spiritual weapons against demons see John Moschos, *Spiritual Meadow*, 152, which specifies Psalms 7, 36, 61, and 67. See also Athanasius, *Letter to Marcellinus* 18, 33. See as well the numerous examples in Evagrius, *Counter-Sayings*. For a detailed study on Evagrius and psalms see Luke Dysinger, *Psalmody and Prayer in the Writings of Evagrius Ponticus*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), see specifically 131-49 for the use of psalms as spiritual weapons.

well-known and widely circulated *Life of Anthony* (ca. 356-62 CE) features Psalms not only as a protective barrier but also as a veritable demon-slaying weapon. In nearly every instance in which Anthony encounters a demonic threat he recites an apt psalm verse that drives it away.[30] Even the Devil, in conversation with Anthony, adopts both a psalm verse and a sword motif to proclaim his weakness: "He said, 'I am not he who troubles them, but they trouble themselves, for I am become weak. Have they not read, 'The swords of the enemy have come to an end, and thou hast destroyed the cities?' (Ps 9:6)'[31] I have no longer a place, a weapon, a city'." Christian monks readily blurred the lines between magic, liturgy and piety – a phenomenon that I will highlight below with regards to rabbinic Jews.

Monks did not hold the exclusive right to Psalm piety in early Christianity. Neither did men. Elite Christian women often read Psalms for spiritual edification. In 403 CE, Laeta, the daughter-in-law of Paula, asked Jerome how she should educate her infant daughter. In penning his 107th letter, Jerome responds, "Let her begin by learning the Psalter."[32] Paula, too, engaged in Psalm piety. In his 108th letter – a missive written to Eustochium to console her upon Paula's death – Jerome notes that, "Paula, on making up her mind that she too would learn it, succeeded so well that she could chant the psalms in Hebrew." Jerome was not the only church father to counsel women to read the Psalter. Athanasius' *On Virginity* combines Psalm piety with materiality. To ascetic women he writes, "Your occupation will be studying constantly the Sacred Scriptures. You

[30] See, for example, *Life of Anthony,* 6: "But Antony having given thanks to the Lord, with good courage said to him, 'Thou art very despicable then, for thou art black-hearted and weak as a child. Henceforth I shall have no trouble from thee, "for the Lord is my helper, and I shall look down on mine enemies." (Ps 118:7)' Having heard this, the black one straightway fled, shuddering at the words and dreading any longer even to come near the man" (NPNF^2 4:197). Multiple similar examples in the *Life of Anthony* could be cited. This trope of expelling demons through psalmody is common in many monastic narratives. For the example of Abba Macarius and the swords of fire see Christie, *The Word in the Desert*, 148–49.
[31] *Life of Anthony,* 41 (NPNF^2 4:207).
[32] NPNF^2 6:190.

must have a Psalter and you must learn the Psalms. When the sun appears above the horizon, it should be the book in your hands." In his *Life of Macrina* 3, Gregory of Nyssa describes the Psalter as Macrina's constant companion. Evidence of female Psalm piety extends beyond the realm of literary representation. As we will see below, both Jews and Christians connected Psalm piety to death. In Al-Mudil, Egypt a fourth or fifth century copy of a Psalter was buried next to the head of a teenage girl.[33]

Other material remains, such as amulets, provide evidence for non-elite Christian Psalm piety. Some of these theurgic and protective texts likely belonged to elite Christians as well. The psalm most represented in amulets is also the least surprising: Psalm 91.[34] In a study of scriptural quotation in Greek amulets found in late antique Egypt from the fourth to the eighth centuries, Theodore de Bruyn lists the presence of Psalm 91 in at least fourteen of the twenty-three objects he classifies as certainly amulets.[35] Furthermore, in a detailed study of Psalm 91, Thomas Kraus claims to have collected eighty-two objects that contain Psalm 91.[36] As we will see below, Psalm 91 takes center stage in late antique Jewish expressions of magical piety. In addition to Psalm 91,

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[33] AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Forbidden Oracles?: The Gospel of the Lots of Mary*, STAC 89 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 48 n.57. It is also worth noting that an elegant copy of the second book of the Iliad was found buried under the head of a girl in Hawara, Egypt. See Richard B. Parkinson and Stephen Quirke, *Papyrus*, Egyptian Bookshelf (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 67.

[34] Use of Psalm 91 as a demon repellent also appears in literary texts. For example, John Cassian claims that during the sixth hour monastic dejection is "like some fever which seizes him at stated times, bringing the burning heat of its attacks on the sick man at usual and regular hours. Lastly, there are some of the elders who declare that this is the 'midday demon' spoken of in the ninetieth Psalm" (NPNF^2 11:266). For wandering and dejection see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 38–41.

[35] Theodore de Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca, and Tablets Written with Biblical Texts in Greek and Used as Amulets: A Preliminary List," in *Early Christian Manuscripts: Examples of Applied Method and Approach*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, Texts and Editions for New Testament Study 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 145–89. Joseph Sanzo, in a study on scriptural incipits in magical amulets lists Psalm 91:1 in eighteen out of the sixty-three amulets he surveys. See Joseph E. Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt: Text, Typology, and Theory*, STAC 84 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 106–20.

[36] Thomas J. Kraus, "'He That Dwelleth In the Help of the Highest': Septuagint Psalm 90 and the Iconographic Program on Byzantine Armbands"," in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon*, ed. Craig A Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, LSTS 70 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 137–47. See pp 140-41 for this figure. See also Thomas J. Kraus, "Septuaginta-Psalm 90 in apotropäischer Verwendung: Vorüberlegungen für eine kritische Edition und (bisheriges) Datenmaterial," *Biblische Notizen* 125 (2005): 39–72.

Theodore de Bruyn lists the use of Psalms 1:1-2,3; 2:7; 3:4-9, 5-6, 2-4; 16:10; 18:3; 21:2-7; 22:20-23; 29:7; 31:3d-4a; 41:3-6; 50:1-7; 54; 63:2, 4-5a, 2-3; 65:2; 74:2; 87:2,5; 92:1; 107:35; 110:3; 112:1; 118:6-7, 19-20; 119:10-11, 55-60; 141:1-6, 8, 10; 148:9-14; 149 and 150 in texts that he classifies as certainly or probably amulets.[37] The diversity of this list is astounding.

Material expressions of Christians Psalm piety extend beyond magical texts. Ekaterini Tsalampouni has collected a database of sixteen Jewish and 490 Christian inscriptions that contain biblical verses.[38] It covers the Greek inscriptions of the Eastern Roman Empire from the second century BCE until the sixth century CE, and includes a wide array of artifacts, such as mosaics, church lintels, funerary monuments, personal and liturgical objects, and jewelry. These inscriptions are mostly concentrated in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Of the 490 Christian inscriptions, 359 contain quotations of the Old Testament, over two-thirds of which come from Psalms! Furthermore, throughout the corpus, particular psalm verses are typically found on specific objects. Psalm 121:8, "The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore," often adorns the lintels and doorposts of churches and houses; Psalm 118:20, "This is the gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter through it," appears on numerous cult monuments in Syria and Palestine; Psalm 29:3, "the voice of the Lord is over the waters" was inscribed on buildings and objects that relate to water;[39] and Psalm 46:8, "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*," often appears on various public and private buildings.[40]

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[37] de Bruyn, "Papyri, Parchments, Ostraca," 166–74.

[38] Ekaterini Tsalampouni, "Citations of Biblical Texts in Greek Jewish and Christian Inscriptions of the Graeco-Roman and Late Antiquity: A Case of Religious Demarcation," in *Chasing down Religion: In the Sights of History and the Cognitive Sciences: Essays in Honor of Luther H. Martin*, ed. Panayotis Pachis and Donald Wiebe (Thessaloniki: Barbounakis Publications, 2010), esp. 463-9.

[39] For a specific example, which quotes Psalm 29:3, see Hannah M. Cotton et al., eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae: Volume 1: Jerusalem, Part 2: 705-1120* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), #789.

[40] For similar results using a smaller corpus but organized by church inscription, house lintels and funerary inscriptions see Denis Feissel, "The Bible in Greek Inscriptions," in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*, ed. Paul M. Blowers, The Bible Through the Ages 1 (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1997), 289–98. Of the 247 inscriptions

As we will see below, these last two verses also appear prominently in Jewish Psalm piety. Is this coincidental? I think not.

Christian Psalm piety also appears, as it will in the Jewish sources explored below, in communal manifestations. Psalm piety was not exclusively a personal endeavor, and both Jews and Christians used Psalm piety to create and police identity. The third century Pseudo-Clementine epistle, *Ad Virgines* 2.6, attempts to draw clear and distinct boundaries between Christian and other gentile communities. Singing psalms becomes both a flash point and an identity marker. If the author and his group find themselves lodging in a non-Christian village, "We do not sing psalms to the heathens, nor do we read to them the Scriptures, that we may not be like common singers, either those who play on the lyre, or those who sing with the voice."[41] Psalms are for Christian edification and not for the amusement of idol-worshippers. One must be a Christian to join in a community of psalmody. Indeed, to violate this rule is to "go about 'singing the songs of the Lord in the strange land' (Ps 137:4) of the heathen, and doing what is not right."[42]

A tragedy on the Mediterranean island of Minorca highlights the contested ownership of Psalms. If in our previous example Psalms defined Christians against other gentiles, here it sets Christians against Jews.[43] Before Saint Stephen's relics arrived at Minorca in 417, Jews and Christians peacefully coexisted. A Jew, Theodorus, was the unchallenged leader of the entire community, acting as the *defensor* of the city as well as its *patronus*. In the eyes of the later-

over 1/3 come from the psalter. Popular psalm verses include Psalm 29:8 (17x), Psalm 91:1 (15x), Psalm 118:20 (31x) and Psalm 121:8 (43x).

[41] Translation from ANF 8:63.

[42] On the context of this letter and monastic wandering see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 74–75.

[43] For a brief analysis of this event and its relationship to power and patronage see Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 103–4. See also Hagith Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 182–83. Translations of this text are from Scott Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews*, Oxford Early Christian texts (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

victorious Severus of Minorca, his tenure was not without premonition of disaster. According to Severus, as the relics were being transferred Theodorus had a dream in which twelve men barred his path to the synagogue, declaring that a lion dwelled within. Theodorus, fearful, goes to Reuben's house in order to peer into the synagogue, and sees monks singing psalms with uncanny sweetness. This terrifies him. This dream, of course, portends the destruction of the synagogue and Jewish community. Psalmody is at its center. This vision plays out as Severus, upon arriving in the city, begins to proceed towards the synagogue. According to Severus, "Along the way we began to sing a hymn to Christ in our abundance of joy. Moreover, the psalm was 'Their memory has perished with a crash and the Lord endures forever' (Ps. 9: 7), and the throng of Jews also began to sing it with a wondrous sweetness." The local Jews, expecting no violence, join in the psalmody. The verse, however, was truly portentous. As Severus proceeded, violence ensued and the synagogue was burned to the ground.[44] Severus then goes to the church where he "beseeched the Lord to lay siege to the true dens of their unbelief and to expose to the light the faithlessness of their dark hearts." The next day, a Jew named Reuben – presumably the owner of the house next to the synagogue – converts. Three days later Severus claims to humiliate Theodorus in a disputation on the grounds of the ruined synagogue. The lion in the synagogue was none other than Jesus and its roar was monastic psalmody. Its sweet sound, according to Severus, compelled the Jews of the city to convert. Psalm piety was a contested identity marker, one that Severus manipulates in his narrative to highlight the dominion of Christianity in an island he imagined as once multi-religious.

[44] Violence by Christians against Jews, and even "monks" against other Christians was not uncommon. For the latter see Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 231–32. A North African religious group, who were labeled by some as the "circumcellions," would roam the Numidian country side, sing Psalms and terrorize its wealthy inhabitants. For further on this group see discussions in Brent D. Shaw, *Sacred Violence: African Christians and Sectarian Hatred in the Age of Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). On using psalms to incite violence against Jews, non-Christian gentiles and other Christians and during violent riots see Ibid., 231, 289–92, 300–301, 441–89.

That Psalm piety was a central cultural formation in the world of early Christianity is indisputable. The sources above highlight its range, manifestations and nuances. Psalm piety was practiced by many Christians, from the non-elite to monks and women. It was carved in stone and incised on amulets. It could simultaneously be a sharp tool in fashioning identity or a quotidian fact of life. Perhaps Jerome is not too idyllic in claiming of the Palestinian countryside: "But, as we have said above, in the cottage of Christ all is simple and rustic: and except for the chanting of psalms there is complete silence. Wherever one turns the laborer at his plough sings alleluia, the toiling mower cheers himself with psalms, and the vine-dresser while he prunes his vine sings one of the lays of David."[45]

Ancient Jewish Psalm Piety

In this section, I will argue that Psalm piety also characterized the life of late antique Jews. Rabbinic and non-rabbinic Jews alike practiced Psalm piety as individuals and as a group, inscribed psalm verses into stone and upon amulets, and used Psalm piety as a means of identity formation. Several instances of Jewish Psalm piety even mirror the patterns of Christian Psalm piety described above. In particular, I will examine in this section the rabbinic sources that offer us a glimpse into exceptional Psalm piety, quotidian Psalm piety, competitive Psalm piety and communal Psalm piety. Throughout, I will highlight the blurred boundary that Psalm piety shares with liturgy. In short, I will argue that not only did Jewish Psalm piety exist as a central feature in the religious life of late antique Judaism, but its cultural formations fit well within the larger world

[45] *Jerome, Epistle*s, 46:12 (NPNF^2 6:65).

of Late Antiquity.

Psalm Recitation as Exceptional Piety

As I mentioned above, ancient Jews connected Psalm piety with both quotidian piety and exceptional piety. The latter is more easily recognizable, as rabbis signal it with the Hebrew root *ḥsd* – traditionally rendered as "piety," but which I translate as "exceptional piety" because a full view of the extant sources suggests that Psalm piety was by no means an extra-ordinary feature of Jewish life.

That the Psalter – and its author – seems to be particularly well-suited for imagining and characterizing exceptional piety can be seen in b. Ber. 57b. This portion of the Babylonian Talmud belongs to part of a large and thematically consistent talmudic unit that scholars call the Babylonian Dreambook, a how-to guide for expounding upon and deciphering the meaning of dreams.[46] Thus, in a passage adjacent to the one we will explore, the Talmud records: "All beasts are a good sign in dreams, except the elephant, monkey and long-tailed ape." Overall, both dream and interpretation presuppose a particular form of cultural knowledge readily accessible to the rabbinic sage.

The origins and formation of this large unit are unclear and its transmission was very unstable. While many statements are attributed to earlier tradents – often in the form of the

[46] On the Babylonian Dreambook see Septimus, *On the Boundaries*, 89–142; Haim Weiss, *All Dreams Follow the Mouth: A Reading in the Talmdiuc Dream Tractate* (Kineret, Zmora-Bitan: Dvir, 2011); Phillip S. Alexander, "Bavli Berakhot 55a-57b: The talmudic Dreambook in Context," *JJS* 46 (1995): 230–48. For further history of scholarship see pg. 230 n.2. I particularly take issue with Alexander's reduction of the entire unit to issues of rabbinic authority and his description of Scripture in the passage. On the intersection of rabbinic exegesis and dream interpretation see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 68–82; Maren R. Niehoff, "A Dream Which Is Not Interpreted Is like a Letter Which Is Not Read," *JJS* 43 (1992): 58–84; Richard L. Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia*, BJS 303 (Providence, R.I: Scholars Press, 1994), 61–80, esp. 73-7. On dream interpretation in general see Harari, "The Sages and the Occult," 552–58.

Tannaitic citation formula "our rabbis teach" – significant variation in both content and order exists among the available manuscripts and genizah fragments. In light of all this, it is noteworthy that the text of the following statement remains stable across all manuscripts, even if its location changes within the Dreambook:

> Our rabbis teach: There are three kings. One who sees David in a dream should anticipate exceptional piety (*ḥassidut*);[47] Solomon, one should anticipate wisdom; Ahab son of Omri, fear retribution…. There are three books. One who sees the book of Psalms in a dream should anticipate exceptional piety; Proverbs, should anticipate wisdom; Job, should fear retribution.[48]

To best understand this source, we must remember that the cardinal assumption of dream interpretation is that dreams correspond with reality. Some rabbis take this logic a step further and imagine that dream interpretation can *create* a particular reality. Thus, "a dream which is not interpreted is like a letter not read" (b. Ber. 55a); it has no effect. What reality does seeing David and Psalms in a dream produce? The answer: exceptional piety. This tradition generates its dream interpretations by reducing biblical kings and books to an essential and culturally recognizable characteristic, features embedded within the memory of ancient Jews. That Solomon and his book are associated are wisdom is to be expected. The book of Job is premised on tidings of woe, and in the book of Kings Ahab is characterized as the quintessential wicked Israelite king. Seeing them portends punishment. David and his book, according to this tradition, typify exceptional piety. One who sees either in a dream can anticipate acquiring the virtue of exceptional piety.

In fact, the connection of David, and by extension his book, to exceptional piety is not the innovation of the Babylonian Dreambook. Rather, the Dreambook drew on a much earlier set of cultural expectations – exemplified in both biblical and rabbinic literature – that couple David to

[47] It is worth noting that the parallel in Avot R. Nathan A reads "humility" (ענוה) and Avot R. Nathan B reads "fear of sin," (יראת חטא) and also specifies someone seeing themselves reading from it.
[48] Reading with Ms Paris 671.

exceptional piety. The clearest rabbinic example appears in b. Ber. 4a, which contains a discussion about the meaning of Psalm 86:2a, a verse in which David himself declares his exceptional piety. In addition to reading David through the prism of exceptional piety, the rabbinic discourse also affords us a glimpse of how some rabbis imagine the practices that constitute exceptional piety:

> "About David:[49] guard my soul, for I am an exceptionally pious one (*ḥasid*)" (Ps 86:2a). It is a dispute between R. Levi and R. Isaac. One says [David said]: "Am I not pious? For all the kings of the east and west sleep until the third hour[50] and I get up at midnight to sing praises to you." And the other says [David said]: "Am I not pious? All the kings of the east and west gather together and sit in their glory, while I get messy with blood, fetus and placenta in order to declare a woman pure for her husband. And not only that, I consult my teacher Mipiboshet and ask him, 'Mipiboshet, my teacher, did I judge well? Did I justify correctly? Did I condemn correctly? Did I declare impure correctly? Did I declare pure correctly?' and I was not embarrassed."[51]

R. Isaac and R. Levi agree that David was a perfect exemplar of exceptional piety; he says as much in Psalm 86:2 – "I am an exceptionally pious one." They argue, though, as to what this means. What practices constitute exceptional piety? One sage claims it refers to midnight psalmody;[52] the other asserts that it means fidelity to rabbinic practice.[53] The sage who situates exceptional piety firmly within the realm of rabbinic legal culture crafts a narrative in which David dirties himself to legally purify impure women, and constantly defers to his teacher. The message resounds: the greatest Jewish king – himself a sage – submits to a wiser sage. Exceptionally pious are those who

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[49] These words appear in every available manuscript and Genizah fragment except Oxford Opp. 23. Did the original tradent have a text that actually read לדוד שמרה נפשי, or is he fragmenting what he deems to be the important part of the first verse, the ascription to David, and placing it at the beginning of the second?

[50] This statement clearly draws upon m. Ber. 1:2.

[51] This is obviously a pun on then name Mipiboshet, read as "being embarrassed through my mouth."

[52] The narrative motif of David getting up at midnight is also developed in y. Ber. 1:1 2d. Here David awakes for Torah study and not for psalmody. For a comparison between our entire Babylonian Talmud discourse and its parallel sources in Palestinian literature see Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 112–16.

[53] It is also perhaps worth nothing that this portrayal of piety may actually be a taming of the use of *ḥasid* in Tannaitic literature, where it seems to refer to a Holy Man and is usually connected with "fear of sin." For the argument that divorces *ḥasid* from scholarship in rabbinic literature see Jacobs, "The Concept of Hasid," 151–53; Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," 19–20; Novick, *What Is Good, and What God Demands*, 141. Further evidence for the scholastic re-imagination of piety may be the use of the late term "*mishnat ḥasidim*" (*contra* Safrai 25-6, who takes attributions too seriously), and the notion that the true *ḥasid* must master part of rabbinic law, as per b. b. Qam. 30a. I plan on developing this idea further in another context. For a general portrait of the scholasticism of Babylonian rabbis see Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*.

lower themselves from their life station to engage with rabbinic practice and affirm the rabbinic scholastic cultural and legal system.

The first rabbi defines exceptional piety as the practice of psalmody. To arise in middle of the night and sing psalms is to imitate the pious Jewish king. Although the rabbi does not directly tell us that David's midnight praises were psalms, there is good reason to suggest that he likely imagined them to be selections from the Psalter. In addition to the general correlation of David with Psalms, the midnight setting in the narrative clearly derives from Psalm 119:62: "At midnight I will rise and give thanks to you." These exact words appear in the passage above but are unmarked. They are not introduced by any citation formula. Psalms are merely the songful words of David.[54] Piety is psalmody, and David is its chief exemplar.[55]

Ultimately, the opinion just discussed may be a reflection of and argument for a particular cultural pattern that valorizes Psalm piety. But to imagine rabbinic Jews being offered two models of piety but striving towards only one of them is to paint an imbalanced and scholastically biased portrait. Indeed, earlier within this extensive pericope R. Ashi suggests that David would deal in matters of Torah *until* midnight, and from midnight and onwards would sing songs of praise.[56] In light of this and similar discourses, it is no surprise that the *book* of Psalms, often imagined as the composition of the pious king, itself becomes a symbol and transmitter of piety. To see David or the book of Psalms in a dream is to anticipate exceptional piety, of which at least one practice includes the pietistic recitation of Psalms.

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[54] It is worth noting that the Babylonian Talmud here does not follow the lead of the parallel in y. Ber. 1:1 2d, which focuses on the latter half of the verse to describe David's activity as Torah study. All manuscripts and fragments, except Ms Paris 671, cite only the first half of the verse. Regardless, the activity imagined by the tradent is songful praise and not study.

[55] This exemplarity is at center in the parallel in y. Ber. 1:1 2d and Pesiq. R. Kahana 7.4, in which the music from the harp at David's bedside would alert others that David was studying Torah and encourage them to do likewise.

[56] On the midrashic underpinnings of R. Ashi's statement see Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 122.

Midnight psalmody was not a marker of Jewish Psalm piety exclusively. Rising in middle of the night to pray was already a pious custom among certain groups of Christians, or at least advocated as one. In his *Christ the Educator* 2:9, Clement of Alexandria claims, "For a sleeping man is no more use than a dead one. Therefore at night we ought to rise often and bless God. For blessed are they who watch for him, and so make themselves like the angels, whom we call 'Watchers.'"[57] Origen, in his *On Prayer* 12.2, scripturally undergirds evening prayer with the same verse used in the rabbinic tradition above: "Indeed, we do not even complete the nighttime properly without that prayer of which David speaks when he says, 'At midnight I arose to make acknowledgment to you for your righteous judgments' (Ps 119:62)."[58]And the fourth century Apostolic Tradition may be the earliest available source to advocate prayer *at* midnight: "Pray before your body rests on the bed. Rise about midnight, wash your hands with water, and pray. If your wife is present also, pray both together; if she is not yet among the faithful, go apart into another room and pray, and go back to bed again. Do not be lazy about praying."[59] None of these sources directly detail the use of psalms, but it is safe to presume – based on our discussion in the previous chapter – that by the fourth century, if not earlier, these midnight pietistic prayers contained psalmody.[60] It is also worth noting that these Christian sources begin to play with the idea of midnight as a time for mandated prayer, while for the rabbis midnight can only be a time of voluntary pietistic activity. Could Christian midnight prayers have inspired the rabbis to imagine and advocate midnight psalmody? Or are both Jews and Christians merely drawing similar conclusions from a shared biblical verse? Regardless, the rabbinic choice to tell and promote a

[57] Translation from ANF 2:258.
[58] Origen, *Origen: An Exhortation to Martyrdom, Prayer, First Principles: Book IV, Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs, Homily XXVII on Numbers*, trans. Rowan A. Greer, The Classics of Western spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 105.
[59] Taft, *The Liturgy*, 23.
[60] See pages 221-24, above.

Jewish narrative about midnight psalmody receives both context and texture if read against a developing Christian practice.

Having demonstrated the connection between Psalms and exceptional piety in rabbinic culture, let us return to the beginning of this section, to the Babylonian Dreambook. The tradition recorded in this text – that one who sees Psalms in a dream should expect piety – receives anecdotal corroboration elsewhere in rabbinic literature, especially if we understand piety through the lens of the rabbi recorded in b. Ber. 4a who equates piety with rabbinic practice. B. Soṭah 31a contains a narrative in which two of Rava's students come to him in distress:

> One said, "They proclaimed in my dream, 'O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those that fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you in the sight of everyone' (Ps 31:20)." The other said, "They proclaimed in my dream, 'But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you' (Ps 5:12)." He [Rava] said to them, "You are both sages, one through love and the other through fear."[61]

Each student hears a verse from the book of Psalm read aloud to him in a dream. Dreaming Scripture is meaningful, but what does it signify? Rava informs his students that both are proper rabbis; both verses describe God's goodness, bounty and protection. They differ in what motivates them to rabbinic practice. The one who saw Psalm 31:20 is driven by fear: "Laid up for those who *fear* you"; the one who dreamt of Psalm 5:12 is impelled by love: "so that those who *love* your name may exult in you." Could Rava, in line with the tradition recorded in the Babylonian Dreambook, understand that dreaming psalm verses signifies piety in general and not necessarily rabbinic practice? This may very well be the case. I suggest that the best translation of *rabbanan* in this passage is not "rabbi" but "pious:"- "You are both pious, one through love and the other through fear." That piety is at play in this passage may be evidenced by the first Venice print edition, which does not read "you are both rabbis," but rather, "you are both rabbis, *completely*

[61] Translating from Ms Vatican 110; there are no significant variations other than that discussed in the note below.

righteous (*tzaddiqe gamore*)." The print editors felt the need to further qualify "rabbis," which to them simply meant "rabbinic master" and not "pious person." They chose "completely righteous" because they could not escape the context of piety.[62] This interpretation is aided by the selection of prooftexts: Psalms 31:20 and 5:12. Numerous psalm verses use the words "fear" and "love." Why choose these two? As I will discuss later, these specific verses are connected to Psalm piety elsewhere in rabbinic literature

Thus far, our discussion of ancient Jewish Psalm piety reveals three facts: first, that rabbis connected the book of Psalms and David with exceptional piety; second, that Psalm piety could manifest itself as either rabbinic practice or the midnight recitation of Psalm; third, that it bears resemblance to Christian piety. Psalm piety, however, was not only connected with exceptional piety – marked by the word *ḥasid* – but was also associated with quotidian piety.

Psalm Recitation as Quotidian Piety

Genesis Rabbah 74:11 attests to the recitation of Psalms as a pious practice.[63] In addition to solving a particular exegetical problem, I suggest that it also implicitly answers the question, "What should one do during unoccupied time?" by pointing to a developing cultural practice: Psalm piety. In isolation, this source will not prove the widespread existence of Psalm piety, but it is one piece of evidence for Psalm piety outside the realm of exceptional piety alone.

When Laban confronts Jacob for fleeing with his daughters and idols, Jacob issues a long defense of his faithfulness. It includes the line: "It was like this by me: by day the heat consumed

[62] I suspect that the phrase תרוויכו רבנן צקידי גמורי was generated as follows. First, the phrase צדיק גמור appears many times throughout rabbinic literature. Second, the editors of the Venice print were then likely influenced by and harmonized the following two passages: b. Ḥag 9b: תרוייהו צדיקי גמורי נינהו and b. Moed Qat. 28a: תרוייהו רבנן צדיקי הוו. They combined the phrase רבנן צדיקי with צדיקי גמורי to produce רבנן צדיקי גמורי.

[63] Parallel in Gen. Rab. 68:11.

me; and cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes" (Gen 31:40). What does this last clause mean? What did Jacob do to fend off sleep? Gen. Rab. 74:11 cites the opinion of two Amoraim:

> What did he say? R. Joshua b. Levi said, "He said the fifteen Songs of Ascents in the book of Psalms. As it says, 'Song of Ascents[64] if the Lord had not been with us, Israel now says[65] (Ps 124:1).' 'Israel,' namely Israel the elder (i.e. Jacob)."[66] R. Samuel b. Naḥman said, "He said the entire book of Psalms, [as it says] 'And you are holy, the one who sits on praises (*tehillot* = Psalms [*tehillim*]), O Israel'[67] (Ps 22:4) 'Israel' the elder."

Both rabbis suggest that Jacob rejected sleep by reciting either a section or the entirety of the book of Psalms. They both generate their opinion by somewhat forcibly reading Israel as Jacob and not the Israelite collective, and both cite as a prooftext a verse from Psalms. Regardless of whether these comments originated in the context of a sermon or study hall,[68] I argue that they must have replicated a recognizable cultural pattern. In other words, to imagine Jacob the patriarch as engaged in psalmody that lasts all night requires a context in which such psalmody exists as a pious practice. I also tentatively suggest – if the attributions to Tannaim may be trusted – that pious all-night recitation of the entire Psalter preceded the practice of Christian monks. Both R. Joshua and R. Samuel are sages who flourished in the third century. Psalm piety was either an ancient Jewish practice adopted by early Christians, or, more likely, a slow developing cultural phenomenon shaped and reshaped by both Jews and Christians simultaneously.

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[64] Among the manuscripts that keep the words "Song of Ascents" all omit "of David" except for Ms Oxford 147. Ms Vatican 30, the best manuscript available, contains Song of Ascents without David. Once again, it appears that authorship matters and the inconvenience of David in the title is simply removed. In the parallel source in Genesis Rabbah 68:11 David is kept in Ms Oxford 2335, the Venice print and the Yemenite Ms of Elhanan Adler. David is omitted, however, in Ms Oxford 147, Ms Vatican 30, Ms Stuttgart 32, Yalqut Shimoni and the Constantinople printing. The inconsistency within Ms Oxford 147 demonstrate that the instances in which David is mentioned is likely the product of a correcting scribe. Unfortunately, the available Genizah fragment cuts off right in the middle of "Song of ascents."

[65] Translating with its midrashic sense.

[66] The only biblical character to receive the moniker "elder" multiple times is Israel = Jacob. See Gen. Rab. 70:2, 73:2, 76:5, 77:1 92:2. This phrase seems to be limited to Genesis Rabbah.

[67] Once again, translating midrashcially.

[68] See discussion of the rabbinic sermon in the previous chapter. On the relationship between preacher and contemporary cultural patters see David B. Ruderman, *Jewish Thought and Scientific Discovery in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 200–212.

Perhaps this midrash can also be read as a rhetorical argument in favor of Psalm piety. By attributing the practice to an ancestral figure, the midrash makes it an activity worth emulating. This argument receives support from the fact that multiple rabbinic traditions associate Jacob with the book of Psalms. Y. Shab. 16:5 15c claims, "The 147 songs[69] written in Psalms corresponds to the life of Jacob our father. [This this teaches us that all the praises that Israel praises God with equal the life of Jacob][70] 'And you are holy, the one who sits on praises, O Israel' (Ps 22:4)." Once again, Psalm 22:4 binds Psalms to Jacob. In many ways, the verse functions as a "scripturally primed" verse in the manner discussed in chapter 3. At least for this traditional cluster, the Psalter may belong to Jacob more than it does to David. Regardless, in promoting Psalm piety, ancient rabbis would adopt as many pious exemplars as possible.

The midrashic use of Psalm 22:4 and the Songs of Ascents to undergird and describe a pious practice had liturgical consequences. As discussed above, the line between pietistic practice and liturgy often blurs with the passing of time. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that Psalm 22:4 was a stable feature in nearly every liturgical poem that adorned the Qedusha prayer as early as Yannai (ca. 500 CE).[71] Genizah fragments such as Cambridge T-S 8H further suggest that the verse was a regular part of the morning Qedusha even when unadorned by a liturgical poem. If the attributions in Gen. Rab. 74:11 are to be trusted, Psalm 22:4 appears as a prooftext for Psalm piety centuries before the invention of liturgical poetry. The redactors of Genesis Rabbah, however,

[69] This reckoning likely combines Psalms 1-2 and 9-10. I do not know what else it conflates to get the number 147. On the combination of Psalms 1-2 see b. Ber. 9b. On the combination of Psalms 9-10 see Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 430 n.35.

[70] While the bracketed material is a clear scribal addition, it is inspired by a similar comment that appears in a contemporary source. Gen. Rab. 48:7 cites an opinion attributed to R. Samuel b. Ḥiyya in the name of R. Yudan in the name of R. Ḥannina: "Each and every praise that Israel praises God with, His presence dwells with them. What's the reason? 'And You are holy, the one who sits on the praises of Israel' (Ps 22:4). 'Israel' (i.e. nation of Israel, not Jacob)." Could our scribe be intentionally reworking this statement, recasting it as Jacob the patriarch?

[71] See pages 192-3, above.

would likely have known Psalm 22:4 as a liturgical verse.[72] Like Christian Psalm piety, Jewish Psalm piety straddled the borders of piety and liturgy.

The Songs of Ascents also eventually became a liturgical unit. Ezra Fleisher's study of the Palestinian prayer rite during the early Middle Ages documents the daily use of the Songs of Ascents by Palestinian Jews during the morning service in eleventh century Egypt.[73] Fleisher suggests that our midrash "is possibly an early hint of the liturgical use of the Songs of Ascents." [74] Perhaps the custom of reciting the Songs of Ascents continued for centuries, or, perhaps, those who initially advocated placing these psalms into the morning prayers drew inspiration from our midrash.[75] In whichever direction we trace this development – and I think based on my analysis in the previous chapter that the latter route is more likely – it is clear, in my opinion, that our midrash attests a known and established practice of pietistically reciting Psalms during the evening.

In fact, it would not be the only source to describe evening Psalm piety. In addition to our discussion of midnight psalmody above, the recitation of Psalms to replace sleep appears in the only securely datable Tannaitic example of Psalm piety.[76] According to the rabbinic reconstruction of the Yom Kippur ritual, the High Priest was prohibited from falling asleep on the night of Yom

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[72] This is certainly the case with regards to Avot R. Nathan B 44, which actually situates this verse in the context of Qedushah: "The praise that you praise before good is more praiseworthy than the ministering angels. As it says, 'and you are holy the one who sits on Israel's praises' (Ps 22:4)."

[73] Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs*, 215–57.

[74] Ibid., 234 n.69. Translation from Hebrew my own.

[75] Inspiration to include the Song of Ascents into liturgy may also have come from looking back at the temple. M. Sukkah 5:4 clearly associate the unit with the temple, and the legend found in y. Sanh. 10:2 29a imagines their origins in connection with the building of the temple.

[76] Y. Yoma 1:6 39b exemplifies another dimension of Psalm piety in its elucidation of m. Yoma 1:6. In a one-line comment, it states: "A Tannaitic source: with Proverbs or Psalms, because their reasoning fends off sleep." For an exploration of this passage see pages 88-9, above**.** While we cannot, of course, posit these statements as historical fact, they likely reflect, replicate and promote established cultural patterns. Indeed, the concluding line of our Tosefta supports this argument, particularly with regards to all-night psalmody: "Thus they would do outside the temple after the temple was destroyed, as a remembrance of the temple, but they (that do this) are sinners." Statements prohibiting or attacking a particular practice often indicates that it is in vogue. Although, it is possible this statement merely refers to staying awake and not also the psalmody.

Kippur. M. Yoma 1:7 claims: "If he requests to go to sleep, the young Levites snap their finger (*etzba tzeredah*) before him, and they say to him, 'Mr. High Priest, get up and drive away [sleep] once more on the floor,' and they would keep him occupied until it came time for the slaughtering." T. Yoma 1:9, elaborating on this or a similar version of the Mishnah,[77] remarks:

> What is the snapping finger (*etzba tzeredah*)? It is the great finger on the right [hand]. [They would keep him awake] by mouth, and not by harp or lyre. And what would they say? "A Song of Ascent of Solomon,[78] if God does not build the house they that build it labor in vain etc…" (Ps 127:1). And they would not sleep all night, but rather keep watch over the High Priest, in order to keep him occupied with reverberating noise.[79]

The High Priest and those who keep watch over him are not allowed to fall asleep. While the Mishnah suggests that the young Levites snap their fingers and issue a verbal command, the Tosefta assumes that they engaged in continuous singing. It assigns Psalm 127 as the song of choice, and likely reads the "house" of verse 1 as the temple, God's house. While we cannot be certain if the Tosefta implies that the Levites sing the entirety of Psalm 127 or merely its first line, oftentimes rabbinic literature will signal a whole psalm by citing only its first verse.[80] The second verse of Psalm 127 may indicate that entire chapter is in play. It reads: "It is in vain that you rise up early, and go late to rest, eating bread of anxious toil, for he gives sleep to his beloved." Perhaps the situational irony is intentional. The anxious High Priest is unable to rise early, to go to bed late and to enjoy even a bit of beloved sleep.[81] In any case, the Tosefta differs from the Mishnah in another key manner. Unlike the Mishnah, which places the High Priest at the center of the

[77] On the one hand, our Tosefta passage does seem to act as a commentary on an earlier Mishnah. On the other, it contains information not found in our current Mishnah. Perhaps our Tosefta is commenting on an earlier Mishnah as per Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*. Although, it is also clear that Mishnah Yoma has undergone thorough editing and revision. See Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis*.

[78] The name Solomon is omitted in Ms Erfurd, perhaps akin to the phenomenon regarding David explored above in footnote 64.

[79] Ms Lieden reads "Torah."

[80] It is important to note that y. Yoma 1:4 39a does parallel our Tosefta and implies that one reads only the first verse to him.

[81] If one reads with the y. Yoma 1:4 39a, the High Priest was also supposed to abstain from a whole host of foods.

narrative, the Tosefta notes that the singing was not merely for the benefit of the High Priest, but also for those who were to stay up all night and keep watch. This too is reflected in the second clause of the first verse of Psalm 127: "If God does not keep the city, the watchman watches (*shaqad*) in vain." The rare word "guard" (*shaqad*) is employed in both the psalm and in our Tosefta passage: "But rather keep watch (*shoqedin*) over the High Priest." Ultimately, as in Genesis Rabbah, Psalm piety is a proven practice for fending off sleep. Could the use of a Song of Ascents also be noteworthy? Both y. Yoma 1:4 39a and b. Yoma 19b retain the use of Psalm 127:1 in their discussions about keeping the High Priest awake. The Babylonian Talmud, however, cites an extended (reworked?) version of the Tosefta passage, which adds: "The nobles of Jerusalem would not sleep all night, so that the High Priest would hear a reverberating sound and thus sleep would not grab him."[82] Could the nobles also be singing Psalm 127:1, the clear reverberating sound of the Tosefta? I think so. At the very least, a liturgical poem found in the Genizah implies this to be the case. It includes lines such as: "The majority of the congregation would lead him with reverberation all night, making songs and praise heard to the great High God." [83]

Regardless, t. Yoma 1:9 provides another illustration of Psalm piety in general and nighttime piety in particular. It imagines the Levites repeating Psalm 127:1 or the entire psalm in a loop throughout the night. This constant repetition of a single verse or psalm mirrors a pattern of Christian Psalm piety discussed earlier, namely, the repetition of a psalm verse like a mantra.

In fact, t. Yoma 1:9 is not be the only source to attest the practice of constantly repeating psalm verses. The rabbis provide evidence for this form of Psalm piety not only in their crafting

[82] On the variations of this passage see Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, 2:967. Epstein further discusses how this line makes its way into some versions of the Mishnah and may have been an original part of the Mishnah that made its way to Babylonia.
[83] This line is quoted in Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Kefshuto: Part 4: Seder Moed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary Press, 1961), 732–33.

of historical memory, but also in discussions about contemporary practice. Unlike the previous sources discussed, where I inferred the existence of Psalm piety from exegetical practices and exemplarity, the following source in y. Ber. 5:1 8d leaves no doubt that Psalm piety was a steady staple of life in Jewish Late Antiquity. Y. Ber. 5:1 8d contains a clear fragment of pious instruction:

> R. Hezekiah, R. Jacob b. Aḥa, R. Yassa in the name of R. Yoḥanan, "Really, this verse should never move from your lips: 'The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, *selah*' (Ps 46:8/12)." R. Yosi son of R. Avin, R. Abbahu in the name of R. Yoḥanan and the colleagues:[84] "O Lord of Hosts, happy is the man who trusts in you" (Ps 84:13)."

This passage in the Palestinian Talmud advocates contemporary pious mantra-like recitation of Psalms. While the Palestinian Talmud quotes these traditions within the larger context of how to begin prayer, it is clear that they were not originally intended for that occasion. The exhortation, "let this verse never move from your mouth," is unique in rabbinic literature, occurring only here.[85] It seems to instruct a constant performance, and not an occasional – if daily – recitation. What these traditions advocate, therefore, is the mantra-like repetition of specific psalm verses. They are not to depart from lips of any Jew, and are to be banners of faith and piety. Both of these verses begin with "The Lord of Hosts," and share the common theme of trust and faith in God. The individual is instructed to constantly affirm via psalm recitation the presence of God in life and their trust in him. This performative Psalm piety, the iterative repetition of key verses, shapes the individual into a pious actor, one who relates all consequences of life back to God.[86]

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[84] On *ḥavvraya* in general see Miller, *Sages and Commoners*.

[85] Indeed, the phrase זז מתוך only appears here within rabbinic literature. However זז לא + a biblical text does appear in Lev. Rab. 26:6, which mentions that the *parsha* that prohibits the consumption of alcohol before performing the priestly service should never depart (זז לא) from the descendants of Aaron. It is tempting to view this too as a form of pious recitation and embodiment.

[86] For this sense of performativity as constitutive I draw from Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40 (1988): 519–31. Indeed, this is a particular form of discipline. In some manners this activity is akin to the constant repetition of the bedtime Shema that we will explore below.

As mentioned above, this pattern of Psalm piety shares a great with some of the monastic sources discussed earlier. Recall, in particular, the statement by Abba Lucius: "I sit down with God, soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes, and I say, 'God, have mercy on me; according to your great goodness and according to the multitude of your mercies, save me from my sins' (Ps 50:1)." Both rabbi and monk advocate the constant repetition of a single verse to focus the soul and create piety. While the mechanics remain the same, the choice of verses differs. The rabbis suggest the repetition of verses that acknowledge trust in God and thus build confidence; the monastic source dwells on mercy and sin. These distinctions may reflect divergent views about the function of Psalm piety and anthropology, with the rabbis advocating a life of faithful and secure service to God and Christian monks deeply committed to a theology of sin and repentance. This suggestion does not rest on these two sources alone. Some of the rabbinic and Christian sources I will analyze below point in a similar direction.

It is also worth noting that Psalm 46:8/12 and Psalm 84:13, like the verses discussed above, eventually enter the Jewish liturgy during the early Middle Ages (800-1200).[87] Psalm 46:12 appears at the conclusion of an additional prayer appended to the end of the pre-Shema morning blessings. It is extant in two parallel early witnesses,[88] and clearly demonstrates the move from pious recitation to liturgical practice. Psalm 46:8 is formally incorporated into liturgy along with and connected to Psalm 84:13 in Maimonides's prayer book, which is appended to the section of his Code called the Book of Love. Here it appears at the end of the morning services. Both verses also appear together in the slightly earlier magical text known as Havdalah of Rabbi Akiva.[89] The

[87] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 74.
[88] Cambridge, University Library, T-S Collection, NS, 271, 21 and Cambridge, University Library, Add. 3160, 1.
[89] These verses appear together in the modern *havdalah* liturgy, and Psalm 46:8 appears as part of the *havdalah* liturgy as recorded in Seder R. Amram Gaon. See Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 83.

presence of these verses in radically divergent sources, the magical Havadalah and the hyper-rational Maimonides, demonstrates the popularity and utility of reciting and connecting Psalm 46:12 and 84:13. While the use of these verses in later liturgical texts may simply stem from knowledge of the passage in the Palestinian Talmud, it is more likely that an active pietistic tradition employed and connected these verses in the centuries prior to the Havdalah and Maimonides. As we will see below, these two verses are widely attested in late antique Jewish incantation bowls and amulets.

It did not necessarily take multiple centuries for Psalm piety to morph into liturgy. In the previous chapter, we discussed the *ashre* liturgical unit (Pss 84:5, 144:15, 145, 115:18), and argued for its early inclusion into daily liturgy.[90] The core of this unit, the recitation of Psalm 145, also appears in the context of Psalm piety. In b. Ber. 4b, merely a few lines before the first mention of *ashre*, the Babylonian Talmud cites an opinion attributed to R. Elazar b. Avina: "Anyone who says 'A Praise of David'[91] (Ps 145) every day, it is certain for him that he is an inheritor of the world to come."[92] The language of promise, as opposed to the prescriptive rhetoric of law, often indicates the promotion of a pious activity.[93] R. Elazar b. Avina thus advocates the recitation of Psalm 145 (and note that he does not say *ashre*) as good behavior. While R. Elazar b. Avina does not tell us why Psalm 145 was singled out, the later Stammaitic editors, indicated by the characteristic shift from Hebrew to Aramaic, suggest that it was selected because it combined acrostic poetry with the

[90] This count is the modern version. It is clear, however, that the verses surrounding Psalm 145 were core to the unit, even as additional verses that begin with the word *ashre* are added. *Maḥzor Vitri*, for example, precedes this unit with Psalms 119:1, 2; 84:6; 112:1; 89:16. For a discussion of *ashre* see 193-4, above.

[91] Psalm 145 is the only Psalm to being with "A Praise of David."

[92] If one takes the names of the tradents with absolute seriousness than it is possible that R. Elazar may be recording a pietistic practice that arose *from* the daily recitation of *ashre*. Alternatively, the statement in the name of R. Yoḥanan may simply be pseudepigraphic.

[93] For further examples that this is the language of piety see Sifre Deuteronomy 33, b. Ber 57a, b. Yoma 88a. These examples could be greatly multiplied.

divine provision of sustenance (Psalm 145:16: "Open your hand, filling to satisfaction every living thing). Thus the *ashre* liturgical unit was likely composed by taking an extant pietistic practice and placing it into liturgy.

It was not long, however, until evidence for this pious practice was effaced and read as a proof for a liturgical custom. The Munich 95 talmudic manuscript as well as the early printed editions contain the line: "Anyone who says 'A Praise of David' *three times* a day…."[94] An earlier tradition was no doubt updated in light of a contemporary liturgical practice in which *ashre* was repeated thrice daily. Such a phenomenon was a common occurrence in the history of liturgy.[95] In fact, the innovative practice of repeating *ashre* three times a day is both noted and justified in several Geonic sources. The prayer book of R. Amram Gaon, for example, cites a responsum of R. Natronai Gaon that recognizes that the talmudic statement reads that one should say "A Psalm of David" once a day, and suggests that the "later sages" demanded its repetition three times lest a Jew miss it once or twice and "not because there is a requirement to say it three times a day."[96] In sum, the movement between Psalm piety and liturgy did not take centuries, and that transition was not always uncontested – at least by those who sought to create formal legal structures for underpinning and understanding liturgy.

[94] The situation in Ms Florence is much more interesting. The original manuscript contained three time a day, the scribe erased it and wrote גמ' א' לא גריס לה. The inclusion of *ashre* into prayer prompted much need for justification, see Louis Ginzberg, *Genize Schechter*, vol. 1 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928), 301.
[95] On the notion of liturgical documents as living see Bradshaw, *The Search*, 101–2. For Jewish sources see Langer, "Early Rabbinic Liturgy," 2:434–35. Even R. Amram's prayer book was updated. See the introduction to Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*. See also Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 192; Brody, "The Enigma of Seder Rav Amram."
[96] Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 60. Stemberger's suggestion that Ashre was drawn into liturgy because the prescription to say it three times a day is unfounded. Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 229. Had he consulted the available manuscripts his conclusions might differ.

Competitive Piety

The analysis of mantra-like psalm recitation above highlighted a particular pattern of Psalm piety, its structural similarity to an early Christian Psalm piety and the ideological differences brought to light when placing both types of Psalm piety in conversation. A similar juxtaposition may be made with y. Avod. Zar. 3:1 42c and Possidius' account of Augustine's death, which both discuss the use of psalm verses at a key moment in a pious life, namely, at death.[97] The final words of any individual, and particularly a sage, were imagined as particularly efficacious and binding. Jewish tradition since Genesis 49 developed an extensive genre of Last Testament narratives.[98] A dying person speaks truth, and to die in the midst of psalmody demonstrates nothing less that ultimate piety. The final words of an individual capture his or her essence.[99] Within the larger context of discussing rabbinic death, Y. Avod. Zar. 3:1 42c claims to record the final words of several rabbinic figures:

> Zavdi b. Levi, R. Joshua b. Levi and R. Yosi b. Petram said these following verses as they died. One said: "Therefore let all exceptionally righteous people (*ḥassid*) offer prayer to you at the time of going out, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them" (Ps 32:6). One said: "But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, so that those who love your name may exult in you." (Ps 5:12). Another said: "O how abundant is your goodness that you have laid up for those that fear you, and accomplished for those who take refuge in you in the sight of everyone." (Ps 31:20).

This passage discusses the ultimate form of Psalm piety – the recitation of psalm verses upon death. Each sage passes from this world to the next with an appropriate psalm verse on his lips. Psalm 32:6 combines the pious person (*ḥassid*), with "time of going out," here read as death; Psalm

[97] On death in ancient Judaism in general see David C. Kraemer, *The Meanings of Death in Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Routledge, 2000). For further examples of death piety see Lam. Rab. 9:10 and b. Moed Qat. 25a-b.

[98] For the role of this genre see Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Testaments in Rabbinic Literature : Transformations of a Genre.," *JSJ* 25 (1994): 222–51; Anthony J. Saldarini, "Last Words and Deathbed Scenes in Rabbinic Literature," *JQR* 68 (1977): 28–45.

[99] This cultural trope continued well into modernity, see Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 10–30.

5:12 combines God's shelter with eternal rejoicing; and Psalm 31:20 highlights the hidden goodness – the ultimate reward – of those who lead a life of faith. As mentioned earlier, these latter two verses seem to be stable features in the larger matrix of ancient Jewish Psalm piety, appearing in both the dream and death manifestations of Psalm piety.

That psalm verses in particular take center stage in the performance of rabbinic death is confirmed by an elaborated version of this passage in Genesis Rabbah 62:2.[100] In addition to the psalm verses listed in the Palestinian Talmud, it adds "For in him our heart rejoices, and his name we hold firm" (Ps 33:21), "Set before me a table against my enemies" (Ps 23:5), "For one day in your courtyard is better" (Ps 84:11), and "Precious is the death of his pious ones (*ḥasidav*) in the eyes of the Lord" (Ps 116:15). The passage quotes only verses from the Psalter.[101] To act out piety in death is to perish with words of psalms upon one's lips. Y. Avod. Zar. 3:1 42, and by extension Gen. Rab. 62:2, not only further confirm the existence of Psalm piety in ancient Judaism, but highlight another way in which it operates: deathbed Psalm piety.

Deathbed Psalm piety also appears in a Christian context. According to Possidius of Calama, the early biographer of Augustine:

> [Augustine] often told us in intimate conversation that the reception of baptism did not absolve Christians, and especially priests, from the duty of doing fitting and adequate penance before departing from this life. And he acted on this himself in his last and final illness. For he ordered those Psalms of David which are specially penitential to be copied out and, when he was very weak, used to lie in bed, facing the wall where the written sheets were put up, gazing at them and reading them, and copiously and continuously weeping as he read.[102]

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[100] On the textual situation of this passage in Genesis Rabbah see Michael Sokoloff, ed., *Fragments of Genesis Rabbah from the Genizah* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), 49. See also note 230 for its relationship to the Palestinian Talmud.

[101] This is not to say that all death verses must come from the book of Psalms. See, for example, Sifre Deuteronomy 307, which imagines non-psalm verses being recited upon death. These verses are part of a larger phenomenon of ancient Jewish scriptural piety, of which Psalm piety is one manifestation. I hope to explore scriptural piety at a later date.

[102] Possidius, *Life of Augustine*, 31.1-2. Translation taken from Peter Brown, *The Ransom of the Soul: Afterlife and Wealth in Early Western Christianity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 114. Peter Brown does not

According to Possidius, Augustine perished with David's words in his mouth. It is impossible to identify which psalms Possidius imagines, but they may have included those that Augustine elsewhere interprets with a penitential hermeneutic.[103]

Both Jewish and Christian sources point to a pattern of pious behavior in which an individual would recite psalms on his deathbed. Psalm piety appears to be a widespread Late Antique practice shared by both Jews and Christians. There are, however, salient distinctions. Augustine is imagined to tearfully recite the penitential psalms on his deathbed; the rabbis are said to have recited verses characterized by confidence and jubilation. Once again, Jewish Psalm piety expresses itself in verses of joy and confidence while Christian Psalm piety highlights sin and penitence. If Jews and Christians share a common practice, at least from the vantage of these sources, they would have understood its implications in very different terms.

A history of religious convergence and competition between Jewish and Christian Psalm piety need not only be built by placing actual instances of Jewish and Christian Psalm piety into conversation. The rabbis themselves, I argue, thematize competitive Psalm piety and acknowledge their struggle to keep up with contemporary manifestations of Christian psalmody. They do so by pitting the greatest exemplar of psalmody, king David, against the most bitter enemy of the Jews, king Nebuchadnezzar. I suggest that in the following examples, the rabbis imagine David as a stand-in for themselves and Nebuchadnezzar as the patron of Christianity.

The clearest example comes from B. Sanh. 92b, which contains a short discourse on Nebuchadnezzar. It claims that after witnessing Ezekiel vivify the dead bones in the plain of Dura,

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discuss the source in-depth. For a rabbinic example of reading Scripture with tears see y. Hag 2:1 77a, in which Rebbe would cry when he read particular verses. For an example of weeping before death see the narrative of R. Eleazar b. Dordia in b. Avod. Zar. 17a.

[103] See Clare Costley King'oo, *Miserere Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 3–13.

Nebuchadnezzar broke into song and sang Daniel 4:34, the verse discussed above. It then continues with a tradition by R. Isaac: "Let molten gold be poured down[104] the mouth of that wicked man, for if an angel had not come and struck him on his mouth, he would have overshadowed[105] all the songs and praises that David said in the book of Psalms." In this tradition, Nebuchadnezzar is a better psalmist than David. If left unchecked, he would replace the Psalter with his own creation. Allowing him to do so would constitute definitive evidence that a wicked gentile could replace a pious Jew. Operating in the background of this tradition, I suggest, is the Jewish knowledge of Christian Psalm piety and the accompanying anxiety that the gentiles – embodied here by Nebuchadnezzar – are being a better David than David's own nation.

A similar struggle is at play in Leviticus Rabbah 13:5.[106] It suggests that psalmody is a competitive field and that Nebuchadnezzar can best David at the composition of praise:[107]

> R. Berekhiah and R. Ḥelbo in the name of R. Ishmael b. Naḥman, "Everything that David articulated in his book,[108] that wicked person included[109] in one verse,[110] 'Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven; for all His works are truth, and His ways justice; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase' (Dan 4:34).[111]
> 'Praise (*meshabaḥ*) – 'Praise (*shivḥi*) the Lord, O Jerusalem' (Ps 147:12).
> 'Extol' (*meromam*) – 'I will extol you (*aromimkha*), O Lord, for you have drawn me up (Ps 30:2).[112]

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[104] Ms Munich reads על instead of לתוך.
[105] Reading with Ms Yad Herzog, which reads גינה. Ms Munich and Ms Florence read ביקש לגנות, "sought to overshadow." Munich and Florence add a bit of distance. Nebuchadnezzar would *try* to overshadow David. In the reading of Yad Herzog, Nebuchadnezzar would certainly eclipse David.
[106] A source critical analysis of this proem would reveal that the passage I deal with falls outside the narrative flow and can thus be considered a coherent and independent tradition inserted into a prior homily by an editor. Therefore, it must first be read within its own internal logic before being examined as part of the extended homily. Furthermore, I cannot agree with Matthias Henze, *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar: The Ancient Near Eastern Origins and Early History of Interpretation of Daniel 4*, JSJSup 61 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), that "this midrash is grounded in the recognition that Nebuchadnezzar's conversion has turned the Babylonian villain into the truthful devotee of the God Most High." The fact that the appellative "the wicked" is appended to Nebuchadnezzar's name and is stable across all manuscripts indicates that from the perspective of this midrash he is still very much the villain.
[107] Translating with Ms Vatican, will note significant variations.
[108] Ms Paris and Ms London lack "in his book."
[109] Ms Vatican reads מלל, "spoke" instead of כלל "include." This is clearly a very clever scribal correction.
[110] I am citing the full verse, against the manuscript, which abbreviates.
[111] Translation from OJPS.
[112] JNUL Heb 24° 5977 and Friedberg, Sasson 920 use Psalm 145:1 as the prooftext.

'Honored the king (*lemelekh*) of heaven' – 'The Lord is king (*melekh*); let the peoples tremble![113]

'For all his works are truth (*qeshot* [Aramaic for Hebrew *emet*])' – 'For the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness (*amitekha*)' (Ps 115:1b)

'And his ways justice (*din*)' – 'He will judge (*yadin*) the people with equity' (Ps 96:10)[114]

'And those that walk in pride (*begevah*)' – 'The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty (*ge'ut*).' (Ps 93:1).

'He is able to abase' – 'And all the horns of the wicked I will cut off' (Ps 75:11).

This midrash creates the perception of a fundamental imbalance between the creative and compositional abilities of David and Nebuchadnezzar. What takes the former many verses to express is done by the latter in one simple verse. Unlike some of the midrashim explored above, this composition is not a problem-solving exercise. The exegete clearly began with Daniel 4:34, split the verse into numerous parts and found corresponding verbal parallels in the Psalter. In fact, these verbal similarities are so vague and weak that the available manuscripts and Genizah fragment shows that transmitters freely swapped verses. The list seems forced and artificial, which calls for the question: What point is the homilist getting at? The goal is not simply to debase David and promote Nebuchadnezzar. Rather, I suggest that the psalm competition detailed here reflects a current reality, one in which rabbinic Jews recognize that Christians are outperforming them in Psalm piety. The midrash is a call to arms.

The competition engendered by Psalm piety did not just create interreligious tension, but also internecine strife. As evidenced throughout this chapter, rabbinic sages were – for the most part – proponents and promoters of Psalm piety in all its manifestations. Some sages, however, criticized Psalm piety, especially when it crossed the lines from piety into liturgy. While some sages were comfortable living with overlapping and fuzzy conceptual categories others demanded

[113] There is significant variation as to the prooftext for this verse. The printed edition, JNUL Heb 24° 5977 and Friedberg, Sasson 920 read with Psalm 104:1 – focusing on *hadar*. JNUL Heb 24° 5977 and Friedberg, Sasson 920 also have a separate entry for "king of heaven," correlating it with Psalm 97:1.

[114] JNUL Heb 24° 5977; Friedberg, Sasson 920; Oxford, Bodleian Opp. Add. fol. 3 and Oxford, Bodleian Opp. Add. fol. 51 use Psalm 9:9 instead.

strict division and clarity. Evidence for this tension appears in b. Shab. 118b. A statement attributed to R. Yosi[115] begins: "Let my portion be among those who complete[116] Hallel every day." There is little reason to suspect that R. Yosi recites anything but the standard Hallel, Psalms 113-118.[117] Furthermore, the phrase "let my portion be" often introduces pious and non-commanded behavior.[118] This statement is quite similar in force and style to R. Elazar's dictum that one who recites Psalm 145 daily inherits the world to come, which I discussed above. Unlike that instance, however, the anonymous layer here challenges the veracity of R. Yosi's statement: "(Aramaic) But is that so? Did not the master say, (Hebrew) 'He who reads Hallel[119] every day blasphemes and reviles?' (Aramaic) Rather, what are we talking about? Verses of Song (*pesuqe dezimra*')." This statement cannot be read, as some previous scholars have, as a wholesale rejection of Psalm piety.[120] Rather, the anonymous layer re-frames R. Yosi's practice in attempt to set a boundary around and *control* Psalm piety. In particular, the anonymous layer is motivated by two impulses: first, to harmonize the conflicting statements of R. Yosi; second, to distance liturgy from piety. One who recites Hallel – a liturgical unit mandated at particular times – everyday blasphemes; one who recites Verses of Song, a non-liturgical pietistic verse cluster, does not sin.

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[115] While R. Yosi was a Tanna, there is reason to suspect the historical attribution. This statement appears as a stable formula whose content gets refitted by context. See Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 228 n.14.

[116] It would be tantalizing to read this as *study* Hallel, but it likely means complete.

[117] Contra Stemberger, "Psalmen in Liturgie," 228–29; Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, 127–28. The phrase "Hallel of every day" does not appear in talmudic literature and likely draws its origins from this very passage in which כל יום becomes שבכול יום. Plain 'Hallel' likely means Psalms 113-118 as it usually does elsewhere. Hoffman, "Hallels, Midrash, Canon and Loss: Psalms in Jewish Liturgy," 145 is also likely incorrect in suggesting that to say any psalm said publically or privately is to "say Hallel" and that R. Yosi completed the entire Psalter daily. Hoffman provides no philological justification for his assumption and I have not found any text to support it. Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 73 reads history backwards and assumes this unit to consist of Psalms 145-50.

[118] See similar statements throughout the same folio.

[119] Note the difference between קרא and גמר between these two statements. Could גמר here actually be connected to study?

[120] See note 9, above. If anything, what troubles the anonymous layer is not piety but a perceived internal contradiction.

What are Verses of Song? This phrase, which eventually comes to designate a particular liturgical unit, appears only this one time in classical rabbinic literature. Its contents cannot be discerned with any precision and its adoption into Jewish liturgy certainly does not precede the time of the Geonim.[121] Instead of reading history backwards and imagining Verses of Song as a set liturgical unit, I suggest that Verses of Song originally was a particular collection of scriptural texts associated with joyous singing and praise.[122] It was a unit of pietistic recitation. In fact, it serves as a counterpart to the Verses of Supplication (*pesuqe deraḥme*) mentioned in b. Ber. 4b-5a. B. Ber. 4b-5a contains a discussion about whether one should recite the Shema upon one's bed if one has already said it in synagogue. R. Joshua b. Levi declares it a commandment, R. Naḥman claims that it is unnecessary for a scholar, and Abaye states: "Even a scholar needs to say *one of the Verses of Supplication*[123] (*pesuqe deraḥme*), such as 'In your hands I commend my spirit, redeem me, Lord, the God of truth' (Ps 31:6)." This source not only highlights bedtime Psalm piety, another pious practice we will explore shortly, but also the existence of a scriptural concatenation called "Verses of Supplication." Note that Abaye suggests that a scholar say at least "one of" the verses from this collection and chooses a verse from Psalms as its chief example.

While there is no reason to think that Verses of Song began as a liturgical unit, by the time of R. Amram Gaon the phrase clearly designated a particular liturgical formation.[124] According to

[121] I disagree with Weinfeld, "Traces of Qedushat Yozer and Pesuke De-Zimra in the Qumran Literature and in Ben-Sira." This unit is not early, and cannot be traced back to the Second Temple period. We simply do not know its contents based on this statement alone. In fact, what constitutes Verses of Song varies by rite and region. For an attempt to grapple and historicize this variance see L. J. Liebreich, "The Compilation of the Pesuke de-Zimra," *PAAJR* 18 (1949): 255–67.

[122] In this sense adopt Rashi's interpretation that it refers to "Psalms of praise" but reject both his specific identifications as well as the need for it to constitute a full Psalm. Any specific identification is impossible.

[123] For רחם as prayer see Sokoloff, *Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, 1069.

[124] Additionally, *Seder R. Amram* places Psalm 31:6, the one verse explicitly identified with Verses of Supplication, in his liturgy for bedtime Shema. See Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 54–55. Here it combines with other protective verses such as the priestly blessing.

R. Amram, the unit was a stable part of daily prayer. His prayer book even contains a responsum from R. Natronai, who treats the Verses of Song as part of rabbinic legislation: "As the sages legislate, thus they legislated to say the Verses of Song, and then afterwards prayer."[125] Furthermore, according to R. Amram, Verses of Song consisted of Psalms 145-150.[126] Why these particular psalms, especially if Verses of Song was initially a medley of verses and not paragraphs? A tentative solution may be found it we compare Babylonian Jewish liturgy to the neighboring East Syrian Christian liturgy. According to liturgical scholar Robert Taft, "The laud Psalms [Psalms 148-150, AJB] are an ancient element of cathedral morning prayer."[127] They appear as a stable element in most morning liturgies. The East Syrian liturgy, the form of prayer closest in geography to the Babylonian rabbis, contain these psalms.[128] I suggest that Verses of Psalms as Psalms 145-150 was formed as follows. Psalm 145 already existed as part of rabbinic liturgy since the Amoraic period. Psalm 148-50, as noted above, were popular among Christians. The rabbis simply built a bridge between Psalm 145 and Psalm 148-50 and formed that into the Verses of Song liturgical unit. If I am correct, the Babylonian version of Verses of Song may owe its content, in part, to its surrounding environment.

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[125] Ibid., 60. This responsum appears in other Geonic collections as well. It is worth nothing as well that the section was liturgized with a beginning and concluding blessing. This move did not go unquestioned. See Simcha Emanuel, *Teshuvot HaGeonim* (Jerusalem: Ofek, 1994), 29-30 (#31). Due to this blessing one was not allowed to stop in middle of this section, just as in Shema, see Emanuel, *Teshuvot HaGeonim*, 32-33 (#33). Although, if one does not say it with a quorum a blessing is not needed, Jacob Musafiya, *Teshuvot HaGeonim* (Lyck: Meqitze Nirdamim, 1846), 17-19 (#45).

[126] Goldschmidt, *Seder R. Amram*, 8–9.

[127] Taft, *The Liturgy*, 201. While he argues with Bradshaw as to the origins of the Laudate Psalms, both would agree that by the time of R. Amram they are a set and stable part of nearly every Christian liturgy. For another perspective on the Bradshaw-Taft debate about the origins of the Laudate Psalms see W. Jardine Grisbrooke, "The Laudate Psalms: A Footnote," *Studia Liturgica* 19 (1989): 162–84. Her suggestion that R Yosi refers to Psalms 145-50 is untenable. She does not separate the statement of R. Yosi from its reframing by the anonymous redactor. Absent any other markers Hallel should be understood as Psalms. 113-118. In fact, the inverse explanation, that later Babylonian Jews called the anomalous Verses of Song as Psalm 145-50 due to an already established Lauds better fits the evidence and chronology. Her argument is also seriously undercut by the Palestinian understanding of what constitutes Verses of Song, for which see Fleischer, *Prayer and Prayer Customs*, 215–57.

[128] Taft, *The Liturgy*, 232.

Communal Psalm Piety

Most of the examples explored above give the impression that Psalm piety was enacted by an individual in isolation. This is only half true. The sources examined in this section demonstrate that ancient Jews performed Psalm piety as a community, often within the confines of the synagogue.

Not all synagogue psalmody was viewed as obligatory or liturgical. Instead, both Babylonian and Palestinian Jews gathered in synagogues to recite Psalms as a pious community. For Palestinian Jewry, the best and perhaps only explicit example of this practice comes from an understudied poem written in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic.[129] It was composed to be sung when a community completes the recitation of the Psalter. The poem itself highlights both the synagogue setting of Psalm piety and its ultimate goal:

9: He, Psalms / one hundred and fifty said

[129] The phenomenon of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic poetry requires greater scholarly attention. For a corpus, which includes our poem, see Joseph Yahalom and Michael Sokoloff, *Songs of the Children of the West: Aramaic Songs of Palestinian Jews during the Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem: The National Israeli Academy of Science, 1999). Our poem is #43, and can be found on pgs. 248-53. I hope to publish a detailed study of this poem and its Late Antique context in the future. For an extensive review of the volume see Menahem Kister, "Jewish Aramaic Poems from Byzantine Palestine and Their Setting," *Tarbiz* 76 (2006): 105–84. For an English summary and introduction to the collection see Joseph Yahalom and Michael Sokoloff, "Aramaic Piyyuṭim from the Byzantine Period," *JQR* 75 (1985): 309–21. Yahalom argues that the Aramaic poems, as opposed to Hebrew poem, are more open to Christian influence and are non-liturgical and represent the "most inward areas of Jewish spiritual life" Joseph Yahalom, "Piyyut in Byzantium: A Few Remarks," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Guy G Stroumsa et al., Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 317. It is clear, however, that even if these poems were not embedded into liturgy some of them were sung in the synagogue in relation to specific liturgical events. Most of the studies that engage with this corpus pay particular attention to a specific Aramaic poem that mentions Jesus. These include: Ibid., 323; Joseph Yahalom, "Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic: On the Literary Use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in Late Antiquity," *JJS* 47 (1996): esp. 41-44; Ophir Münz-Manor, "Carnivalesque Ambivalence and the Christian Other in Aramaic Poems from Byzantine Palestine," in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Guy G Stroumsa et al., Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 14 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 831–45; Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity*, 147–53. On these poems and the lament tradition see Yahalom, "Angels Do Not Understand Aramaic"; Michael Rand, "Observations on the Relationship Between JPA Poetry and the Hebrew Piyyut Tradition—The Case of the Kinot," in *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship: New Insights into Its History and Interaction*, ed. Albert Gerhards and Clemens Leonhard, JCP 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 127–44.

10: With all of them, praising / Him who created everything with a saying.

11: Gathering in our Synagogues / to say them

12: Those who expect him who shall / pass by mounted on a donkey.

The poet masterfully ties together three important themes: the ascription of the Psalms to David, their synagogue recitation, and the community's messianic expectations. The figure on a donkey is an obvious allusion to Zechariah 9:9, interpreted since the Second Temple period as a reference to the messiah son of David. In one simple stanza, the poet melds together the Davidic past, psalmic present and expectant future. For the poet, and possibly his Jewish community, the book of Psalms was a redemptive text. Pious recitation could either bring about the messiah, or at least was an appropriate act in waiting for him. Thus, this source affords us a quick glimpse at not only what Psalm piety looks like, but what some ancient Jews took Psalm piety to mean.

The poet returns to the explicit connection of psalmody and redemption in the concluding stanza, in many ways a crescendo:

41: The Lord will remember the promise / now in mercy

42: And he will redeem us / from the Seventy Nations

43: To the Mighty One, to Him they will be / praising and exalting

44: Redeem the nation that / completes the Book of Psalms![130]

As it says: (Ps 150:6)[131] "Let every living thing praise the Lord, Hallelujah"

[130] With the final line we get the direct connection between finishing the Psalter and requesting redemption from Israel's enemies. I wonder if, by extension, the reciters of this poem would have understood the enemies throughout the psalms as the Seventy nations?

[131] Here too we get a full inclusio. The poem begins with an Aramaic rendering of Psalm 1:1 and it concludes with the final line of the Psalter.

Unlike the previous stanza, the poet moves from third person address to second person speech. He demands that God redeem his nation, a people steeped in psalmody. The book of the father of the messiah should lead to the advent of the messiah.

Babylonian Jews also recited Psalms in synagogue as a pious practice. While no talmudic evidence for this practice exists, perhaps suggesting its late genesis, it is mentioned in several Geonic responsa. These responsa open up a small window into an important aspect of non-liturgical synagogue life. Responsa literature is particularly suited for this purpose as the questions are often live issues addressed by a Jewish community to a legal institution they deem authoritative. The first question we will explore was addressed to R. Natronai Gaon.This responsum details the interplay of communal piety, student restlessness and ritual obligation. A petitioner informs him that "there are synagogues in which congregation gathers and recites chapters from the book of Psalms on the Sabbath and Holidays, and on New Year and the Day of Atonement they add on chapters." While the congregation sings, some students study Torah. All of this occurs during the mandated time for reciting the Shema. The questioner wishes to know if it is permissible for the students to study before reciting Shema. R. Natronai answers in the affirmative, and while doing so elaborates on communal Psalm piety. He claims that those who gather in synagogues for communal Psalm piety, "are doing a good deed." Not only that, but he imbues the practice with antiquity, claiming that it originates during the first exile! When Jews were exiled to Babylonia, R. Natronai maintains, they were in dire straits. Unlike their counterparts in Israel they had neither prophets nor masters of Torah. Instead, when they had spare time on Sabbath or on Holidays, they established (*tiqqenu*) that the community would get up early and recite psalms until the morning prayer. Thus, "They agreed with the practice of King David, mercy be upon him, who said: 'At midnight I get up to deliver praise to you' (Ps 119:62)." While R.

Natronai's historical claims are dubious at best, they still underscore an established custom. Note as well the use of Psalm 119:62, a verse discussed above in relationship to Psalm piety. Here the community – as a whole – emulates David's pious behavior.[132]

Jewish law and communal piety conflict in another responsum. A question was addressed to R. Hai Gaon from the Jewish community in Kairouan, North Africa. Mishnah Shabbat 12:1 claims that one should not read by candlelight on the Sabbath eve. But, according to the petitioner: "Our custom here in Kairouan, in the synagogues, is that men gather on the night of the Day of Atonement, and often on the night of Sabbath and read from Psalms to the light of oil lamps." Could the practice continue? What if two people read it together? Is the fact the psalmody is communal, or that it was done by the light of an oil lamp, permit the behavior? R. Hai, to the petitioner's chagrin, prohibits the practice.[133]

While the available evidence is sparse, it is enough to suggest that ancient Jewish Psalm piety, much like early Christian Psalm piety,[134] was not an entirely private affair. It had communal manifestations. Pious psalm gatherings occurred to fulfil various tasks, whether to emulate David, effect atonement, occupy time in preparation for prayer, or usher in the messiah

[132] Jacob Musafiya, *Teshuvot HaGeonim* (Lyck: Meqetze Nirdamim, 1846), 28 (#87) and Robert Brody, *Teshuvot R. Natronai* (Jerusalem: Ofek, 2011), 130 (#24). For further on this responsum see Kadari, "Between the Sages," 150–52. I completely disagree with Kadarai that one finds in this responsum a veiled argument that Torah study is better than psalmody. Citing the rabbinic tradition that reads David's midnight psalmody as study is to select one rabbinic tradition over another, as seen above.

[133] Musafira, *Teshuvot,* 23-4 (#59). For another example of contested synagogue Psalm piety see Ibid., 141–42.

[134] In addition to Psalm piety as part of monastic communal piety, we also catch glimpse of communal Psalm piety in the diary of Egeria, the Spanish pilgrim to Jerusalem. Pious Christians *would* gather as a community and keep vigil on certain night, reciting psalms throughout. See Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 149. Psalms were also sung when the community was gathered and awaiting the bishop (pg. 143).

Piety, Protective Magic and Materiality

In this section, I will argue that "piety" and "magic," which exist as independent mental categories in modernity, are coterminous in rabbinic thought. Thus, some ancient rabbis not only supported and practiced "piety" but "magical piety." I use the term "magical piety" in this context to signify the unity of two concepts we as modern scholars often examine independently. To what degree rabbis would have categorized the practices below as "magic," and therefore forbidden, is uncertain. Some sources do; others do not.

In this section I will also explore the material remains of ancient Jewish Psalm piety, mostly focusing on magic bowls and amulets. In addition to providing context for the rabbinic sources discussed, these material artefacts allow us a passing look at non-rabbinic ancient Jewish Psalm piety. Psalms were often quoted in these incantation texts, and more particularly, some of the verses cited in these physical remains are also discussed by the rabbis within the context of Psalm piety. I suggest that the modes of Psalm piety explored above with regards to ancient rabbis were not limited to their circles. At least for Psalm piety, rabbinic literature preserves and reflects a wide range of ancient Jewish practices.

One such practice was bedtime Psalm piety, which I mentioned briefly above; it almost effortlessly melds piety with protective magic. Rabbis both participated in and encouraged this behavior; thus, any claim that "rabbinic values" and "magical piety" are conflicting and opposing essences must be reconsidered. A clear example of magical piety is found y. Ber. 1:1 2d. The Palestinian Talmud is interested in determining if one can speak after reciting the evening True and Firm (*emet veyatziv*) prayer, the concluding paragraph of the Shema liturgy.[135] It cites both

[135] It may be working with the assumption that one should go directly to sleep. See Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, Bar-Ilan studies in Near Eastern Languages and Culture (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1994), 223. Ginzberg connects this assumption to Josephus's *Antiquities* and the *Letter of Aristeas*, Louis

legal precedents and rabbinic anecdotes that either indicate that one can or cannot speak, usually by implication. The anecdotes brought together by the process of redaction can be read independently of the Palestinian Talmud's overarching discourse. Instead of informing us about the legal intricacies of liturgy, the narratives can give us insight into various evening pietistic and anti-demonical practices. For example, R. Huna in the name of R. Joseph claims that, "A man must read Shema in his house during the evening in order to chase away the demons." The use of Shema as a demon repellent has a long history, dating as early as the first phylacteries and continuing with the Babylonian magic bowls.[136]

The very next anecdote in the Palestinian Talmud connects the protective use of Shema with Psalms. It undergirds a pious practice by appealing to the book of piety:

> When Samuel b. Naḥmani came down from intercalating the month he was met by R. Jacob the miller, and R. Zera was hiding between the baskets in order to hear how he would recite Shema. He would read and read again until sleep would sink him. What is the reason? R. Aḥa and R. Ḥalafta his father-in-law said in the name of R. Samuel b. Naḥmani: "Fear and do not sin, say in your heart upon your bed, and be silent, *selah*" (Ps 4:5).[137]

According to this narrative, Samuel b. Naḥmani would ceaselessly repeat Shema[138] until falling asleep. This practice mirrors a form of Psalm piety discussed above, namely, to never let particular psalm verses depart from one's lips. More than sharing a pattern with Psalm piety, this Shema practice is itself predicated on a reading of Psalm 4:5. While the Palestinian Talmud does not

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Ginzberg, *Commentary and Novella on the Yerushalmi*, vol. 1, 3 vols. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1940), 65. For a radically different reading of this sugya see Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 144–50. Overall, Benovitz attempts to read the stories within the context of the sugya's framework. I am of the opinion that they can be successfully removed and interpreted independently. Nonetheless, it is important to understand how the redactor worked with these earlier anecdotes.

[136] On the relationship between Shema and early Tefillin see Yehudah B. Cohn, *Tangled up in Text Tefillin and the Ancient World*, BJS 351 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2008), 100–103. On Shema in magic bowls see below.

[137] Perhaps it is worth nothing that verse before this mentions חסיד.

[138] The Shema here necessarily means the *entire* Shema liturgy only within the framework of the entire redacted unit. Taken independently, this story as well as the other anecdotes strongly imply that one says either the Shema verse itself or the Shema verse and associated verses. *Contra* Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 147 n.15.

unpack its particular exegetical moves, I suggest that it likely reads Psalm 4:5 as such: "Fear and do not sin" how? By continually "speaking to your heart upon your bed," and then, upon falling asleep, "be silent."[139] The constant repetition of Shema protects the diligent from undue sin. It is a pious practice. While this passage does not provide additional support for bedtime *psalmody*, the statement that follows certainly does: "R. Joshua b. Levi read Psalms after it." After the night time Shema, R. Joshua b. Levi would read Psalms. Perhaps he too would fall asleep while reciting them.

These short anecdotes in the Palestinian Talmud inform us about three facts. First, bedtime piety existed as an ancient Jewish culture practice. Second, it could consist of Shema and/or Psalms.[140] Third, pious recitation was understood not only to mold a righteous individual, but also to offer protection from demons.

B. Shev. 15b attempts to set the exact location and content of R. Joshua's bedtime psalmody. In doing so, it directly attests to the convergence of "piety" and "magic." According to the Babylonian Talmud:

> R. Joshua b. Levi would recite (or: cling to)[141] these verses [presumably Psalm 91:1-9] and then go to sleep. But did not R. Joshua say that "it is prohibited for one to be healed using words of Torah?" Rather, for protection it is different. Rather, when is it prohibited? When there was already a wound.[142]

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[139] Sperber suggests that Psalm 4:5 mirrors Deuteronomy 6:6-7. Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, 224–25. Benvovitz, in explaining the parallel in b. Ber. 4b, suggest that the emphasis is on the word "silent." Benovitz, *BT Berakhot Chapter 1*, 176. The parallel to our sugya in the b. Ber. 5b reads this verse in light of waging war against the evil inclination.

[140] The liturgy known as קרית שמע על המיטה eventually does combine both psalm verses and the Shema. See Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 54–55. Some Babylonian magic bowls combine Shema and psalms, as I will show below.

[141] Ms Munich 95 reads מסרך; Ms Florence, Ms Vatican 140 and Ms Vatican 156 read מסדר. Pesario, Venice and Vilna print read אמר. It is possible that Munich is simply a corruption. We do know of being מסדר psalms elsewhere. Alternatively, it is possible to take מסרך seriously and suggest that R. Joshua b. Levi would clutch, or adhere tightly to these verses? Namely, sleep with a magical *text*? סרך is certainly the *lectio difficilior*.

[142] The anonymous layer then continues the discussion, asking why it is not more than prohibited, since a Tannaitic source says one who utters an incantation over a wound has no share in the world to come. It resolves this by saying that our Tannaitic statement only applies if the practitioner spits. Note here too that it is not the act that is prohibited but how it is done.

This source attests the conceptual overlap between "magic" and "piety," at least for the redactors of this passage. The redactors were troubled by a perceived conflict between R. Joshua b. Levi's practice and legal rulings. R. Joshua would recite psalm verses before going to bed, which the *redactors* read as a magical practice. At the same time, they have a tradition from R. Joshua that prohibits one to be healed using scriptural verses. Why does R. Joshua permit the use scriptural verses in one area of "magic" but prohibit it in another? The anonymous layer resolves the contradiction by creating a conceptual distinction between "protection" and "healing." The former is permitted and the latter prohibited. In creating this difference, the redactors firmly situate bedtime Psalm piety as a valid protective magical practice. In fact, what prompts the discussion in the first place was not the acceptability of magical piety as a practice, but the consistency of R. Joshua b. Levi. The talmudic discussion leaves little doubt that reading the psalm verses at bedtime shields the reciter during his most vulnerable state – sleep. Psalm piety creates an impenetrable barrier that allows the reciter to rest in peace during the night, a time when demons are particularly active.[143]

This R. Joshua b. Levi tradition follows and was read in light of a discussion of magical psalmody. The talmudic discourse opens with an explication of m. Shev. 2:2, which describes the ritual process required to add space to either Jerusalem or the temple. According to the Mishnah, the king, prophet and the great Sanhedrin must be present. A successful ritual also requires two *todah* sacrifices "with a song." The court would go around the newly added area with the two sacrifices in tow. The *todah* walking closer to the court would be eaten and the one father from court would be burnt. Most components of this ritual are pretty certain. We know what a king,

[143] Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, 223.

prophet, court and *todah* sacrifice look like. What about the "song"? What should be sung? B. Shev. 15b proposes an answer:

> Our masters teach: (Hebrew) It is the Song of Thanksgiving (Ps 100);[144] with harps, lyres and cymbals at every corner and on every great stone of Jerusalem then one would sing: "I will extol you because you raised me up" (Ps 30:2), and the Song (against) evil mishaps (*shir shel pegaʿim)*, Some say the song (against) affliction (*shir shel negaʿim*).[145]
> (Aramaic) The one who says "affliction," it is because it says "and affliction shall not come into your tent (=temple)" (Ps 91:10). And the one that says "evil mishaps" because it is written "may one thousand fall at your side, and ten thousand by your right hand, and not approach you" (Ps 91:7).
> (Hebrew) With harps, lyres and cymbals.[146] And one says, "He who dwells in the hiddenness of the High one, and resides in the shadow of Shaddai" (Ps 91:1) until "for you my Lord are my refuge" (Ps 91:9). And then he goes and says: "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son…" (Ps 3:1) until "Salvation belongs to God, your blessing on your nation, *selah*" (3:9).

This source depicts not only the magical properties of some psalms, but also the close relationship between magic and liturgy. Recall that in the imagination of the rabbis, temple sacrifices *required* proper psalmody to be efficacious.[147] According to the traditions cited in Shev. 15b, the unspecified "song" of the Mishnah hides a deceptively detailed psalm-based procession. It includes the expected "Song of Thanksgiving (*todah*)" (Ps 100), as well as a verse from another candidate: "A

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[144] There are two possible ways to read this passage. 1) Either "Song of X" is its own unit, and the "one would sing x" is a different ritual action. Or 2) "Song of X" is a macro category and "one would sing x" is a verse from that category. I have adopted option 1) above. In this reading, there are five ritual songs: the Song of Thanksgiving, Psalm 32:2, Song against evil mishaps, Psalm 91:1-9 and Psalm 3. In reading 2) there are either two or three ritual songs: Song of Thanksgiving, which is Psalm 32:2; Song against evil mishaps, which is Psalm 91:1-9 and Psalm 3. The latter may be an independent unit or connected to the larger complex of Song against evil mishaps. I have adopted reading 1) for the main body of the text because שיר של פגעים exists as a unit *independent* of Psalm 91 in earlier Jewish literature. Further, the designation of Psalm 100 as שיר של תודה and not מזמור לתודה is unproblematic. The designation of שיר של was likely influenced by שיר של פגעים. Alternatively, מזמור and שיר collocate often enough in various Psalm titles for a later interpreter to read one in light of the other. I must stress that either reading works for point I am trying to make.

[145] This sentence and the entire Aramaic section is a later addition in Vatican 140, and completely absent in Munich 95. Munich even omits mention of "Song of Affliction," and reads: "Our masters teach: Song of Thanksgiving, and with harps, lyres and cymbals at every corner and on every great stone of Jerusalem one says 'I will extol you because you raised me up' (Ps 30:2), and then says 'He who dwells in the hiddenness of the High one, and resides in the shadow of Shaddai' (Ps 91:1) until, 'For you my Lord are my refuge' (Ps 91:9). And then he goes and says: 'A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son…' (Ps 3:1) until 'Salvation belongs to God, your blessing on your nation, *selah*' (3:9)." This version seems tantalizingly simple. Based on the parallel in y. Shab 1:2 8b, however, it appears to not be the original version of this *baraita*.

[146] This really seems to be some kind of narrative resumption.

[147] See, for example, y. Tan. 2:2 67d.

Psalm a Song at the dedication of the Temple" (Ps 30). Only Psalm 30:2 was sung, for the *baraita* has no problem demanding the performance of an entire psalm or demarcating the boundaries of recitation. The next components of this psalm ritual are: "A song against evil mishap," Psalm 91:1-9 and the entirety of Psalm 3. The dangerous task of extending sanctity requires a psalmodic procession that entwines magic and liturgy and highlights two themes: praise and protection. Psalm 100 thematizes the joy and thanks for sacrifice; Psalm 30:2 continues this praise; the song against evil mishaps and Psalm 91:1-9 protect the temple from preternatural forces; and Psalm 3 safeguards sacred space against human threats.

The association of psalms-based liturgy with magic rests on three factors: the enigmatic "song against evil mishaps," the place of Psalm 91 in ancient Judaism and early Christianity and Psalm 3 in rabbinic thought. The "song against evil mishaps" clearly resonates with protective magic and has an ancient pedigree, appearing for the first time in the Qumran Psalm Scroll as a category to which four exorcistic psalms belong.[148] The Qumran Psalm Scroll does not tell us exactly which texts fall into the category of songs against evil mishaps. It is the rabbis, and particularly those who lived after the Tannaitic period, who first identifed the category with Psalm 91.[149] This identification was made, in part, because the song against evil mishaps as a collection of independent text lost its cache as time went on, and some rabbis understood that songs associated with the temple must come from the canonical book of Psalms.

[148] It appears in the list of David's Compositions in the *Psalm Scroll* as: "and songs for making music over the stricken (פגעים), 4." Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPsa)*, 92.

[149] Thus I argue that the *localization* of Psalm 91 as the song against evil mishaps did not happen until the rabbinic period. *Contra* Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 380. Psalm 91 of course had magical resonances earlier, but, I believe, it takes a 'canon conscious' perspective to demand the identification of שיר של פגעים with a *specific* psalm located in the now-canonical Psalter.

The secondary nature of the identification of Psalm 91 with the song against evil mishaps receives support from y. Shab 1:2 8b,[150] a parallel to b. Shev. 15b that quotes a periphrastic version of our *baraita*:

> One may not read verses upon a wound on the Sabbath. It is forbidden to read a verse over the mandrake. [If someone says,] "Come and read this verse upon my son for he is afraid, put a book on him, put on him phylacteries so that he may sleep" [this practice] is forbidden. But do we not have a Tannaitic source that says: "There was the song against evil mishaps in Jerusalem?" R. Yudan says, in one place he is already afflicted and in the other place it is before he is afflicted. And what is the "song against evil mishaps?" "Lord, how many are my enemies" (Ps 3:2) and the entire psalm. "He who dwells in the hiddenness of the High one" (Ps 91:1) until, "For you, Lord, are my shelter" (Ps 91:9).

This passage, like b. Shev. 15b, discusses the permitted and prohibited use of Scripture as magic, and demonstrates that the song against evil mishaps became associated with Psalm 91 only towards the end of the Amoraic period. The Tannaitic source it quotes to establish the presence of the song against evil mishaps in Jerusalem clearly refers to and assumes the background provided by the much more elaborate *bariata* preserved in the Babylonian Talmud. The presence of a song against evil mishaps as part of a ritual for extending sanctity was likely an authentic Tannaitic tradition. In the times of the Tannaim, this song was likely a well-known composition, perhaps very similar if not identical to the song against evil mishaps mentioned at Qumran. By the time of the Amoraim, the song required identification, and it was assumed to be composed of Scripture. For the Palestinian Talmud, R. Yudan, a fourth generation Amora (ca. 320-350), or perhaps the later editor, identifies the song of evil mishaps. For the Babylonian Talmud, identification comes in the form of an anonymous Aramaic voice. Worth noting, however, is how the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmudim differ. The former seems to link the song of mishaps to *only* Psalm 91:1-9, while the Palestinian tradition imagines it as Psalm 3 *and* Psalm 91:1-9.[151] This variation, I suggest,

[150] Parallel in y. Eruv. 1:12 26c.

[151] It is possible, however, to argue that the Babylonian Talmud derives the name of the unit from Psalm 91, but viewed Psalm 3 as integral to it. If so, I still think that the identification of the song against evil mishaps as Psalm 91:1-9 and

is an indication of a work-in-progress, a tacit admission that the song against evil mishaps has fallen out of use and was reconstructed from the evidence at hand. In fact, the difference between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmudim may be accounted for by imagining where ancient readers placed mental brackets when reciting the *bariata*. The Babylonian Talmud, which seems to imagine only Psalm 91:1-9 as the song against evil mishaps, likely read the end of the baraita as follows: "[and the song against evil mishaps … one says, 'He who dwells in the hiddenness of the High one, and resides in the shadow of Shaddai' (Ps 91:1) until 'For you my Lord are my refuge' (Ps 91:9).] [And then he goes and says: 'A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son…' (Ps 3:1) until 'Salvation belongs to God, your blessing on your nation, *selah*.']" In this reading, Psalm 3 begins a new unit not part of a liturgical unit called song against evil mishaps. The Palestinian reader likely did not bracket apart Pslam 91:1-9 from Psalm 3, reading both as the song against evil mishaps. By the times of the Amoraim, magical piety and liturgy existed as close neighbors, with some rabbis directly identifying an older exorcistic poetic composition as one or two canonical psalm texts.

The song against evil mishaps was not the only text to contain magical resonances cited in the *baraita*. In fact, what clearly assisted the identification of Psalm 91 with the song against evil mishaps and further associated magical Psalm piety with liturgy was the cultural and ritual significance of Psalm 91 in late antique magic. The material popularity of Psalm 91 places R. Joshua b. Levi's choice to either recite or clutch this psalm before going to sleep in sharper context. Psalm 91 was used for protection as early as the Second Temple period, appearing in several exorcism texts from Qumran.[152] Earlier in this chapter, I noted the widespread popularity of this

Psalm 3 comes at the cost of a straightforward reading of the *bariata*, which claims that after Psalm 91:9 one is חוזר ואמר. This sounds like the beginning of a new liturgical unit.

[152] On Psalm 91 and its apotropaic reception during the Second Temple period see Breed, "The Reception of the

psalm in early Christian amulets. Late antique Jewish material evidence demonstrates something similar. At least seven different Babylonian magic bowls contain a verse from the psalm,[153] and the sorcerer-scribe of at least two of them interwove, word by word, Deuteronomy 6:4 and Psalm 91:1, rendering a text that read:[154]

Psalms: The Example of Psalm 91," 298–300; Esther Eshel, "Apotropaic Prayers in the Second Temple Period," in *Liturgical Perspectives: Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Esther G. Chazon, STDJ 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 71–74; Ida Fröhlich, "Healing with Psalms," in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays on Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner, Ken M. Penner, and Cecilia Wassen, STDJ 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 203–7; Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 232–36; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 108–11. On the textual variation in the reception of Psalm 91 see Otta Eissfeldt, "Eine Qumran-Textform des 91. Psalms," in *Bibel und Qumran. Beiträge zur Erforschung der Beziehungen zwischen Bibel- und Qumranwissenschaft. Festschrift Bardtke*, ed. S. Wagner (Berlin: Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft, 1968), 82–85; Mika S. Pajunen, "Qumranic Psalm 91: A Structural Analysis," in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. Raija Sollamo, Anssi Voitila, and Jutta Jokiranta, JSJSup 126 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 591–605. This verse also appears prominently in the late magical text Havdalah of R Akiva. For the post-talmudic afterlife of Psalm 91 see Lawrence H. Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, eds., *Hebrew and Aramaic incantation texts from the Cairo Genizah: selected texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1*, Semitic Texts and Studies 1 (Sheffield: T & T Clark, 1992), 39, 78; Bill Rebiger, ed., *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim: Buch vom magischen Gebrauch der Psalmen: Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, TSAJ 137 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 268–71, *71–*3; Dorothea M. Salzer, *Die Magie der Anspielung: Form und Funktion der biblischen Anspielungen in den magischen Texten der Kairoer Geniza*, TSAJ 134 (Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 117–19; Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 112–13. Originally published 1939. Ultimately as Late Antiquity becomes the Middle Ages the evidence for psalm verses in Jewish magic increases exponentially.

[153] The corpus of magic bowls and amulets used in this study include: Charles Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975); Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003); Dan Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: "may These Curses Go out and Flee,"* MRLA 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Christa Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena, und weitere, Nippur-Texte anderer Sammlungen*, Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht-Collection of Babylonian Antiquities 7 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1998); J. B. Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum* (London: British Museum Press, 2000); Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford, and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowls. Volume One*, MRLA 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2013). I will cite this evidence using the title of the work followed by the identification number given by the editor. These five bowls include: Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Bowl 11; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, VA.2423; Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, Bowl 52; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Ms2053/70:8 pg. 19 and JNF 141:3–4, which is found on pg. 22 n.101. Other instances not included in the corpus above include: Moïse Schwab, "Coupe À Inscriptions Magiques," *Proceedings of the Society for Biblical Archaeology* 13 (1890): 591–92; Cyrus Gordon, "Two Aramaic Incantations," in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies: Essays in Honor of William Sanford LaSor*, ed. Gary Tuttle (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), ZRL 48, although it only contains the first two words of Psalm 91.

[154] Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Bowl 11. Schwab, "Coupe À Inscriptions Magiques"; Gordon, "Two Aramaic Incantations." Also, JNF 141:3–4, which I accessed through Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 22 n.101.

שמע יושב ישראל בסתר ה׳ עליון אלהינו בצל ה׳ שדי אחד יתלונן

Surprisingly, this combined super-verse reads somewhat intelligibly as: "Hearken! Israel dwells in the hiddenness of YHWH the High One, our God. In the shade of YHWH, Shaddai, the One, he dwells."[155] This combination may add further context to our previous discussion, in which the Shema and Psalms are both enmeshed in a discourse of magical protection. Material reality and rabbinic literature can be mutually informative when examined in tandem.

In fact, b. Shev 15b provides yet another example of contact between rabbinic sources, Psalm 91 and the magic bowls [156] As seen above, the anonymous layer of the Babylonian Talmud identifies Psalm 91 as either the "song against evil mishaps" or "song against afflictions" by appealing to Psalm 91:10 and Psalm 91:7, respectively. These verse appear together in Bowl 52 of Isbell's *Corpus of Aramaic Incantation Bowls*.[157] Can we draw a direct connection between this bowl and the tradition behind the anonymous comment? At the very least, one cannot deny the strong connection. Ultimately, in a culture suffused with the magical significance of Psalm 91 it should not surprise us that rabbinic tradents assumed that the "song against evil mishaps" must refer to it.

Furthermore, like the many examples of magical piety discussed above, Psalm 91 also makes an eventual appearance in actual rabbinic liturgy and not just the imagined liturgy of the

[155] Decoupling these verse in translation as Naveh and Shaked do in their translation undermines the coherence of the combined verse. I have not been able to check JNF. Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 20 do not mention the possibility the verses can be read in a combined manner in their discussion of the interweave. Schwabe does not offer a full translation, and Gordon does not translate this section in his bowl.

[156] Psalm 91 also makes an appearance in Hekhalot literature. For its use in Maʿasheh Merkhava, see Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism*, 149. It is surprising that the psalm occurs very infrequently in this literature given the general popularity of the Psalm. Although, the figure of David does appear in the so-called "David Apocalypse" found in Hekhalot Rabbatai. This section include several psalm verses, such as 19:1, 146:10 (x3) For an analysis see of this section see Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*, 85–94.

[157] Pointed out already in Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 187.

temple.[158] R. Amram quotes b. Shev. 15b in the section of his prayer book pertaining to the bedtime Shema liturgy,[159] and places Psalm 91 after the Amidah for Saturday night.[160] Psalm 91 then migrates to other locations depending on the specific rite.[161] Once again, magic, liturgy and piety did not exist in obvious self-contained boxes.[162]

Magical-Piety between Materiality and Rabbinic Literature

The material residue of Psalm piety extends far beyond texts that quote Psalm 91. As in ancient Christian amulets, the book of Psalms is a widely-quoted biblical book in ancient Jewish magical texts. This evidence points to, I believe, the widespread non-elite engagement with Psalm piety. In this brief section I will summarize the available material manifestations of Psalm piety in ancient Judaism, and provide one further example where material reality and rabbinic text shed light on one another and on the phenomenon of Psalm piety.

The magical use of Psalms was not restricted to Psalm 91. For most ancient Jews, piety and protection melded in the recitation and inscription of psalm verses. Psalm quotation is a favorite among both Palestinian amulets and Babylonian magic bowls. It even occurs in rabbinic literature. B. Pesaḥ. 112a, for example, delineates the power of reciting Psalm 29. It claims that one must not drink water on Wednesday night or the night of the Sabbath. It is tainted with evil

[158] The combination of magic and liturgy is a central component of Hekhalot literature as well. See Peter Schäfer, "The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism," in *Hekhalot-Studien*, TSAJ 19 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 277–95.
[159] Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 55.
[160] Ibid., 81.
[161] See Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 95, 101.
[162] On the connection of magic and liturgy (although not piety) in ancient and medieval Judaism see Peter Schafer, "Jewish Liturgy and Magic," in *Geschichte - Tradition - Reflexion; Festschrift Für Martin Hengel Zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schafer, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 541–56; Dan Levene, "Jewish Liturgy and Magic Bowls," in *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, ed. Robert Hayward and Brad Embry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 163–84; Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 22–31.

spirits. The one who drinks, "His blood will be on his head." The Babylonian Talmud proposes a remedy for the thirsty: "Let him say the seven Voices that David said over the waters and then go and drink." These are none other than "The voice of the Lord upon waters until the end of the chapter" (Ps 29:3-11).[163] A short psalm recitation drives away the demon and ensures safe potable water.[164] It is worth noting that Christians inscribed these very verses on the walls of cisterns, likely to protect them from external supernatural threat.[165]

Among a collection of 30 Palestinian amulets published by Naveh and Shaked,[166] quotations from the book of Psalms appears seven times. Psalms 89:8,[167] 94:1,[168] 115:1,[169] 116:6,[170] 138:2[171] each appears once. Psalm 46:8 appears twice.[172] The Babylonian incantation bowls show some more variety.[173]Appearing once are: Psalms 4:5-9,[174] 24:8,[175] 32:7,[176] 46:8,[177] 55:9,[178] 57:2,[179]

[163] For sake of space I read with Ms JTS Rab. 1623/2 (EMC 271). Most other manuscripts cite the verses in full and conflict as to what the last verse in this magical unit ought to be. Rebiger, "Die magische Verwendung von Psalmen im Judentum," 269 does not account for this manuscript variation in his brief analysis.
[164] Psalm 23:4 is also given magical resonances in b. Pesaḥ. 111a-b.
[165] Cotton et al., *CIIP*, #789.
[166] All the amulet data comes from Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*; Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*.
[167] Amulet 24 (fragment)
[168] Amulet 12
[169] Amulet 16
[170] Amulet 30
[171] Amulet 16
[172] Amulet 17 and Amulet 29
[173] See delineated corpus in note 160 above.
[174] Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Ms2053/44:13–15, Pg 19.
[175] Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M156.
[176] Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, JBA 55 (Ms 1928/1).
[177] Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, 041A (BM 91763).
[178] Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, JBA 55 (Ms 1928/1).
[179] Ibid., Ms2053/70:8–11, pg 19.

69:24,[180] 69:26,[181] 72:18-19,[182] 86:5,[183] 89:53[184] 91:7,[185] 104:31,[186] 106:47-8,[187] 121:7,[188] 125:2.[189] Appearing twice are: Psalms 55:8,[190] 91:1,[191] 91:10,[192] 116:6.[193] The verse Psalm 10:16[194] appears ten times; Psalm 104:20[195] shows up eleven times; and finally, Psalm 24:8[196] twelve.

A complete analysis of each verse would greatly expand the length of this chapter and must be reserved for another occasion.[197] The connection between Psalm piety and magic, however, can be enriched if we examine the prominence of Psalm 46:8, "The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, *selah*." The verse appears a total of three times in the corpus delineated above, twice in Palestinian amulets and once in a Babylonian magic bowl. The verse was likely

[180] Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Bowl 9.
[181] Ibid.
[182] Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M108.
[183] Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, 041A (BM 91763).
[184] Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M108.
[185] Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, Bowl 52.
[186] Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M108.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, Bowl 23.
[189] Ibid., Bowl 19.
[190] Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Ms2053/70:8–11, Pg 19, twice.
[191] Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Bowl 11; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, VA.2423.
[192] Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls*, Bowl 52; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Ms2053/70:8–11, Pg 19.
[193] Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, 041A (BM 91763); Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, JBA 56 (Ms 1928/8).
[194] Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, JBA 1 (Ms 1927/8), JBA 3 (Ms 1927/45), JBA 4 (Ms 1927/47), JBA 5 (Ms 1927/64), JBA 6 (Ms 2053/10), JBA 7 (Ms 2053/12), JBA 9 (Ms 2053/183), JBA 10 (Ms 2053/185), JBA 11 (Ms 2053/79), JBA 12 (Ms 2053/178). This is the absolute number. The citations belong to four distinct clients.
[195] Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M156; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, JBA 1 (Ms 1927/8), JBA 2 (Ms 1927/29, JBA 3 (Ms 1927/45), JBA 4 (Ms 1927/47), JBA 5 (Ms 1927/64), JBA 6 (Ms 2053/10), JBA 7 (Ms 2053/12), JBA 8 (Ms 2053/55), JBA 9 (Ms 2053/183) JBA 10 (Ms 2053/185). This number is in terms of absolute quantity. However, citations belong to at least four distinct clients.
[196] Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M156; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, JBA 1 (Ms 1927/8), JBA 3 (Ms 1927/45), JBA 4 (Ms 1927/47), JBA 5 (Ms 1927/64), JBA 6 (Ms 2053/10), JBA 7 (Ms 2053/12), JBA 9 (Ms 2053/183), JBA 10 (Ms 2053/185), JBA 11 (Ms 2053/79), JBA 12 (Ms 2053/178), JBA 28 (Ms 1927/25). This number is in terms of absolute quantity. These citations belong to six different clients.
[197] The book of Psalms also appears in these magical texts through invocation of David. See, for example, Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, Amulet 4; Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*, M117, M145, where Psalms of David are mentioned; Shaked, Ford, and Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, Ms 2053/159:14–15, pg. 16 n.72. Resonance with psalms may also come from the popular use of שיר תושבח in various amulets. This is nothing but an Aramaic translation of שיר מזמור, a rendering found frequently in the Targum to Psalms.

popular in both regions.[198] It also appears inscribed on a fourth century Jewish tomb in Macedonia.[199] As seen above, it was also a staple of Psalm piety: "R. Hezekiah, R. Jacob b. Aḥa, R. Yassa in the name of R. Yoḥanan, "Really, this verse should never move from your lips: 'The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge, *selah*" (Ps 46:8)." Where it was used first is less important than the clear nexus between piety and magic. It is worth noting as well that this verse appears frequently in Christian magical texts and epigraphy.[200] Overall, these sources allow us to appreciate the vibrant culture of Psalms practice in Late Antiquity. Not only did Psalm piety exist and thrive, the rabbis were both its proponents and practitioners.[201]

Conclusion

This chapter began with a set of seven claims. I will briefly summarize here how the analysis above substantiates each one.

1) Psalm piety exists in Late Antiquity. This chapter conclusively demonstrates that a culture of Psalm piety characterized Late Antiquity for both Jews and Christians. Psalm piety took many forms. Midnight piety, bedtime piety, death piety, mantra-like repetition of psalms, communal piety and slow recitation of the entire Psalter are but some of the manifestations of Psalm piety explored above.
2) Psalm piety is the province of both elite and non-elites. Members of some social elites,

[198] On the connection between Babylonia and Palestine with regards to magic see Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, 34–35; Naveh and Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, 20–22.
[199] David Noy, Alexander Panayotov, and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, eds., *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis: Volume 1: Eastern Europe*, TSAJ 99 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), Mac 13, (pgs.93-4).
[200] See page 242, above.
[201] Due to space, I have refrained from discussing two other aspects of Psalm piety in Late Antiquity, namely the use of Psalms in personal prayer and the use of Psalms in daily conversion.

like Jerome and R. Joshua b. Levi, either advocate or exemplify the practice of Psalm piety. I further argued that many of the practices that characterize Psalm piety in the literature of the elite are not particular elite social constructions, but rather reflections of a widespread culture of Psalm piety, which can be glimpsed at through analysis of both Jewish and Christian material remains.

3) Psalm piety is best appreciated by examining literary and material sources in tandem. Extant material sources confirm the portrait of Psalm piety delineated in literary evidence and point to a whole world uncaptured by the written word. Literary sources, in turn, provide potential contexts for how material evidence may have been understood by those who used it. The examples of Psalm 46:8 and Psalm 91 in Jewish and Christian pious instruction and epigraphy point to a shared but complicated cultural universe in which late antique Jews and Christians saw, read, heard and felt Psalms on a daily basis.

4) Jews and Christians engage Psalm piety in a fundamentally similar manner. Both Jews and Christians practiced midnight piety, recited Psalms on their deathbed, and encouraged the mantra-like repetition of specific psalm verses. At the same time, however, their pieties were not entirely the same. Above, I pointed to several instances in which Jewish and Christian piety shared similar mechanics but different meanings. Jewish Psalm piety focused on joy in divine service while Christian Psalm piety dwelled on sin and repentance. Their Psalm piety was a fundamentally shared cultural system with distinctive Jewish and Christian nuances.

5) Psalm piety shares a blurred boundary with magic on one end and liturgy on the other. The analysis above demonstrates that little true distinction existed in Late Antiquity between Psalm piety and magic. The same Psalter was used for both pious recitation

and magical protection without much qualm. Bedtime psalmody, for example, could simultaneously fortify the faithful soul and act as a nighttime demon repellent. Psalm piety also shared a porous border with liturgy. Texts used for pious recitation, such as Psalm 145, could end up becoming a staple of rabbinic liturgy. In contrast to the situation for piety and protective magic, however, we do have some evidence of late antique intellectuals trying to secure the borders of piety and liturgy. It is also worth mentioning that magic and liturgy also share unstable boundaries. Psalm 91, for example, is imagined as an important part of temple liturgy, a text to recite piously for protection, and eventually a liturgical text read in the evening.

6) Psalm piety allows us to view the Bible in Late Antiquity as an object of practice and not just interpretation. This claim runs throughout the entirety of this chapter and posits that the Bible did not just mean through interpretation, but signified through use. In other words, countless late antique Jews and Christians found the book of Psalms filled with significance and meaning without having to ask the question: "How do I interpret this verse?" This chapter tries to give form and voice to the many ways that Jews and Christians found the Psalter meaningful beyond interpretation by focusing on instances of piety and its material manifestations. It argues that practice creates significance through use. In fact, the active preservation of interpretive literary remains gives the impression that most late antique Jews and Christians would encounter psalms through exegesis. This is misleading. More Jews and Christians would engage in Psalm piety than psalm interpretation.

7) Psalm piety demonstrates the widespread appeal and engagement with Psalms in Late Antiquity. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the book of Psalms is the

most quoted biblical texts in both Jewish and Christian literature. This corpus is mostly interpretive. By exploring Psalm piety, and especially its material dimensions, this chapter demonstrates that the book of Psalms was widely cherished by Jews and Christians in dimensions beyond interpretation. More importantly, it shows that engagement with book of Psalms was simply a fact of life. To live life in Jewish and Christian Late Antiquity was to inevitably be enmeshed in a culture of song, a discourse of psalmody.

The popularity and importance of the Psalter provides a unique vantage point from which to view the relationship of Jews and Christians in this period. This chapter began the process of examining Jewish and Christian interaction by comparing and contrasting modes and Jewish and Christian Psalm piety. But now that we have established exactly what stake Jews and Christians had in reciting psalms, we can truly appreciate and unpack how each community responded to the claims the other made about Psalter. Perhaps the hardest Christian claim for Jews to countenance was that Jesus was a central figure of the book of Psalms, and that nearly any psalm could refer to his life. Jews needed a counter-claim, a counter-narrative. This was found, at least for Psalms 45, in the figure of Abraham. It is to this discourse we now turn.

Chapter 6: Reading Polemically, Psalm 45 Between Jesus and Abraham

Both read the Bible day and night / but you read it black and I read it white.

- *William Blake (1757-1827), The Everlasting Gospel*

The previous chapters of this dissertation demonstrate that in Late Antiquity, the sounds of psalm liturgy, piety and magic constantly reverberated around the lives of Jews and Christians, often facilitating both shared and contested social interactions. The following two chapters draw out the implications of living in this psalm-suffused atmosphere for Jewish and Christian exegetical exchange. They will demonstrate that the interpretation of Psalms built an intellectual and cultural bridge between Jews and Christians as well as the checkpoints to police it. This chapter will explore the place of Psalms in Jewish anti-Christian polemic by using Psalm 45 as a case-study. The following chapter will examine an irenic form of exchange through a case-study of Psalm 1.

We begin with a plea for help. Towards the close of the fourth century, Sophronius, a friend of Jerome, debated a Jew. He deployed the most powerful weapon in his inventory, one assured to demonstrate the divinity of Jesus and gain him victory – the book of Psalms. He wielded, however, a blunt sword. Every time he would quote a passage, the Jew would retort that the Greek translation does not reflect the Hebrew original. In desperation, Sophronius penned a letter to his friend Jerome. He asked for a re-forged sword, a translation of the Psalms based on the Hebrew. Jerome assented. He commended Sophronius and defended his translation project by noting: "It is one thing to read the Psalms in the churches of those believing in Christ, another thing to answer the

Jews who accuse every word."[1] Debates are serious business; one must come prepared with an effective arsenal.

By focusing on Psalms as a vector for Jewish and Christian polemic, this chapter offers several methodological observations and interventions. First, it calls attention to the utility of Psalms for examining exegetical contact between Jews and Christians. Shared and contested readings of Genesis or Song of Songs have received the lion's share of scholarly attention.[2] Relatively little notice, in comparison, has been paid to the most cited text in both traditions: the book of Psalms.[3] Second, this chapter highlights the issue of plausible channels of transmission,

[1] Sophronius also appears in the penultimate entry of Jerome's *Lives of Illustrious Men*. Jerome praises Sophronius's learning and notes that Sophronius translated his Latin rendition of the Psalter from the original Hebrew into Greek. Polemical tools require both accessibility and precision. English translation from Kevin Edgecomb in http://www.bombaxo.com/blog/jeromes-prologue-to-psalms-hebrew/. I checked this against the Latin text from *Corpus Corporum* (http://www.mlat.uzh.ch/MLS/).

[2]The bibliography is immense and will not be cited in full here. Some works include: David Stern, "Ancient Jewish Interpretation of the Song of Songs in a Comparative Context," in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange: Comparative Exegesis in Context*, ed. Natalie Dohrmann and David Stern, Jewish Culture and Contexts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 87–107; Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Elizabeth A. Clark, "Origen, the Jews, and the Song of Songs: Allegory and Polemic in Christian Antiquity," in *Perspectives on the Song of Songs*, ed. Anselm Hagedorn, BZAW 346 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 274–93; Tamar Kadri, "Rabbinic and Christian Models of Interaction on the Song of Songs," in *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz, and Joseph Turner, JCP 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 65–82; Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity: Encounters Between Jewish and Christian Exegesis*, JCP 24 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Ephraim E. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origen on Canticles and the Jewish Disputation," in *Collected Writings in Jewish Studies*, ed. Robert Brody and Moshe Herr (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1999), 318–46; Marc G. Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), 43–54. For an exhaustive review of the scholarly debate regarding Song of Songs with largely negative conclusions regarding the potential to uncover polemic see Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Polemicomania: Methodological Thoughts on the Study of Jewish-Christian Polemic in Light of Rabbinic Interpretation and Origen on Song of Songs," *The Science of Judaism* 42 (2002): 119–90.

[3] According to biblindex.info, between the years 1-650 one finds 53,179 Psalm quotations. Matthew yields 47,089, Genesis 35,639 and Song of Songs 4052. Exact numbers are harder to estimate for rabbinic literature. Aaron Hyman's *Torah haKetuva veHaMesura* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1936-9) contains 112 pages of reference to Psalm quotation. Genesis has 93 and Song of Songs 11. For comparative studies see Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms*; Gillingham, "The Reception of Psalm 137 in Jewish and Christian Traditions"; Esther M. Menn, "No Ordinary Lament: Relecture and the Identity of the Distressed in Psalm 22," *HTR* 93 (2000): 301–41; Johann Maier, "Psalm 1 im Licht antiker jüdisher Zeugnisse," in *Studien zur jüdischen Bibel und ihrer Geschichte*, SJ 28 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 359–74; Marcel Poorthuis, "King Solomon and Psalms 72 and 24 in the Debate Between Jews And Christians," in *Jewish and Christian Liturgy and Worship*, ed. Clemens Leonhard and Albert Gerhards, JCP 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 257–78; Gerard Rouwhorst and Marcel Poorthuis, "'Why Do The Nations Conspire?' Psalm 2 in Post-Biblical Jewish and Christian Traditions," in *Empsychoi Logoi — Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Pieter Willem van Der*

an element often left unclear or unexamined when scholars posit exegetical interchange between Jews and Christians. Instead of presupposing these outlets, this chapter and the one that follows will attempt to carefully reconstruct them.

This chapter does so by examining the reception history of Psalm 45. It will, in particular, demonstrate that ancient Jews knew and reacted to a widespread Christological reading of this psalm. Ancient Jews undermined the Christocentric interpretation by employing a counter-reading that substituted a different historical figure for Jesus as the referent of the psalm: Abraham. By replacing Jesus with Abraham, ancient Jews argued that Abraham is not only a Jew, but the Jewish response to Christ.[4]

The shaping of Psalm 45 into an Abraham-focused Jewish counter-narrative to a Christological reading was a slow process. It did not occur instantaneously or come pre-fabricated. This chapter will trace that development from the dawn of Late Antiquity, when many Christians begin to identify the referent of Psalm 45 as Jesus and at the same time also start to employ the Psalm in anti-Jewish polemic. This aggressive use of Psalm 45, in turn, encourages Jewish exegetes of the Amoraic period (ca. 200-650 CE) to respond. Over the course of Late Antiquity, Jews counter-interpret several key verses by highlighting Abraham's role as the referent of the psalm. By the dusk of Late Antiquity, the entire psalm has come to refer to Abraham. Close

Horst, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Albert de Jong, and Magda Misset-van de Weg, AJEC 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 425–54; Rivka Ulmer, "Psalm 22 in Pesiqta Rabbati: The Suffering of the Jewish Messiah and Jesus," in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflection, Reclamation*, ed. Zev Garber (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), 115–22. Gillingham, *Jewish and Christian Approaches to the Psalms: Conflict and Convergence*, contains no essay focused on late antique Judaism. Some attention has also been paid to Midrash Psalms and polemic: Benedikt, "The Letter That Lives: Mid. Ps. 29 as a Case Study of Anti-Christological Polemic." It is worth noting that Abraham does not appear in Midrash Psalms to Psalm 45.

[4] Competition over Abraham's legacy appears as early as Paul. See Romans 4:1-12. See also John 8:31-59. For a recent treatment of Abraham in Judaism and Christianity see Jon D. Levenson, *Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

attention to Psalm 45 reveals not only the genesis and development of a polemic, but also another example of holistic exegesis, the slow embedding of an *entire* psalm into a particular discourse.[5]

Channels of Transmission

Before interpreting our primary sources, it is essential to consider the problem of channels of transmission. How exactly did Jews come to know of Christian exegetical claims so as to be able to respond to them? Channels of transmission are important but not always easily visible. In this section I will first review three commonplace but often unstated scholarly strategies for placing Jews and Christians in direct conversation. I will then propose a methodology for detecting channels of transmission that best accounts for the data provided by the late antique Jewish and Christian use of Psalm 45. My strategy is inductive and built upon the foundation of Psalm 45; nevertheless, I am confident that it can be replicated and modified when examining other instances of Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction. The following chapter, which focuses on Psalm 1, will demonstrate this to be the case.

The most compelling arguments for explaining Jewish knowledge of Christian claims, in my view, are those that reconstruct highly localized and specific channels of transmissions. The case of Origen is instructive.[6] Some scholars claim that R. Yoḥanan, because he was the leading

[5] For further on holistic exegesis see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[6] Note that I am not dealing with the Christian knowledge of Jewish claims. While the minority culture is more likely to know, in broad strokes, the opinions of the majority culture than visa-versa, Origen is something of an exception. He was an omnivorous consumer of knowledge. That said, we cannot claim that Origen had ready and easy access to the totality of rabbinic knowledge. For the most explicit version of the claim that he did, see the important and pioneering study of Nicholas de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 8: "In general it may be assumed that the Tannaitic literature as a whole was available to him, and in fuller form than that in which it has come down to us." Equally as implausible is his claim that "Origen no doubt visited during his life all the important centres of Jewish scholarship in Palestine" (28). For more recent and more moderated versions of this claim see Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 90; Stern, "Ancient Jewish Interpretation," 98. For brief list of examples of Origen's contact with Judaism and history of

rabbi of his day, or R. Hoshaiya, because he lived in Caesarea, must have had direct contact with Origen.[7] Such contact is possible, but cannot be demonstrated with any certainty. It is true that Origen claims to speak with learned Jews, but we cannot *a priori* identify them with the rabbinic movement.[8] Rabbis constituted a tiny elite in the Judaism of Late Antiquity and were certainly not the only ones learned in Jewish law and lore.[9] Other scholars posit that since Origen was a towering figure he left an indelible mark on Caesarea such that even if the rabbis did not have direct personal contact with him they would have been exposed to his specific ideas.[10] Though this picture is possible, it is beset by two problems: agency and specificity. If rabbinic knowledge of Origen's claims is not direct, it requires at least two or three layers of mediation. I imagine such mediation as follows, although other maps can be drawn: Origen delivers his homily, congregants discuss it amongst themselves, one person (or perhaps a few) informs a Jew, perhaps a business partner. The Jew – assume a student of a rabbinic sage – tells his rabbinic master, who then composes a polemical response. This multi-layered process that transmits a single idea leads to the problem of

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scholarship until 1988 see David J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*, TSAJ 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 324–26.

[7] For scholarship that adopts these assumptions see de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 157 n.112. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages"; Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbi Yokhanan and Origen on the Song of Songs: A Third-Century Jewish-Christian Disputation," *HTR* 73 (1980): 567–95; Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 148–51. It must be noted that recent scholarship tends to avoid placing Origen in direct contact with a specific named rabbi. On Urbach's approach see Oded Irshai, "Ephriam E. Urbach and the Study of Judeo-Christian Dialogue in Late Antiquity – Some Preliminary Observations," in *How Should Rabbinic Literature Be Read in the Modern World?*, ed. Matthew Kraus, Judaism in Context 4 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006), 168–92.

[8] Much of this type of scholarship is predicated on reading every mention of "wise man," "sage," or "teacher" in Origen and Jerome as "talmudic rabbi." This is possible, but not necessary. Other non-rabbinic Jews bore the title "rabbi." See Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Epigraphical Rabbis," *JQR* 72 (1981): 1–17; Hayim Lapin, "Epigraphical Rabbis: A Reconsideration," *JQR* 101 (2011): 311–46.

[9] In this sense I follow in general outline the historiographical paradigm set out in Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.*

[10] For the most recent example of this claim see the insightful work of Maren R. Niehoff, "Origen's Commentary on Genesis as Key to Genesis Rabbah," in *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context*, ed. Sarit Kattan Gribetz et al., TSAJ 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 129–53. "Because he was a prominent figure in the Land of Israel, Origen provides important background information for *Genesis Rabbah*, allowing us to appreciate the particular local discourses that the rabbis encountered" (132). She supposes that, "Origen and the rabbis emerge as lively discussion partners, highly aware of the other's interpretation" (135).

specificity, the broken telephone effect. The more specific an exegetical move or theological notion the less likely a direct transfer from Origen to the rabbis can be successfully mapped. Yet scholars have pointed to striking parallels between Origen and the rabbis.[11] These compelling parallels may be explained in one of two manners, both of which can be operative simultaneously but in tension with one another. First, textual evidence in which rabbis seem to respond to Origen is indeed evidence of successful transfer of knowledge from Origen to the rabbis, with each example being a historical exception to the broken telephone effect. Second, rabbinic polemics that seem to rebut a claim found in the writings of Origen are not direct responses to Origen, but rather to a wider Christian claim of which Origen is merely one node in a larger network of interpretation. In short, just because Origen was a towering figure we cannot examine and explain rabbinic responses to Christianity – even in Caesarea – by reference to his work alone. By zooming out from Origen, and building multiple potential channels of transmission, we can tell a more nuanced story of Jewish and Christian exegetical encounter, one that includes Origen but does not reduce to him. Likewise, the search for highly localized and specific channels of transmission should proceed in tandem with the reconstruction of multiple, larger and more interwoven networks of communication.

At the same time, we must attempt to reconstruct channels of transmission that are both *historically plausible* and *historically probable*. Even zooming out has its limits. Some scholars who examine Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction assume channels of transmission founded upon the universal and encyclopedic access to knowledge. They posit, often implicitly, that an idea, once thought of and articulated, floats in the air and is immediately accessible to everyone

[11] My assumption here is that at least some parallels between Origen and the rabbis are more than phenomenologically connected.

else.[12] This assumption problematically removes agency and history from the transmission of knowledge.[13]

We must recognize, however, that not every instance of exegetical interaction can be located on a reliable channel of transmission. In fact, multiple compelling parallels may indicate the existence of a yet undiscovered or untheorized channel. Nonetheless, the methodology I propose and develop here assumes normal historical circumstances and provides the most compelling instances, in my opinion, of Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction.

One further aspect of nearly every late ancient network of communication deserves careful consideration: the oral nature of transmission. Close textual parallels between rabbinic and Christian literature appear to be limited to several quotations from the Gospels.[14] Orality, therefore, is a fundamental part of almost every scenario of exchange. Orality cannot be constituted as a self-sufficient and independent channel of transmission; it cannot be disentangled from historical context; and it does not absolve the historian from the requirement of *attempting* to reconstruct the "on-the-ground" networks through which oral exchange of exegesis occurred. All too often

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[12] For an example of the assumption of universal access to knowledge at work see Menahem Kister, "Metatron, God, and the 'Two Powers': The Dynamics of Tradition, Exegesis, and Polemic," *Tarbiz* 82 (2013): 43–88. Many of Kister's comparative studies work with this assumption, although some of the parallels he points out are indeed striking. In the article cited, Kister places Ephrem and an Armenian author in direct conversation with Tannaitic Midrash. I suspect that the sources Kister attempts to align were not as encyclopedic or erudite as himself. See also Stephanie E. Binder, *Tertullian, On Idolatry and Mishnah Avodah Zarah: Questioning the Parting of the Ways between Christians and Jews in Late Antiquity*, JCP 22 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 14:"Rather, since our concern is a rabbinic text compared with a contemporaneous Christian Carthaginian text, *it is the rabbinic ideas themselves that are important*, no matter whether rabbinic prescriptions were or were not widely observed by Jews, and no matter whether other sects in Judaism might have existed, or what they might have written regarding the selfsame issues" (emphasis my own)."

[13] In this sense I seek to build upon and modify the very important studies of Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius*, 5; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*, Figurae: Reading Medieval Culture (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Boyarin, *Border Lines*; Grypeou and Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity*. The literary or ideological connections between Judaism and Christianity these scholars examine would be even more persuasive if they included careful examination of historical connections, such as channels of transmission.

[14] For the parodic use of Gospel quotations see Holger M. Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature*, TSAJ 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 137–66. It is possible, though, that rabbinic knowledge of this text, as well, was primarily oral.

scholars ignore the important question of how ideas *actually* move from one place to another. They often begin by locating "self-evident" parallels and then assume an oral context for exchange instead of demonstrating how and why such channels were created, maintained and utilized. Indeed, studies that do not actively think about channels of transmission often adopt this procedure by default.[15]

Reconstructing traceable channels of transmission is not always possible.[16] History is messy, and our record partial at best.[17] The search for and interpretation of apparent parallels between Jewish and Christian literature is not without value, but the results must be treated as tentative until historically contextualized. The study of Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction, like many historical pursuits, rests on arguments for probability as opposed to certainty. Claims for exegetical exchange, therefore, are the most compelling when founded upon multiple historically contextualized channels of transmission.

Luckily, the available evidence for the Jewish and Christian use of Psalm 45 allows us to do just that: namely, to explore an instance of Jewish anti-Christian polemic built upon a complex

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[15] In addition to many of the studies quoted in note 13, the following ground-breaking studies would be even more persuasive if they paid careful attention to how ideas travel: Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*; Burton L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures*, WUNT 80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Israel J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Yuval, "The Orality of Jewish Oral Law: From Pedagogy to Ideology." Attention to channels of transmission may invalidate some of the parallels these scholars draw, but it would surely strengthen others.

[16] This does not mean one should abandon history altogether. Goshen-Gottstein calls for a "spiritual activity model," which "is the attempt to cast Judaism and Christianity as parallel religious phenomena, while minimizing their historical contact." Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish–Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature—Shifting Scholarly and Relational Paradigms: The Case of Two Powers," in *Interaction between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art and Literature*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis, Joshua Schwartz, and Joseph Turner, JCP 17 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 26. While viewing Jews and Christians in splendid isolation may be good for promoting "present-day contact, based on respectful mutual study and understanding" (28), it does violence to an accurate understanding of the past. Jews and Christians – along with the other inhabitants of the ancient world – comingled and lived in productive, and oftentimes violent, tension with one another. For a useful *historically-informed* paradigm of intercommunal engagement see David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[17] Consider, for example, the discovery of a copy of a Dead Sea Scrolls text (CD) in the Cairo Genizah.

communication network that linked Jews and Christians. I will reconstruct this network of communication and demonstrate how it operates as follows. I will begin by highlighting the pervasive Christocentric reading of the psalm by the church fathers. This survey will include a discussion of those exegetes who normally avoid reading Jesus as the referent of a psalm, and decry those who do. I will then explore the widespread use of Psalm 45 in Christian anti-Jewish polemic. An analysis of *Adversus Iudaeos* literature will demonstrate that Psalm 45 became a textual cudgel wielded against Jews who denied the divinity of Jesus. The channels of commentary, homily and debate will highlight the widespread Christian knowledge that Psalm 45 referred to Jesus, and debate and urbanism will underscore how Christian claims were transmitted to a Jewish audience. I will then show that such exchange occurred and that rabbinic Jews did not ignore these attacks. I will examine several passages in Genesis Rabbah that demonstrate that some rabbis were not only aware of Christian claims but actively subverted them. The psalm pertains to Abraham, not Jesus, they argue. I will then examine a liturgical poem by Yannai, who draws from and builds upon these traditions. Through the vehicle of liturgical poetry perhaps even non-rabbinic Jews would have come to know Psalm 45 as an anti-Christian polemic, or at the very least to associate it with Abraham. I will conclude with a passage from Jerome, who seems to be aware of this developing Jewish trend.

Ultimately, the evidence provided by the Jewish and Christian reception of Psalm 45 allows me to do three important things: 1) demonstrate widespread knowledge by Christians of a particular claim, 2) explore multiple potential channels of transmissions, and 3) detail a specific, but widespread, rabbinic response. Thus, instead of examining one shared motif (such as a distinct quotation), or one node of contact (a single figure such as Origen), I am able examine a network of exegetical communication, one that includes homily, commentary, polemic, urbanism and

liturgy, in all of its complexities, answering the important historical questions of *how and why* a large number of Christians would imagine a text to be read in a particular manner, *why* such interpretations would be presented to Jews and *in what contexts* this interaction *could* take place. By paying attention to channels of transmission, I am able to contextualize the exchange of warring words as not only possible, but also probable.

Psalm 45 as Christocentric in Early Christian Exegesis

I begin by demonstrating the widespread Christocentric interpretation of Psalm 45, by which I mean any act of reading that contextualizes Psalm 45 as referring to the life, death or divinity of Jesus. The origin, or at least earliest extant use of Psalm 45 in this manner, is Hebrews 1:8-9.[18] In this section of his missive, the author of Hebrews attempts to demonstrate Jesus' supremacy over angels. After marshaling several verses to argue for angelic subservience to Jesus, he deploys Psalm 45:7-8 to convince his readers of Jesus' divinity and ascendance:

> But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;

[18] Psalm 45 does not appear in in the letters of Paul or any of the early Gospels. In general, quotations and allusions to Psalm 45 in Second Temple literature are sparse. It certainly appears in 4Q171, a fragment from *Pesher Psalms*. The Sons of Korah are understood to be classes of converts, and the pen of the scribe refers to the Teacher of Righteousness. The text then breaks off. Allusions to Psalm 45 also appear in three texts that *may* antedate Hebrews: the Testament of Judah, Odes of Solomon and Similitudes of Enoch. Delamarter, *A Scripture Index*, 24 points to Testament of Judah 24:1, 3. There are certain affinities to Psalm 45 in this passage. These are affirmed and explain in James Kugel, "Testament of the Twleve Patriarchs," in *Outside the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scripture*, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel, and Lawrence H. Schiffman, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 1769. These allusions may indicate that the psalm was already being read with messianic undertones. Of course, we cannot conflate the cultural worlds of the authors of the Testament of Judah and Hebrews. For Odes of Solomon, Delamarter, *A Scripture Index*, 81 points to Odes 16:1-2 and Odes 26:1, which may echo Psalm 45. These seem too far-fetched. For the date of Odes, see Michael Lattke, *Odes of Solomon: A Commentary*, trans. Marianne Ehrhardt, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2009), 7–10, who dates the text to the first quarter of the second century. For the use of Psalm 45 in Similitudes, see Pierpaolo Bertalotto, "The Enochic Son of Man, Psalm 45 and the Book of the Watchers," *JSP* 19 (2010): 195–216. I am less convinced that these allusions can be traced back to the Book of Watchers. On the question of date see George Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2011), 254–56. On the date of Hebrews see Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 6–9, who places the letter sometime between 60 and 100.

> therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

The author constructs Jesus' position over angels on the basis of the concluding clause of Psalm 45:8: "beyond your companions," which he reads as "beyond the angels." This reading is aided by the beginning of the verse, which is read to further substantiate Jesus' divinity, capitalizing on the double mention of God in Psalm 45:8, "God, your God," by identifying the former as Jesus and the latter as God.[19] This, in turn, allows the author to read the "God" in verse 7 as Jesus, to whom belongs an eternal throne.[20] This two-verse interpretation begins the process of transforming Psalm 45 into a narrative about Jesus.

The stream of interpretation represented in Hebrews swells into a torrent during Late Antiquity. Nearly all patristic readers of Psalm 45 situate it within the narrative of Jesus' life, death and divinity, even if they differ amongst themselves as to the exact details. As our interest lies in Jewish counter-exegesis, we will not explore the important nuances of patristic interpretation in this chapter. Rather, we will simply observe that for the following readers of Psalm 45 it could not have referred to any figure other than Jesus or to any time other than his own.[21] Or, in other words, we can highlight a tradition of reading that demonstrates the widespread acceptance of Psalm 45 as a poem about Jesus.

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[19] These "double God" passages were particularly useful for Christologically driven readers. It is no surprise that Psalm 110:1 also figures in Hebrews.

[20] *Pace* Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*, SNTSM 36 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 60–61. Graham argues that while Jesus is referred to as "Lord" here, the author of Hebrews is more interested in placing Jesus of above angels than in constructing his divinity. Graham, however, is not attentive enough to the double "God" language – an integral part of the verse! The perplexing locution is remedied if one "*theos*" is Jesus. If this is not a claim to divinity I do not know what is. For similar argument see Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 58–60.

[21] I will deal with Tertullian and Justin in the section below. I have also intentionally held off on Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who will be dealt with later.

This exegetical trend appears among second to sixth century Christian authors from Gaul to Mesopotamia, and includes such figures as Athanasius,[22] Augustine,[23] Basil the Great,[24] Clement of Alexandria,[25] Cyril of Alexandria,[26] Cyril of Jerusalem,[27] Daniel of Salaḥ,[28] Ephrem,[29] Gregory of Nazianzus,[30] Irenaeus of Lyons,[31] Jerome,[32] John Chrysostom,[33] Origen,[34] and Theodoret.[35] For many of these writers, Psalm 45 becomes either a hook upon which to hang discussions about divine inspiration,[36] or a spear with which to impale enemies during a Christological controversy.[37]

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[22] *Orations against the Arians* 2.13. For the role of this psalm in the Arian controversy see Rowan Williams, "Christological Exegesis of Psalm 45," in *Meditations of the Heart: The Psalms in Early Christian Thought and Practice: Essays in Honour of Andrew Louth*, ed. Andreas Andreopoulos, Augustine M. Casiday, and Carol Harrison, STT 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 23–28.

[23] *Enarrations on the Psalms* 45:7. This is not surprising as Augustine attempts to read almost every psalm in light of Jesus, either as the person or as the head of the body of the Church. See Michael Cameron, "The Emergence of Totus Christus as Hermeneutical Center in Augustine's Enarrationes in Psalmos," in *The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, ed. Brian Daley and Paul Kolbet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 175–90.

[24] *Exegetic Homilies* 17.8. For further exploration, especially as the Christ-figure as a critique on male virtue see Nonna Harrison, "Gender Allegories in Basil of Caesarea's Homily on Psalm 45," in *The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, ed. Brian Daley and Paul Kolbet, Christianity and judaism in antiquity (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 130–32, 136–41.

[25] *Christ the Educator* 2.8.

[26] *Commentary on Psalms* 44. For analysis see Ronald Cox, "A Sharp Pen versus Fragrant Myrrh: Comparing the Commentaries of Cyril of Alexandria and Theodore of Mopsuestia on Psalm 45," in *The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, ed. Brian Daley and Paul Kolbet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 175–90.

[27] *Catechetical Lectures* 2.12.

[28] *Commentary on Psalms* 45.

[29] *Sermon on our Lord* 2.3.

[30] *Theological Orations* 3(29).19.

[31] *Against Heresies* 3.6.1.

[32] *Tractatus in Psalmos* 132; *Epistulae* 65.8.

[33] *Expositiones in Psalmos* 44:8.

[34] *First Principles* 4.1.5. For the intricacies of how this relates to Origen's personal Christology see Williams, "Christological Exegesis of Psalm 45," 18–21. For a full discussion of Origen's use of Psalm 45 see Ronald E. Heine, "Origen on the Christological Significance of Psalm 45 (44)," *Consensus* 23 (1997): 21–37; Heine, *Origen*, 95–96.

[35] *Commentary on the Psalms* 44:5.

[36] Robert C. Hill, "Psalm 45: A Locus Classicus for Patristic Thinking on Biblical Inspiration," in *Studia Patristica. Vol. 25: Papers Presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1991*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 95–100.

[37] Elisabeth Grünbeck, *Christologische Schriftargumentation und Bildersprache: zum konflikt zwischen Metapherninterpretation und dogmatischen Schriftbeweistraditionen in der patristischen Auslegung des 44. (45.) Psalms*, VTSupp 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1994). Williams, "Christological Exegesis of Psalm 45." On Origen's role see Heine, "Origen on the Christological Significance of Psalm 45 (44)."For Theodore's contribution to the Christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries see Harry S. Pappas, "Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary of Psalm 44 (LXX): A Study of Exegesis and Christology," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 47 (2002): 55–79. For this

These authors, however, differ about the identity of the feminine figure in verses 10-14. Who is the "daughter" of "Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house, and the king will desire your beauty" (Ps 45:10)? According to various church fathers, she is either the soul,[38] the church,[39] virgins,[40] or gentiles.[41] As we will see below, several rabbis imagine even the feminine figure to be Abraham.

I did not include Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia in the list above because their interpretations of Psalm 45 are worthy of independent discussion. These luminaries are typically classified among the so-called Antiochene Fathers, readers of Scripture who eschew Christological interpretations in favor of "historicizing" ones.[42] They were both born in Antioch, produced their respective commentaries on Psalms while there,[43] and both interpret Psalm 45 Christologically, exemplifying the popularity of this exegetical stance.[44] For while other Antiochenes read this Psalm in light of Jesus there is no reason, *prima face*, to assume that Diodore

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debate as evidence for the contrast between 'Antiochene' and 'Alexandrain' approaches see Cox, "A Sharp Pen versus Fragrant Myrrh," esp. 182-86. See also the relationship between Basil and Theodore in pp. 66-7. For how the feminine figures at the end of the psalm play into the fourth and fifth century asceticism controversy see David G. Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine," *Church History* 69 (2000): 281–303. See also Harrison, "Gender Allegories."

[38]Basil the Great, *Exegetic Homilies* 17.9; Augustine, *Enarrations on the Psalms* 45.23, Jerome, *Epistulae* 54.3. Jerome also employs this psalm in *Epistulae* 22 and connects vv. 11-12 with Abraham. He encourages Eustochium to engage in ascetic struggle. Jerome's *Epistulae* 65 is also a full-scale commentary on our psalm written in 397. For the details and contexts of Jerome's interpretation see Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 290–95. For the bride here as the meek contemplative Christian, see Harrison, "Gender Allegories," 132–36.

[39] Augustine, *Enarrations on the Psalms* 45.23; *Against Faustus the Manichaean* 15.11. For the contexts and content of Augustine's use of Psalm 45, which is usually understood as Christ and the church, see Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 296–302. For Basil see Harrison, "Gender Allegories," 142–44.

[40] Ambrose, *De virginibus* 1.36ff. For a discussion of how Ambrose deals with these passages and how it relates to his accumulation of authority see Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 285–90.

[41] Augustine, *Enarrations on the Psalms* 45.27.

[42] For a sensitive treatment of the "Antiochene" mode of interpretation in relation to the "Alexandrian," especially making use of Diodore, Theodore and Psalms see Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 161–85.

[43] For Theodore see Rowan A. Greer, ed., *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on Psalms 1-81*, trans. Robert C. Hill, WGRW 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), xv. For Diodore see Benjamin D. Wayman, *Diodore the Theologian: Pronoia in His Commentary on Psalms 1-50*, STT 15 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 7.

[44] For a full exploration of Theodore's use of Psalm 45 see Pappas, "Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary of Psalm 44 (LXX)." See also Cox, "A Sharp Pen versus Fragrant Myrrh."

and Theodore would do similarly. Diodore and Theodore, for example, deny the Christological reading of Psalm 22,[45] a text Christians almost without exception read as prophesying Jesus' tribulations on the cross.[46] Theodore asserts that those who claim:

> This psalm to be spoken in the person of the Lord are led especially by this verse [Ps 22:2: "My Lord, my Lord, why have you abandoned me" – AB] to become guilty of no little rashness. After all, how could it be accepted that the Lord said this of himself, "Far from saving me" and the rest?[47]

The contents of the *entire* psalm, according to Theodore, do not allow for its voice to be that of Jesus.

He does not deny, however, that Jesus said Psalm 22:2 while on the cross. Jesus does so explicitly in several Gospels. Rather:

> He did not quote this verse as though it were said first in prophecy and then fulfilled in events; rather, when he had endured the passion, scourging, beating, nails, and gibbet, he naturally used this verse, which it behooves all pious people to recite when they suffer something of this kind.[48]

Jesus merely cites a verse that any righteous person would evoke during times of trouble.

Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore's mentor, argues that the psalm actually refers to David's troubles with Absalom. Other commentators, he posits, are misled by the similarities of suffering

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[45]Note that Theodoret differs, claiming with everyone else that Psalm 22, "Predicts the suffering and resurrection of the Lord Christ as well as the call of the Gentiles and the salvation of the world." For translation and discussion see John J. O'Keefe, "Theodoret's Unique Contribution to the Anitochene Exegetical Tradition: Questioning Traditional Scholarly Categories," in *The Harp of Prophecy: Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms*, ed. Brian Daley and Paul Kolbet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 198–99.

[46] This interpretation is embedded within the passion narratives, is developed by Justin and becomes incredibly widespread afterwards. It even forms a central part of the Jerusalem liturgy during the time of Egeria. In short, Diodore and Theodore *actively* rejected this exegetical trend. For Psalm 22 in the New Testament see John H. Reumann, "Psalm 22 at the Cross Lament and Thanksgiving for Jesus Christ," *Interpretation* 28 (1974): 39–58. For Justin see Judith M. Lieu, "Justin Martyr and the Transformation of Psalm 22," in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb*, ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith M. Lieu, JSJSup 111 (Leiden: Brill, 2006). For Psalm 22 as anti-Jewish polemic in other church fathers see Naomi Koltun-Fromm, "Psalm 22's Christological Interpretive Tradition in Light of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemic," *JECS* 6 (1998): 37–58. For use in Jerusalem liturgy see Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*. Egeria describes how on Friday afternoon in the Great Week: "They place the bishop's chair before the Cross, and the whole time between midday and three o'clock is taken up with readings. They are all about the things Jesus suffered: first the psalms on this subject, then the Apostles (the Epistles or Acts) which concern it, and then passages from the Gospels" (pg. 159). The Armenian lectionary Wilkinson copies on pg. 187 lists Ps 22 as one of the 8 Psalms pertaining to the crucifixion.

[47] Translation from Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 241.

[48] Ibid., 243.

in Psalm 22 and the crucifixion, resemblances that ought "not completely displace the psalm's theme."[49] The fact that these exegetes read Psalm 45 Christologically speaks volumes about its importance and reception.

The stakes and popularity of Psalm 45 as a Christological Psalm are further highlighted by Theodore. For Theodore and his teacher – only four psalms are truly Christological: Psalms 2, 8, 45 and 110.[50] In each of these instances, Theodore imagines and rebuts a Jewish position.[51] It is as if the anxiety of constructing a Christological reading requires him to produce a historicizing response to caricature and dismantle.[52] With regards to Psalm 45, he says that:

> We need to attend precisely to the commentary, especially since Jews presume to distort the psalm, turning it into fairy tales, or rather an object of derision, of which no heed should be taken. Thus, they presume to present the inspired writing, at least in their view, as deserving of mockery, taking the psalm as referring to Solomon and his wife. Yet what could be a worse example of folly than this, reducing the saying of the inspired author to nonsense and to the praise and commendation of women…?[53]

Theodore charges the Jews with distorting and mocking Psalm 45. How could they read it as poem about Solomon and his wife? He rebuts this position by consistently arguing that the psalm refers to Jesus, and not Solomon. For Theodore: "On all scores, and much more on the basis of the movement of thought in the commentary, we are forced to the conclusion that it is impossible to

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[49] Everett Ferguson, ed., *Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1-51*, trans. Robert C. Hill, WGRW 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 69.

[50] Pappas, "Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary of Psalm 44 (LXX)," 56–57. See also Cox, "A Sharp Pen versus Fragrant Myrrh," 176–77. In a similar vein, Harrison, "Gender Allegories," 127–28 argues that Basil of Caesarea employs an allegorical mode of interpretation, even though he usually disapproves of one.

[51] For Psalm 2 he says, "Now, issue is to be taken with the Jews, who endeavor to deflect the reference in this prophecy away from the person of the Lord, some wanting to take the words of the present psalm in reference to Zerubabbel, some to David" Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 15. His comments on Psalm 8 are more perplexing and require unpacking: "By the Jews as well this psalm is accepted unhesitatingly as referring to God and to the man whom applies what is said below" (i.e. the Messiah = Jesus). Ibid., 87. It must be noted that Theodore only seldom invokes the Jew in his psalm commentary. Theodore's commentary on Psalm 110 is not preserved.

[52] Cox, "A Sharp Pen versus Fragrant Myrrh," 182 argues that Theodore deploys the Jew as a model of improper exegesis. In light of the fact that a reference to Jews always accompanies Theodore's Christological exegesis suggests that something much larger is at stake.

[53] Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 555. On Theodore and Jews see Aryeh Kofsky and Serge Ruzer, "Theodore of Mopsuestia on Jews and Judaism: Mitigated Supersessionism in Christological and Hermeneutical Context," *REJ* 173 (2015): 279–94.

take the psalm as referring to any other person than the Lord and the church alone."[54] Diodore echoes similar sentiments.[55] He, too, ridicules Jews for reading the psalm as referring to Solomon, an interpretation not found in contemporary Jewish sources.[56]

Homilies delivered publically also cement the connection between Psalm 45 and Jesus. These sources can take us beyond commentaries, the province of the learned elite, and inside the walls of churches and monasteries. The extant commentaries of Augustine and John Chrysostom on Psalms, for example, were actually delivered as homilies.[57] There is no doubt that other church fathers such as like Origen preached with Psalms on a regular basis.[58] To catch a quick glimpse at the dynamics of the homily genre, I quote the opening lines of Chrysostom's homily on Psalm 45, which, like Theodore's commentary, also explicitly invokes the "other," in this case Jews and non-Christian gentiles:

> I would now like all Jews and pagans to be present, and taking in hand this book from the Jews I would like to read the psalm in this way …. For this to happen today, too, we supply testimony from the Old Testament to make both Jews and pagans ashamed – Jews for reading but not understanding it, pagans for seeing the book brought us by our foes. … Whether they are present or not present, however, let us do out duty and commence the commentary.[59]

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[54] Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 599.
[55] Ferguson, *Diodore of Tarsus*, 142–43.
[56] Only one Jewish tradition seems to connect Psalm 45 with Solomon. It is found in Midrash Psalms. The anonymous exegete reads the ivory palaces of verse 9 in light of Solomon, connecting it with 1 Kings 10:18. Likewise, the kings' daughters of verse 10 becomes the royal visitors of Solomon, as expressed in 1 Kings 10:14. This tradition is anonymous, undated and likely was unknown to Diodore and Theodore. If a Jewish connection ought to be made – and this is a tenuous prospect – it would indicate a Christian imposition on Jews. At some point Christian's foisted Solomon as the referent of this text unto Jews, who eventually acquiesced. It is more likely that this understanding arises independently. It is, of course, possible that Theodore and Diodore preserve a popular Jewish reading that simply is unattested in contemporary rabbinic sources.
[57] Augustine himself, and Possidius his contemporary biographer, tell us that Augustine arranged his commentary as homilies, with the intention of them being preached. See Augustine, *St. Augustine on the Psalms*, trans. Scholastica Hebgin and Felicitas Corrigan, vol. 1 (Psalms 1-29), Ancient Christian Writers 29 (New York: Paulist, 1974), 3–5.
[58] Origen's three-year homily cycle likely began with Psalms. See Pierre Nautin, *Origène* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 389–409.
[59] Translation from Robert C. Hill, *St. John Chrysostom: Commentary on the Psalms, Volume 1* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox, 2007), 254.

Chrysostom's homily highlights the public setting as well as the theatrics of delivering a sermon. The books of the Jews, Chrysostom claims, will embarrass the Jews. The Jews read Psalm 45, but do not understand that it refers to Jesus. Chrysostom's audience which because it was an ordinary congregation included more than learned Christians would likely leave his presence with at least two impressions: 1) Psalm 45 refers to Jesus; 2) the Jews misunderstand the psalm.

Even texts outside the genres of homily and commentary identify the figure in Psalm 45 as Jesus. This identification became such a mainstay of Christian thought that eventually one could *assume* that Psalm 45 referred to Jesus instead of arguing for it. The fifth century preface to the Syriac *Book of Steps* provides such an example.[60] It begins by arguing that the ability to prophesy did not cease to exist; rather, it resides in those who keep the commandments. If there are no obvious signs of prophecy today it is because God does not will it. In demonstrating this point, the author implicitly assumes that Jesus is the central character of Psalm 45:

> Again he should remember another prophet who said, 'My heart overflows…' You see how the Lord poured out his spirit at certain times and how sons and daughters prophesy, namely, those who keep the commandments of our Lord and who imitate his humility. See how their tongue is 'the pen of a skillful scribe', that is of our Lord, who is fair and beautiful in countenance (this is something that is beyond comprehension), and their tongue is a pen to him, with which he writes wonderful rules concerning himself, which tell humanity to get to know him and to keep all his commandments.[61]

The author of the preface connects the overflowing heart of Psalm 45:2 with the outpouring of prophetic spirit.[62] Those who keep the commandments become the pens of the beautiful and skillful

[60] Most scholars assume a fourth century date for this work, tying it to the Messialian controversy. They further argue that the preface was composed in the fifth century. For a divergent view that re-dates the entire work to the fifth century and views it as a reaction to Rabbula see Kyle Smith, "The Last Disciple of the Apostles: The 'Editor's' Preface, Rabbula's Rules, and the Date of the Book of Steps," in *Breaking the Mind: New Studies in the Syriac Book of Steps*, ed. Kristian S. Heal and Robert A. Kitchen (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 72–98.

[61] Translation from Kitchen and Parmentier, *The Book Of Steps*, 5–6.

[62] For an exploration of this motif with regards to the Antiochene fathers, see Hill, "Psalm 45." The Book of Steps adds to this conversation, demonstrating the use of this motif in Syriac literature.

scribe of Psalm 45 – Jesus. By obeying him, they are transformed into the very implements with which he writes his ordinances and becomes known to the world.

Altogether, the discussion above demonstrates the widespread and consistent Christian interpretation of Psalm 45 during Late Antiquity as pertaining to the life, death or divinity of Jesus. I discussed both the Latin and Greek church fathers, even though the rabbis are located within the cultural sphere of the latter, to highlight the ubiquity of this exegetical trend. I further argued, and will continue to demonstrate below, that the identification of Psalm 45 with Jesus moved beyond the circles of learned elites through channels of transmission such as homilies, liturgy,[63] and public disputations. It would have also moved through rudimentary education, which I will not elaborate on here but have discussed in the previous chapter.[64] Local Christians would have gained enough knowledge of Psalm 45 to confidently assert that it talks about Jesus, even if they were unable to reconstruct every exact detail. Were a Jew to interact with a Christian in any setting – market, debate, or neighborly discussion – and were Psalm 45 to come up, that Christian would likely inform the Jew, perhaps even forcefully, that Psalm 45 refers to none other than Jesus.

Psalm 45 as Anti-Jewish Polemic

In this section, I will attempt to reconstruct a network of plausible channels of transmission that link Jews and Christians. In other words, I attempt to answer the questions of how and where ancient Jews would have encountered Christological readings of Psalm 45 such that some Jews

[63] The evidence for the use of Ps 45 in Christian liturgy is sparse. However, it does appear in use for the Dedication of the Church in West Syrian Christianity. See http://www.lectionary.eu/thales-database/?lg=EN&u=event-in-lectionary&id=2585. It does feature frequently in later Byzantine Orthodox liturgy.
[64] See pages 234 and 239-40, above.

would feel the need to offer a polemical response. I will reconstruct this network by combining the consistent use of Psalm 45 in Christian anti-Jewish polemic with rabbinic urbanism.

Most of the texts explored in this section come from *Adversus Iudaeos* literature.[65] This literary genre typically features a dialogue between a Jew and a Christian. Each side attempts to conquer the other with words of ingenious scriptural interpretation. The Christian always wins; the Jew converts or flees in disgrace. This literature forms an important vector for the transmission of Christological knowledge of Psalm 45, not because it records actual debates between a Jew and a Christian; it may, but many of these dialogues are idealized constructs.[66] Rather, we must turn our attention to the function of this literature for Christian readers. *Adversus Iudaeos* texts offer an idealized transcript of arguments and prooftexts. They simultaneously affirm Christian belief while providing tools for future debate.[67] In other words, these texts help inform the self-understanding of a person or community such that if a topic presented in the text were to come up in a live debate readers would know the best action to take. They are a "how to" manual, an encyclopedia of quotations and arguments.[68]

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[65] For the classic study and summary of these works see A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos: A Bird's-Eye View of Christian Apologiae until the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935). For a more recent survey see Lawrence Lahey, "Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (Excluding Justin)," in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*, ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 581–639.

[66] I draw on Tessa Rajak, "Talking at Trypho: Christian Apologetic as Anti-Judaism in Justin's Dialogue with Trypho the Jew," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, ed. Mark Julian Edwards et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 59–80.

[67] Evidence for this use of debate texts exists for later periods. Stenographers were brought to public disputations to record and ultimately control information. On Augustine's debates with Manicheans serving as edifying exempla see Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity*, TCH 23 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 102.

[68] In this sense they are akin to *testimonia* literature. On this genre see Martin C. Albl, *"And Scripture Cannot Be Broken:" the Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections*, NTSupp 96 (Leiden: Brill, 1999). See also Lim, *Public Disputation*, 132. For Gregory furnishing his audience with ready-made replies for debate see pg. 165, and for Chrysostom see pg. 175. One may connect this with the flourishing of *florilegia* and debate from the fifth century and onwards. See Averil Cameron, *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity*, HSS 65 (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2014), 33–34.

We have direct evidence for at least one reader of this genre: the sharp-witted polemicist Celsus. While Celsus is neither a Jew nor Christian, the response he evokes from Origen will show the role of *Adversus Iudaeos* in shaping Christian self-understanding vis-à-vis Judaism. Origen, in his *Contra Celsum*, quotes Celsus as saying: "I know a work of this sort, a Controversy between one Papiscus and Jason, which does not deserve ridicule but rather pity and hatred."[69] Origen affirms the nature of this work: "In it a Christian is described as disputing with a Jew from the Jewish Scriptures and as showing that the prophecies about the Messiah fit Jesus; and the reply with which the other man opposes the argument is at least neither vulgar nor unsuitable to the character of a Jew." Far from deserving ridicule, Origen proclaims, "I could wish that everyone who hears Celsus' clever rhetoric asserting that the book entitled 'A Controversy between Jason and Papiscus about Christ' deserves not laughter but hatred, were to take the little book into his hands and have the patience and endurance to give his attention to its contents." Origen both defends and promotes the reading of this *Adversus Iudaeos* tract. Thus, nested within a debate text is an advertisement for another debate text. One can easily imagine Origen recommending the "Controversy between one Papiscus and Jason" to fellow Christians for edification and enjoyment. The text, in turn, would provide the Christian with a set of self-affirming stock-phrase and arguments as to why Christianity is superior to Judaism.

Even if we may suspect the historical veracity of the disputations contained within *Adversus Iudaeos* literature, we cannot deny that public debates occurred.[70] As Averil Cameron

[69] *Against Celsus* 4.52. Translation from Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 226–27. All translations of *Against Celsus* in this chapter come from Chadwick.

[70] I thus agree the claim of John G. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 154: "We can conclude that public debates between Christians and Jews were a familiar feature of the Greco-Roman landscape for at least the first three hundred years of Christianity's existence." I suggest that public debate existed for much longer. I am sure he would agree.

recently noted, debate in Late Antiquity "was the stuff of life."[71] The combined literary representations of public debates by Jews, Christians and other inhabitants of Late Antiquity solidly confirm their existence.[72] I argue that *Adversus Iudaeos* literature provided Christians with model debates. Some Christians would undoubtedly adopt the arguments therein and enact them on the actual debate stage. Their performance, in turn, informs the witnessing public, granting them access to and knowledge about particular interpretive claims. As I will demonstrate below, use of Psalm 45 as proof for the divinity of Jesus was a mainstay in *Adversus Iudaeos* literature. This trope would have been verbalized in actual debate. It would inform Christians and affirm belief; it would demand a serious response by Jews.[73]

As residents of major late antique cities, rabbis, or students of rabbis, would have access to and knowledge of the tropes brought up in these debates. Perhaps they even participate in them. Rabbis were, if anything, disputatious. The narratives in rabbinic sources about rabbis debating non-Jews fall under the same suspicions as *Adversus Iudaeos* literature.[74] Nonetheless, we must remember the social and cultural setting of rabbinic society. As scholars have amply demonstrated, Palestinian Amoraic rabbis were primarily urban dwellers.[75] The results of their scholarly activity,

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[71] Cameron, *Dialoguing in Late Antiquity*, 23. She too understands dialogue literature as an "important part of the rhetorical formation of Christian thought and Christian discourse" (5). For evidence of debate in fifth to seventh centuries, see 23-38. On navigating the social tensions produced by public disputations see Lim, *Public Disputation*.

[72] Evidence of debates also appears in Egypt. Oxyrhynchus papyri 1242, for example, describes Jews and Pagans in argument before Trajan. See Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt, eds., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri: Part X* (Oxford: Horace Hart, 1914), 112–19.

[73] On the existence of "street-level" theological debate in both patristic and legal sources see Lim, *Public Disputation*, 149–50.

[74] With regards to Jewish evidence of the public debate form, much ink has been spilled on the Jewish confrontation with the *min* as well as the Two Powers in Heaven debate. The literature on this topic is immense. In book form, see most recently, Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*; Peter Schäfer, *Zwei Götter im Himmel: Gottesvorstellungen in der jüdischen Antike* (Munich: Beck, 2017). For the utility of *min* narratives see Richard L. Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 68–74; Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*. See also Hayes, "Legal Realism," 139–44.

[75] Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America Series (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 157–74. Here he argues that the rabbinic movement started to urbanize under the leadership of R. Judah at the beginning of the third century. See more recently Hayim Lapin, "Rabbis and Cities: Some Aspects of the

such as Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah and the Palestinian Talmud, are products of this setting.[76] The atmosphere of the city was filled with the sounds and spectacle of public debate.[77] These events were as serious as they were entertaining and enjoyable. Like idolatry on the roads of a Roman city, they were impossible to avoid.[78] We must, therefore, resist the tendency to ghettoize Judaism in general, and rabbinic Jews in particular.[79] Even cities dominated by Jews, such as Sepphoris[80] and Tiberias, contained significant numbers of non-Jews.[81] With enough debate performances it is entirely plausible, if not probable, that the Christian claims attached to Psalm 45 would have become known to rabbinic Jews.

The origins, or at least first attestation, of the depolyment Psalm 45 in anti-Jewish polemic are found in Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho*.[82] He quotes Psalm 45 on numerous occasions.

Rabbinic Movement in Its Greco-Roman Environment," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Catherine Hezser, vol. 2, 3 vols., TSAJ 79 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 51–80; Hayim Lapin, "Rabbis and Cities in Later Roman Palestine: The Literary Evidence," *JJS* 50 (1999): 187–207; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 65–125. For the relationship between urban and periphery see Miller, *Sages and Commoners*. Babylonian Jews, as well, dwelled in urban centers, but they are not the focus here. See Herman, *A Prince without a Kingdom*, 143–61.

[76] For the urban redaction of the Palestinian Talmud see most recently Moshe Asis, "Once More on the Problem of the Redaction of Yerushalmi Nezikin," *Tarbiz* 81 (2013): 191–294. On Leviticus Rabbah Burton L. Visotzky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates: Studies in Midrash Leviticus Rabbah*, TSAJ 94 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 38. For Genesis Rabbah see Niehoff, "Origen's Commentary on Genesis as Key to Genesis Rabbah," 129. I am uncertain as to whether we can truly locate Genesis Rabbah in Caesarea.

[77] On the impact of urban culture on Jews of a slightly later period – one where Jews did live in specific city districts – see Baumgarten, *Practicing Piety*, 7, 172–94.

[78] For idolatry in the Roman city see Yaron Zvi Eliav, "Viewing the Sculptural Environment: Shaping the Second Commandment," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schafer, vol. 3, 3 vols., TSAJ 93 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), who compares street idols to the modern billboard.

[79] There is no reason to suppose: "Jews on a whole, particularly in Palestine still avoided public debate, although religious disputations had not been uncommon even in Achaemenid Persia or Hellenistic Egypt." Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, vol. 2, 15 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 133.

[80] On Sepphoris see Zeev Weiss, "From Roman Temple to Byzantine Church: A Preliminary Report on Sepphoris in Transition," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* (2010). "By the early 2nd c., Sepphoris had been transformed into a Roman city with a mixed population in which Jews lived alongside pagans" (198).

[81] There was certainly an organized Christian community there by the fifth century. See Moshe Dothan, *Hammath Tiberias Volume II: Late Synagogues*, ed. Barbara Johnson (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 3.

[82] Justin, we must note, claims to spend time in Palestinian, particularly among Samaritans. In *Dialogue* 120.6, he says: "For I was not afraid either of any one of my people, I mean the Samaritans, when I wrote an address to Caesar, and affirmed that they were mistaken in trusting Simon, the magician among their people…." Translation from Michael Slusser, ed., *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas Falls, SFC 3 (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 181. Justin also open his *Apology* with a statement that he, his father and grandfather were

The first instance, the only time he cites it in full, is instructive. After encouraging Trypho to abandon the traditions of his teachers, Justin, without pause, says: "The forty-fourth[83] psalm speaks thus of Christ."[84] He then quotes the entire psalm without further explication. It is as almost as if to say: How could this Psalm refer to anyone but Jesus?

Justin continues to attack Jewish tradition with Psalm 45 elsewhere in his *Dialogue*. For Justin, the "daughter" of the psalm represents the church:

> That this is so, and that we are instructed to forget the ancient customs of our ancestors, the following word imply: *Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline your ear, and forget your people and your father's house. And the king shall greatly desire your beauty, for he is your Lord, and him you shall adore* (Ps 45:11-12).[85] (italics in original translation.)

Justin reads the Psalmist's statement "forget your people and your father's house" proscriptively. One must abandon one's former traditions and hearken unto Christ, who he interprets as "the king" and "your Lord." For Justin, verses 11-12 are causally linked: the daughter must forget her past in order for the king to desire her in the present. To be a Christian is to innovate at the expense of ancient tradition. Psalm 45 is the mandate.

Justin, as expected, reads other elements of Psalm 45 Christologically. The phrase, "God, your God" (Ps 45:8) demonstrates that: "We must certainly admit, besides the Creator of the universe, another was called Lord by the Holy Spirit."[86] Furthermore, the oil and adored[87] one of that same verse also signified Jesus.[88]

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natives of Neapolis (Shechem) in Palestine. This alone, of course, cannot allow one to link Justin's words with rabbinic traditions.

[83] Justin, of course, derives his biblical text from the Greek, which combines Psalms 9-10, rendering the MT Psalm 45 as Psalm 44.

[84] Slusser, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 58–59. (38.3-5).

[85] Ibid., 98, (63.5).

[86] Ibid., 86 (56:14).

[87] Ibid., 119 (76.7).

[88] Ibid., 134 (86.3) and Ibid., 189 (126.1).

Tertullian, likewise, employs Psalm 45 in his *Adversus Iudaeos* composition. For Tertullian, this psalm provides the best defense against allegory-denying Jews. When he attempts to read the tribute of the kings mentioned in Psalm 72:10 as Christ plundering other nations, the imagined interlocutor attacks him.[89] Tertullian turns to Psalm 45 for support. He crafts his response by calling attention to a clash in metaphor: How can Jesus – the *a priori* referent of Psalm 45 – be both the beautiful one of the psalm and its warrior?[90] Is war not ugly? Only a stalwart literalist, a Jew, could allow this disharmonious reading to stand. The resolution lies in re-interpreting the sword of Psalm 45:4:

> Let us see therefore whether there is a different meaning for the sword, which has so different an activity – that is, the divine word of God, twice sharpened from the two testaments of the ancient law and the new law, sharpened by the fairness of its own wisdom, giving back to each according to their action. Therefore it was permissible for the Christ of God in the psalms, without war-like intent, to be girt with the figurative sword of the word of God – to which the foretold condition agrees with the charm of the lips – which was at that time girt upon his thigh, according to David, when it was announced that he was about to come to earth at the decree of God the Father. 'Your right hand,' it says 'will marvelously lead you forth,' which means the strength of spiritual grace, from which is deduced the knowledge of Christ. 'The arrows are sharp,' the precepts of God, which fly in every direction, threatening the exposure of every heart, which both pierce and transfix every conscience. 'People will fall down to you.'[91]

Jesus' weapons are allegorical. The sword represents the divine wisdom of both Testaments and the arrows God's precepts. Ultimately, people surrender to the truth of Jesus' message.[92] For

[89] There is no reason to assume that Tertullian had actual experience debating a Jew, or at the very least that his *Against the Jews* accurately reflects such debates. *Pace* Binder, *Tertullian and Mishnah Avodah Zarah*, 50, 159. Geoffrey D Dunn, trans., *Tertullian*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 2004), 32–35, likewise argues that Tertullian is in contact with Jews and thus crafts his polemic around them. The evidence brought by both scholars is scant, over-interpreted and in need of constant special pleading.

[90] The trope of Christ's beauty is an important one for Tertullian and shows up elsewhere in this work. See, for example, 14.5, where he employs Psalm 45:3 in the context of the beauty of the resurrected Jesus.

[91] Dunn, *Tertullian*, 61. (9.18-19).

[92] It may be interesting to note that some rabbis adopt a similar metaphor in interpreting this psalm. Of course, I argue for no direct connection. The transmutation of physical weapons into spiritual ones is simply a common trope found in both traditions.

Tertullian, only allegory can render harmony and truth. Only Jesus can be the referent of Psalm 45.

Tertullian also employs Psalm 45 to attack Jews who deny Jesus' second coming. Textual harmony, once again, is at stake. Two representations of Jesus exist: the suffering man and the victorious warrior. Which image is correct? Both! Verses of degradation characterize Jesus' first coming; verses of beauty paint his second. Psalm 45:3-4, the depiction of a beautiful warrior, takes center stage in imagining the latter.[93] For Tertullian, when Jews see the glorious Christ "they will know him who they have pierced and strike their breasts."[94]

This polemical reading was not localized to North Africa. Origen,[95] in his *Contra Celsum*, also argues that the two images of Jesus refer to his two advents: the first ignoble and the second glorious.[96] Origen rages that Celsus and his Jew fail to acknowledge this hermeneutic.[97] Origen claims that he could quote numerous scriptural prooftexts that would highlight the beauty and glory of Jesus' second coming, and thus persuade Celsus and his Jew, but he settles for a long citation of Psalm 45 instead: "To quote all these prophecies would be too long. It is enough at this moment to quote that from the forty-fourth Psalm."[98] A quotation of Psalm 45:3-8 follows. Origen treats Psalm 45 as the most ready and available evidence to prove Jesus' divinity and the radiance of his seconding coming.

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[93] Dunn, *Tertullian*, 72. (14.5). Note the intertext of Psalm 45 is that of Psalm 8 – another deeply Christological Psalm. Cyprian follows Tertullian here. See his *To Quirinius: Testimony Against the Jews* 2.6, 29.
[94] Ibid. (14.6).
[95] On Origen's complicated understanding of Judaism see Heine, *Origen*, 188–218.
[96] For a brief exploration see Heine, "Origen on the Christological Significance of Psalm 45 (44)," 24–26. As seen above, this interpretive stance seems to be fairly widespread.
[97] Most recently, Niehoff has argued that Celsus has actual fragments from an Alexandrian Jewish Gospel criticism. The Jewish figure is thus an authentic voice. The suggestion is certainly tantalizing but not necessary for my argument. See Maren R. Niehoff, "A Jewish Critique of Christianity from Second-Century Alexandria: Revisiting the Jew Mentioned in Contra Celsum," *JECS* 21 (2013): 151–75.
[98] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 51 (1.56).

This would not be the first time that Origen attempted to quash his non-Christian opponent by appealing to Psalm 45. As mentioned above, Psalm 45:8 contains the clause: "Therefore God, your God has anointed you with oil." For Origen, this text is a weapon of mass devastation, a tool tested and bloodied in previous combat:

> I remember putting the Jew who was thought to be wise into great difficulties with this passage. He did not know what to make of it, and answered in a way consistent with his Judaism by saying that the words were addressed to the God of the universe when it said "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom"; but the Messiah was addressed in the words "thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee" etc.[99]

Origen, during a conversation with a learned Jew, claims to stump his opponent by appealing to Psalm 45.[100] Even the Jew must admit that the psalm refers to the messiah. He merely differs with Origen as to whether the messiah came or not.

It is entirely possible this debate occurred. Origen wrote *Contra Celsum* during his time at Caesarea, a city with a large Jewish community.[101] Additionally, his comment appears tangential, a passing musing embedded in a concerted attack. Origen, furthermore, claims to "remember," a phrase he uses elsewhere in *Contra Celsum* to recall previous conversations or texts.[102] If historically accurate, this comment is the closest and clearest direct evidence for actual Jewish and Christian dialogue involving Psalm 45.[103] But the debate may not have actually occured. Origen, a clever debater, perhaps used his "authentic memory" of a "real" Jewish position to attack Celsus' Jew, who Origen thinks is either a fiction or a poor representative of Judaism.[104] Additionally, only

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[99] Ibid., 52. (I.56).
[100] I disagree with Chadwick's suggestion that "wise" invariable means "rabbinic sage." For Chadwick's note, see Ibid., 41 n.3. See also note 9 above.
[101] See the classic study of Lee I. Levine, *Caesarea under Roman Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1975).
[102] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 356 378, 400.(6.41, 63; 7.7).
[103] Not all of Origen's comments about Jews are found in polemical contexts. See, for example, the preface to Origen's commentary on Psalms, where he learns about psalm titles from a certain "Ioullus the patriarch and someone the Jews considered wise." Heine, *Origen*, 149; de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 23.
[104] See, for example 1.41, 48-9. See also de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 69.

one Jewish text from the close of Late Antiquity, Targum Psalms, provides evidence for a messianic reading of this psalm. Regardless of whether this encounter actually occurred, Origen provides ample evidence that Psalm 45 was useful for debating. At the very least, he provides a winning strategy.

Extant post-Origen *Adversus Iudaeos* texts demonstrate this to be the case.[105] *The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus*, a fourth century text likely composed in Egypt, employs Psalm 45 to attack Jewish interpretation and establish Jesus' divine election.[106] Athanasius, the Christian, asserts that Psalm 45:8's "oil of gladness" indicates that the spirit of God anointed Jesus as messiah.[107] Zacchaeus, the Jew, retorts that "oil of gladness" can refer only to human oil, namely, the anointing oil Moses created. Athanasius stumps his opponent by pointing to the end of the verse, "beyond your companions." Why "beyond"? Jesus' predecessors were anointed with earthly oil, but he with spirit.[108] This exchange, more wishful than historical, nonetheless demonstrates the utility and pervasiveness of Psalm 45 in Christian anti-Jewish polemic.

The *Dialogue of Simon and Theophilus*, an early fifth century Latin text,[109] also employs Psalm 45 to attack Jewish arguments and defend Jesus' divinity. Simon, the Jew, attacks Theophilus in a manner that quite a number of these dialogue texts begin: he accuses him of

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[105] In addition to the works explored in the body see also Martin C. Albl, *Pseudo-Gregory Of Nyssa: Testimonies Against The Jews*, WGRW 8 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 23, where Psalm 45:7–8 becomes a "two powers in heaven" source proving Jesus' divinity, and page 39 where Psalm 45:10 is about the glory of the church.

[106] For these dates and locations see William Varner, trans., *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues: Athanasius and Zacchaeus, Simon and Theophilus, Timothy and Aquila: Introductions, Texts, and Translations*, SBEC 58 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2004), 18. For more on the Egyptian and Apollinarian context of this debate see Patrick Andrist, "Les protagonistes égyptiens du débat apollinariste: le Dialogue d'Athanase et Zachée et les dialogues pseudoathanasiens -- intertextualité et polémique religieuse en Égypt vers la fin du IVe siècle," *Recherches Augustiniennes et Patristiques* 34 (2005): 63–141.

[107] This understanding of "oil" is pretty common in Christian exegesis of Psalm 45. See the quotes from Basil and Cyril of Jerusalem above.

[108] For exchange see Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 51.

[109] Ibid., 87–88.

believing in two Gods.[110] In his defense, Theophilus points to the dual mention of God in Psalm 45:7-8. He asks, "Who is this God or what God is spoken of, O Jew? Certainly it was God the Father *speaking* of Christ his own son."[111] Theophilus, literally the lover of God, deploys Psalm 45 as a ready weapon against the Jew who impugns his monotheism. Theophilus, like Tertullian and others, further cites Psalm 45 as prophetic proof for Jesus' second coming.[112]

The combined evidence paints a clear historical portrait. Nearly every Christian intellectual would have read Psalm 45 as referring to the life, death or divinity of Jesus. He is the beautiful warrior, the God anointed above his companions. This interpretation would spread to non-elite Christians through the mechanisms of commentary, homily, and debate. Rabbinic Jews would most likely encounter the Christian reading through this final channel of transmission. These local encounters likely occurred in an urban context, presumably a market or other public space.

Abraham as Jewish Response to Jesus

How would an *actual* rabbinic Jew respond when approached with the assertion that this psalm refers to Jesus? For Palestinian rabbis the answer was simple: replace Jesus with Abraham. This section will examine the use of Abraham as a hermeneutical key. It will track the growth of a holistic reading of Psalm 45, and demonstrate its polemical potential. It will then trace one channel by which this rabbinic counter-reading could have reached a broader Jewish population, and conclude with one example which demonstrates that it did. For rabbis, the looming threat of Christology dissipates in the rays of genealogy. Jews do not need Jesus; they have Abraham.

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[110] See the opening of *The Dialogue of Athanasius and Zacchaeus* above, Ibid., 23. See also the opening of *Timothy and Aquilla* Ibid., 141. I

[111] Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 95.

[112] Ibid., 125. The beauty motif is important here as well. Ps 45 also appears in *Timothy and Aquilla*, where verse 17 is applied to Jesus' disciples. Ibid., 161.

Why build a holistic reading of this psalm around Abraham?[113] The textual and thematic similarities between Psalm 45:11, "Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house," and Genesis 12:1, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house," certainly help. They cannot, however, by themselves explain the attempt to connect multiple verses of the psalm – and eventually its entirety – to Abraham. Instead, we must also look to the role Abraham plays in Jewish anti-Christology. As Martha Himmelfarb recently argued, Abraham in Genesis Rabbah not only shares many of Jesus's qualities, but also fulfills many functions associated with Christ.[114]

More specifically, the tactic of replacing Jesus with Abraham proved useful in holistically counter-reading another text – Psalm 110. We will analyze this process in summary. As for Psalm 45, nearly every Christian exegete and homilist reads Psalm 110 Christologically, either applying its entirety to Christ, or reading Melchizedek's priesthood as prefiguring Jesus'.[115] It also appears as a mainstay in anti-Jewish polemic. Polemical texts almost invariably deploy Psalm 110 in discussions of priesthood.[116] Additionally, Egeria, a fourth-century Spanish pilgrim to Jerusalem, attests to this psalm's use in the liturgy of Jerusalemite Christians. The liturgical use of Psalm 110 is confirmed by the Old Armenian Lectionary, the best witness to the Old Jerusalem liturgy, the

[113] It must be recognized that not *every* psalm is subject to a determinable holistic reading.
[114] Martha Himmelfarb, "Abraham and the Messianism of Genesis Rabbah," in *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context*, ed. Sarit Kattan Gribetz et al., TSAJ 166 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 99–114. See also Ron Naiweld, "The Father of Man: Abraham as the Rabbinic Jesus," in *Reflections on Religious Individuality: Greco-Roman and Judaeo-Christian Texts and Practices*, ed. Jörg Rüpke and Wolfgang Spickermann, RVV 62 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 145–71.
[115] This prefiguring, of course, begins with Hebrews but is not limited to there. For a full discussion of the use of Psalm 110 in early Christian contexts see David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMs 18 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1973).
[116] In addition to the Justin and Origen, see the examples in all of the dialogue texts cited above. See Varner, *Ancient Jewish-Christian Dialogues*, 63–65, 125, 153, 167, 171. For Ephrem's use of Psalm 110 in anti-Jewish polemic, see Phil J. Botha, "The Exegesis and Polemical Use of Ps 110 by Ephrem the Syriac-Speaking Church Father," *Old Testament Essays* 27 (2014): 395–411.

earliest fully attested rite.[117] Given the importance and prominence of the psalm, it likely appeared in other liturgies as well. Through the mechanism of urban debate, both Jews and Christians would have knowledge of this broad Christological claim. The rabbis did not remain silent. They developed a counter-reading that swapped Abraham for Jesus.[118] Almost every verse is read in light of Abraham, with special attention lavished on proving that Jesus could not have been the recipient of Melchizedek's eternal priesthood since it had already been given to Abraham.[119] The second "Lord" in Psalm 110:1, "the Lord said to my Lord," was also understood as Abraham. When told to wear glasses that skewed scriptural reading towards Jesus, one rabbinic tactic was to replace its lenses. Those titled "Abraham" provided a rosier vista.

This set of lenses was also employed to counter-read Christian claims regarding Psalm 45. In particular, they became popular in Amoraic Palestine. At least five verses are refracted through the lens of Abraham within a relatively short period of time. These comments all appear – or are at least ultimately redacted together – in Genesis Rabbah. They may indicate both a relative date

[117] Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, 181, 191. According to the Old Armenian Lectionary, which records the Jerusalem Liturgy in the early fifth century, the entire Psalm 110 was said on Epiphany Day 1 (Jan 6), 3 (Jan 8) and 4 (Jan 9). It was also read on the Dormition of Theotokos (Aug 15th) and James and David day (Dec 25). This psalm really seems to be clustered at the turn of the year. The tenth century Constantinople Typhicon has Psalm 110 read on the Vigil of Christmas (Dec 24) and Nativity (Dec 25th). Parts are also read on the Saturday after the Nativity and on the sixth Tuesday of Lent. See http://www.lectionary.eu/thales-database/?lg=EN

[118] Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 6; Gen. Rab. 39:8; y. Tan. 1:1 63d; b. Sanh. 108a.

[119] See Lev. Rab. 25:6; Gen. Rab. 43:6; Gen. Rab. 43:8; Gen. Rab. 46:4-5; Gen. Rab. 55:6-7. The polemical tones in some of these midrashim were already noticed by Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 338–40. He argues that these midrashim attack Gnostics and Epistle to the Hebrews. This is unlikely. So is the opinion of Jackob J. Petuchowski, "The Controversial Figure Of Melchizedek," *HUCA* 28 (1957): 127–36. He argues the midrashim were anti-Hasmonean. See page 128 for a history of scholarly opinion until his time. Heinemann, *Aggadah and Its Development*, 98–102 adds a third option, calling the motif an anti–Samaritan polemic.. Fred Horton Jr., *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SNTSM 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 129. claims: "Certainly, any document which subordinates Melchizedek to Abraham in the way we find it done in the sources discussed here could be said to counter the thought of the church." For more recent affirmations see Burton L. Visotzky, "Anti-Christian Polemic in Leviticus Rabbah," in *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures*, WUNT 80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 97; Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 52–55. Perhaps most astounding recent claim is that of Jacobs, *The Midrashic Process*, 115. He argues that the midrash is a direct reaction to Paul's (sic) depiction of Melchizedek in Hebrews as the immaculate priest without genealogy.

and setting in which such interpretation became urgent. Indeed, the extant rabbinic evidence gives the impression that rabbis did not read Psalm 45 as Abraham[120] in the Tannaitic period[121] or outside of Palestine during the Amoraic period.[122] Could growing rabbinic urbanism and the increasing popularity of Psalm 45 among Christians account for this fact? Regardless, rabbinic interpretation of Psalm 45 in Genesis Rabbah is best read in light of and as a response to Christological claims.

The midrash that contains the loudest polemical notes counter-reads a detail that nearly all Christian exegetes agree on: the beautiful one of the Psalm 45:3 is Jesus. Genesis Rabbah 59:5 argues that Christians have the right idea, but the wrong man:

> [a] "You are more beautiful (*yafyafitah*) than the children of man"[123] (Ps 45:3a). You were made beautiful (*nityifitah*) by the ones on high, as it says: "Indeed, the angels (*er'elim*)[124] cry from the outside" (Isa 33:7). You were made beautiful in the lower realms, as it says: "As prince of God[125] you are among us" (Gen 23:6).
> [b] "Therefore God has blessed you" (Ps 45:3c). "Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (Gen 24:1).[126]

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[120] Only one midrash in Gen. Rab. 45:1 may indicate that Psalm 45 was tethered to Abraham's *life* in the Tannaitic period. After R. Simon b. Yoḥai interprets Hagar as Pharaoh's daughter, we get another midrash: "Even Abimelek when he saw the miracles that were done to Sarah in his house he took his daughter and gave her, as it says 'daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor' [these are the daughters of the kings] 'at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir' – this is Sarah." First, the midrash does not directly discuss Abraham. Second, I wonder if this midrash ought to also be attributed to R. Simon or rather a later editor who decided to build on R. Simon's motif, and thus exactly mirrored the language. For the literary context of the first and original R. Simon midrash see Joshua Levinson, "Literary Approaches to Midrash," in *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*, ed. Carol Bakhos, JSJSup 106 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 209–12.

[121] R. Judah in Mekh. R. Ishmael Shirata 4, for example, reads Psalm 45:4 as God's mighty manifestation during the splitting of the sea. Or, for example, in Mekh. R. Ishmael BaḤodesh 2, R. Eliezer uses Psalm 45:17 to prove that "every Israelite is destined to have as many children as there were persons who came out of Egypt." Sifre Deuteronomy 34, for example, employs Psalm 45:6 – amongst other verses – to highlight the prowess of an individual with honed Torah knowledge.

[122] B. Shab. 63a, where Psalm 45:5 is understood as the Torah warrior. See also b. Menaḥ. 88b. When R. Jeremiah answers R. Zereqa's question, the latter praises the former by applying Psalm 45:5 unto him. See also b. Qidd. 30a-b, which seems to parallel and slightly modify Sifre Deuteronomy 34.

[123] Translating as the midrash likely reads. Or, perhaps, "You are the most beautiful man." This distinction depends on how one reads the *mem*: comparative or partitive.

[124] Being read instead of *er'elam*, "their valiant ones."

[125] As opposed to NRSV: "mighty prince."

[126] Translating according to Genizah fragments as presented in Michael Sokoloff, ed., *Fragments of Genesis Rabbah from the Genizah* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1982), 143–44.I do so because it is the earliest witness, even if there are no significant manuscript variations. I am, however, writing out the verses completely.

In this section, an anonymous exegete unpacks Psalm 45:3 in light of Abraham. He interprets the first clause of our verse as the universal acknowledgement of Abraham's popularity, here conceptualized as beauty. By linking this verse with Isaiah 33:7 he argues that the angels "beautified" Abraham from on high. They cried out his greatness from "outside" this world. It is worth noting that Genesis Rabbah employs Isaiah 33:7 multiple times to discuss angelic shock and dismay at the Akedah.[127] Our anonymous exegete flips this motif on its head. The angelic cries of woe become shouts of acclamation. These get confirmed by those below. They "beautify" Abraham, thus declaring his glory, by calling him a prince of God "among us."[128]

With Abraham's greatness established, the exegete then turns his attention to the final clause of our verse, the most direct link between Psalm 45:3 and Genesis 24:1. Both contain the theme of God's blessing. In Psalm 45:3, the figure's beauty and grace causes God to bless him eternally. Mapped unto Genesis 24:1 the homily reads: Abraham, the beautiful figure, is now old. God has blessed him with everything.

This homily is best understood as Jewish anti-Christian polemic. While the most direct connection between our verses rests with the root *brk* (bless), our exegete is deeply interested in developing the concept of Abraham's universally declared beauty. At play is also the root *yfh,* not found in Genesis 24:1. In fact, the exegete employs a very rare valance of *yfh*.[129] Note as well that

[127] Gen. Rab. 56:5 and 65:10.

[128] Is it possible that the *elohim* here ought to be read in light of the second *elohim* of Psalm 45:8? That this may very well be the case see the very complicated manuscript tradition of Gen. Rab. 43:5, which cites Gen 23:6 and explains it with a line that says: "Be an *elohim* over us."

[129] Indeed, the whole scene of everyone beautifying or declaring Abraham's beauty is quite strange. The exegete also casts it in the *nitpʿael,* a verbal form of *yfh* attested only once more in rabbinic literature. This is b. Tan 23b, where clearly means "be made beautiful." It appears in the context of Hannah, the wife of a sage, who is being made beautiful and ugly on rabbinic command. It also appears in *piyyut*. Hebrew poetry is not a good gauge of standard Hebrew because of its highly creative nature with regards to playing around with Hebrew morphology. For the development of *nitpaʿel/hitpaʿel* in early poetry see Michael Rand, *Introduction to the Grammar of Hebrew Poetry in Byzantine Palestine*, Gorgias Dissertations 22 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2006), 208–13.

the exegete leaves the middle clause of the verse "grace is poured upon your lips" without interpretation.[130] This focus on Abraham's beauty means that more is at work than the literary affinity between Psam 45:3 and Genesis 24:1. It likely comes as a Jewish response to Christian interpreters of Psalm 45:3, who, as seen above, read the most beautiful of men invariably as Jesus. This beauty, further, manifests itself at his second coming, when the entire world will recognize him. For our exegete, universal and eternal beauty – and thus acknowledgment and praise – belongs to Abraham, not Jesus.[131]

Another comment in Genesis Rabbah focuses on Abraham's beauty and popularity. Its polemical tones, when interpreted in isolation, are harder to discern. R. Isaac in Genesis Rabbah 39:1 interprets Genesis 12:1: "And God said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house!'":

> [a] R. Isaac opened up: "Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house" (Ps 45:11).
> [b] R. Isaac said, it is like one who goes from place to place and sees a building aflame and says, let it be said that it is without a leader. The owner of the building comes forth and says I am the owner of the building!
> [c] So too Abraham said, let it be said that the world is without a ruler. God appears and said to him I am the leader, the ruler of everything!
> [d] "And the king will desire your beauty" (Ps 45:12a) – to make you beautiful in the world. "Since he is your Lord, bow to him" (Ps 45:12b) – "And God said to Abram, Go!"[132]

In this midrash, R. Isaac reads Psalm 45:11-12 in light of Abraham. He first creates a parable based on Psalm 45:11 to answer an age-old question: Why did God reveal himself to Abraham? The answer, for R. Isaac, rests with the "hearing" and "seeing" of Psalm 45. Abraham sees the world aflame, and questions the presence of its landlord. God, in turn, appears and responds to his claim.

[130] That this is a separate clause is seen in how this verse is treated elsewhere. See especially Tanḥ Lekh Lekha 18.
[131] I also wonder if perhaps our exegete is reading "prince of *elohim*" in Gen 23:5 not as a construct but as two independent nouns: "prince, *elohim*." This, in turn, would then establish the second *elohim* of Ps 45:8 as Abraham.
[132] Translating with text in Theodore-Albeck. No significant variations.

Abraham inclines his ears and obeys.[133] Likely operating in the background, but not explicitly treated in this midrash, are the verbal similarities between Genesis 12:1 and Psalm 45:11 discussed above.

R. Isaac continues by reading Psalm 45:12a in light of Abraham, highlighting the "beauty" motif. He begins by reformatting the king's desire. God does not covet Abraham's beauty for himself. Rather, he seeks to "make Abraham beautiful in the world."[134] Everyone ought to recognize and praise Abraham. Perhaps operating in the background is Genesis 12:2, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." Once again, the possible connection to a scriptural verse is not made explicit. Regardless, R. Isaac concludes by correlating Psalm 45:12b to Genesis 12:1: Abraham leaves upon God's request. After all, "he is your Lord."

In drawing these connections, R. Isaac further binds Psalm 45 to Abraham. What cultural work does this midrash perform? In light of historical context and the interest in the universal acknowledgment of Abraham's beauty, I suggest that R. Isaac's interpretation responds to Christian claims regarding Psalm 45.[135] Beauty does not signify Jesus's second coming, but rather the advent of Abraham into world history. Furthermore, R. Isaac undermines the reading of the feminine figure as the church and of the verse as a whole as the demand to forget one's past in order to become part of the community of Jesus. By inscribing Abraham into the psalm as its feminine figure, R. Isaac teaches that what was abandoned was not Jewish heritage, but an

[133] For an insightful analysis of this parable which does not focus on anti-Christian polemic see Paul Mandel, "The Call of Abraham: A Midrash Revisited," *Prooftexts* 14 (1994): 267–84. I am not convinced we can read the Tanḥuma parallel back into this passage. I nevertheless agree that the parable was likely not originally connected to the interpretation of Psalm 45. See 283-4 n.64.

[134] Compare this with what Jerome claims about the Jews, which we will discuss later on.

[135] Even if a midrash comes to solve something within its own internal logic it does not mean that it cannot perform other cultural functions as well. This is especially the case if a proper context can be demonstrated for it. See Bakhos, "Method(ological) Matters," 179–84.

idolatrous past.[136] The command to forget was not the end of Jewish destiny, but rather its beginning. At the very least, I argue that R. Isaac's interpretation would encourage contemporary Jews to imagine Psalm 45 in light of Abraham. It would give them a response to Christians who would claim that that Psalm 45 refers to Jesus in general, and that Psalm 45:11-12 means one must abandon their ancestral traditions in particular.

Genesis Rabbah 39:6 further connects Psalm 45 to Abraham. R. Azaria in the name of R. Aḥa interprets Psalm 45:8 in light of Abraham's dispute with God over the fate of Sodom.[137] He "interprets the verse as Abraham, our Father." The phrase, "You love righteousness (*tzedeq*) and hate wickedness," refers to Abraham and his demand for justice (*tzedeq*). Abraham seeks to right wrongs, and hates injustice, especially that perpetrated by God. In his interpretation, R. Levi imagines the same scene as R. Azaria – Abraham decrying God's injustice – and has God himself declare: "Abraham, 'you love justice and hate injustice, therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with oil of gladness beyond your companions' (Ps 45:8)." R. Levi has God inscribe Abraham's name into Psalm 45:8! His concern for Sodom is why God, *Abraham's* God, anoints him above his friends; namely, "From Noah until you there were ten generations, and I did not speak to any of them except for you." The anti-Christological potential of this comment is clear. It demonstrates that Abraham – not Jesus – was the anointed one exalted above his peers.[138]

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[136] This connection is made much more explicit in Tanḥuma Lekh Lekha 3, which directly connects "forget" to idolatry.

[137] Indeed, connecting part of our psalm to Abraham's advocacy for Sodom becomes a common interpretive strategy among later midrashim. Even earlier Ps 45 midrashim that do not contain it are read later in light of it. Tanḥuma Ḥayye Sarah 1, for example, rewrites Gen. Rab. 59:5 to have Abraham praised for his advocacy of Sodom. See also Tanḥuma Ki Tisa 17.

[138] Himmelfarb, "Abraham and the Messianism of Genesis Rabbah," 108 likewise suggests that this comment "undercuts the Christian reading of the passage." I disagree with Himmelfarb that R. Aḥa knew this claim from Hebrews. There is more evidence to suggest that he would have known it from the kinds of channels of transmission explored above.

Not every reading of Psalm 45 as Abraham was the result of polemic. As interpretive trends grow and develop they can shed the anxieties that brought them into existence in the first place. At the same time, however, we must remember that even these comments house latent polemical potential. Any remark that further embeds Abraham as the subject of Psalm 45 encourages embattled Jews to respond to Christological readings of that psalm by appealing to Abraham, their forefather.

Genesis Rabbah 34:6 is an example of such a reading.[139] It interprets Genesis 14:18, "And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High" in light of Psalm 43:13, "And the daughter of Tyre will seek your favor with gifts, the richest of people."[140] It first reanalyzes the word *tzur*. Instead of a place-name, Tyre, it is read as "oppression" (root: *tzrr*), rending the phrase: "daughter of oppression." It then applies this phrase to Abraham, since "he oppressed kings and they oppressed him." Once again, Abraham is cast as a feminine character. It then continues to read the second half of the verse as Abraham. The richest of the people is Melchizedek, who entreated Abraham with gifts of bread and wine. I detect no overt polemical notes in this midrash. What it does represent, however, is the growing trend of holistically interpreting the *entire* psalm in light of Abraham and his life. At the very least, any Christian challenger who would posit that Psalm 45 describes Jesus would be met with a firm Jewish retort that it refers to Abraham.

The reading of Psalm 45 as Abraham, and thus its anti-Christian polemical potential, endured through the end of Late Antiquity. Tanḥuma literature, for example, demonstrates the

[139] The passage previous to this may be of interest as well. Although not centered on Psalm 45, it ends with the gentiles setting up a stage and declaring Abraham to be king and God! There is significant manuscript variation on this point, however.
[140] Translating with text in Theodor-Albeck; no significant variation.

growth of this holistic reading. In addition to offering new methods and traditions for connecting Psalm 45 to Abraham,[141] it contains a line that reads: "About whom did the sons of Korah say this psalm? About Abraham."[142] By this point in time the holistic exegetical project was complete. Any Christian reading of Psalm 45 as Jesus could be met with a response that props Abraham up as the Jewish counter-Christ.[143]

While developed within the confines of rabbinic literature, the identification of Psalm 45 with Abraham could spread beyond the four walls of the academy. One node in such a network of transmission may be the liturgical poetry recited in the synagogue. In the first section of his poem on Genesis 12, Yannai writes about Abraham:[144]

> A lover from among the hated ones you acquired / he (i.e. Abraham) acquired created ones / you saw a light from among the dark ones / you tested the ways of his heart / indeed, you led him like an only daughter / and you drew him close like a little sister / you saw him pure among the polluted / you seduced him through sweet talk[145] / …[146] / you beautified him through the strength of your might[147] / for you joined … / therefore with a promise you said to him, "Go"! As it is written: "Now the Lord said to Abram, Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1); and

[141] See Tanḥ. Lekh Lekha 3; Lekh Lekha 18; Ḥayyei Sarah 1; Ki Tisa 17; VaYera 2. All of the traditions that read Psalm 45 as Abraham appear as unnamed tradents.

[142] Tanḥ. (ed. Buber) Lekh Lekha 22 = Tanḥ. Lekh Lekha 18. The locution "about whom did x say" is unique to our passage.

[143] It is worth noting that in at least one instance a Jew did not feel the need to replace a messianic figure with Abraham. The creator of Targum Psalm 45 unabashedly translates 45:3 as: "Your beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than the sons of men; the spirit of prophecy has been placed on your lips; because of this the Lord has blessed you forever." The translator continues to describe a warrior who has come "to kill Gentile hordes" (45:6), and will receive the submission of the nations "while the book of Torah is stationed at your right side, and written in gold from Ophir" (45:10). Ultimately, the renewed priesthood, "In their decorated garments they will offer their sacrifices before the king of the world, and the rest of their fellows who are scattered among the Gentiles will be brought in joy to you to Jerusalem" (45:15). In light of the evidence above, our translator likely knows about Christian interpretation of Psalm 45, at least in its broad contours, and decides to weave his own messianic fantasy. Translation by Edward Cook from http://targum.info/pss/ps2.htm**.** For an exploration of the crafting of this Targum see Timothy Edwards, *Exegesis in the Targum of Psalms: The Old, the New, and the Rewritten*, Gorgias Dissertations 28 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007), 185–92.

[144] Text from Zvi Meir Rabinovitz, *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai According to the Triennal Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1985), 121–22.

[145] Translating "speak to the heart of the girl" in according with a comment in Ibid., 1:121. See also Norman M. Bronznick, *The Liturgical Poetry of Yannai*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 2000), 25.

[146] Ellipses represent gaps in the text as given by Rabinowitz.

[147] I disagree with Bronznick, *Liturgical Poetry of Yannai*, 1:25, who reads this line as God making Abraham's strength great. I think we are referring to beauty. Further, "might" may actually refer to the heavenly host. This is likely the case if the same tradition operates here and in the Gen. Rab. passage discussed above.

> it says, "Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house" (Ps 45:11); and it says, "and the king will desire your beauty. Since he is your lord, bow to him" (Ps 45:12); and it says, "Draw me after you, let us make haste. The king has brought me into his chambers. We will exult and rejoice in you; we will extol your love more than wine; rightly do they love you" (Song 1:4); and it says, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Prov 3:6).

Like every liturgical poem, this composition is replete with reference and allusion. A full analysis of this text falls beyond the scope of this chapter.[148] Instead, I will focus on the connections the poet draws between Abraham and Psalm 45. The first, and most obvious, is the scriptural prooftexts cited: Genesis 12:1 and Psalm 45:11-12.[149] The extent to which listeners of liturgical poetry actually understood what they were hearing is the subject of fierce scholarly debate.[150] Even a minimalist would agree that an audience member with little knowledge of rabbinic lore or poor command of poetic Hebrew would recognize that Yannai reads Abraham of Genesis 12:1 in light of the daughter of Psalm 45:11-12. Yannai cites these three scriptural verses one after another. A more attentive and educated listener would, of course, gain more. If versed in rabbinic traditions, he would recognize and appreciate Yannai's manipulation of his source materials, among which are the midrashim discussed above. If attentive to poetics, he would begin to trace the allusive threads of this intricately woven poem. He would link the "daughter" of Psalm 45:11 to the line, "Indeed, you lead him like an only daughter." He would also see verbal allusions to Psalm 45:3-4, 11 in, "You beautified him through the strength of your might." Both highlight Abraham's beauty, and Psalm 45:4 draws on the image of power. If thinking thematically, he could connect "A lover"

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[148] For a fuller analysis see Rabinovitz, *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai According to the Triennal Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays*, 1:121–22; Lieber, *Yannai on Genesis*, 394–95, 412–14.

[149] It is worth noting that Yehudah also connects Psalm 45 to Abraham. His *magen piyyut* for Genesis 12:1 cites Psalm 45:11-12. His *magen piyyut* for Gen 24:1, "and Abraham was old" cites Psalm 45:3. For Yehduah in general see Wout Jac van Bekkum, *Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity: Liturgical Poems of Yehudah*, AGJU 43 (Leiden: Brill, 1998). On the potential relationship of Yehudah to Yannai see Ibid., xxi–xxii. For the argument that chains of verses cited by poets were actually part of set liturgy see Elizur, "The Chains."

[150] For the range of opinions see Wout Jac van Bekkum, "Hearing and Understanding Piyyut in the Liturgy of the Synagogue," *Zutot* 1 (2001): 58–63.

with the marriage motif present in the latter half of the psalm.[151] He would, throughout, recognize the binary game Yannai plays: Lover/Hated; Light/Dark; Pure/Polluted. The former characterizes Abraham, the latter his environment. Nothing is neutral, especially the Byzantine Christianity to which hate, darkness and pollution allude.[152] If they encountered the Christocentric reading of Psalm 45, Yannai's audience, rabbinically educated or not, would respond with one name: Abraham.

That the Jewish reading of Psalm 45 as Abraham had widespread appeal may be evidenced in Jerome's 65th letter, written to Principia, a female ascetic, in the year 397. She requests an edifying explanation of Psalm 45; he pens a verse-by-verse commentary.[153] The letter hits every major trope discussed above: Jesus as beautiful divine warrior, his second advent and forgetting past traditions.[154] It also mentions Jews. On verse 11, "Hear, O daughter, consider and incline your ear; forget your people and your father's house" Jerome claims: "We ask the Jews, who is this daughter, to whom God speaks." Jerome presents two Jewish options: 1) the Synagogue, and 2) Abraham. It cannot be the former since the Synagogue never left the Hebrew people and Abraham. It cannot be Abraham leaving the Chaldeans since: "Who is this king who will love the beauty of

[151] Of course this need not necessarily be the case. As Rabinowitz points out, Abraham as God's lover appears as early as Isaiah 41:8

[152] On Yannai's stark portrayal of Edom and Byzantine Christianity see Wout Jac van Bekkum, "The Hidden Reference: The Role of EDOM in Late Antique and Early Medieval Jewish Hymnography," in *Empsychoi Logoi - Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van Der Horst*, ed. Alberdina Houtman, Albert de Jong, and Magda Misset-van de Weg, AJEC 73 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 529–34; Joseph Yahalom, *Poetry and Society in Jewish Galilee of Late Antiquity* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999), 183–93; Lieber, *Yannai on Genesis*, 270–85. They do not discuss this particular poem.

[153] For the ascetic contexts of this letter see Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 133–34; Hunter, "The Virgin, the Bride, and the Church," 290–95.

[154] Translation of this letter by Joan Ferrante in http://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/425.html. I checked the translation against the Latin.

Abraham?"[155] Ultimately, Jerome concludes, the king that desires beauty is "not only king but lord and God, who must be adored."

Why raise and refute the reading of Psalm 45:11 as Abraham? As Elizabeth Clark notes, "Abraham's abandoning of his homeland (Gen 12:1) was a theme that, Jerome believed, offered counsel to Christian ascetics."[156] The motif of Abraham's egress as ascetic exhortation appears in his letters to Eustochium,[157] Paula[158] and Rusticus.[159] It also appears in his letter to Principia. Before his refutation of the Jews, a section of the letter that stands outside the flow of commentary, Jerome interprets "hear, O daughter" as: "When she has heard, seen, and inclined her ear and given herself over completely to the teaching and understanding of what was said, she will forget her first people *and coming out with Abraham from Chaldea*, leave the land of her birth and her kin" (italics mine). Why not complete the circle and read Psalm 45:11 as Abraham? Why not claim Christ is the king who loves the beauty of Abraham the ascetic? I suggest that Jerome actively rejects the reading of Psalm 45:11 as Abraham because he knows it is a mainstay of Jewish anti-Christian polemic.

A comparison of his 22nd letter to his 65th shows this to be the case. The 22nd letter was written to Eustochium in 384, while Jerome was in Rome. It begins by connecting Psalm 45:11 to Genesis 12:1. The soul must follow Abraham's example and leave Chaldea, which represents demonkind. Jerome neither fulminates against nor mentions a Jewish position. As noted above, Jerome wrote his 65th letter to Principia in the year 397. By then he had been living in Bethlehem for about five years. I suggest that in the intervening period, likely sometime between his move to Bethlehem in 393 and writing to Principia in 397, Jerome became aware of the Jewish reading of

[155] Note that the Jewish commentator could preempt or respond to this claim or similar one by stating that God does not want Abraham's beauty, rather he wants to show it to the world.
[156] Clark, *Reading Renunciation Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, 108.
[157] *Ep*. 22.1.
[158] *Ep*. 39.5.
[159] *Ep*. 125.20.

Psalm 45 as Abraham and felt a need to actively rebut it. To yield ground is to admit defeat. As Jerome noted less than a decade earlier in his letter to Sophronius, which we discussed at the beginning of this chapter: "It is one thing to read the Psalms in the churches of those believing in Christ, another thing to answer the Jews who accuse every word." If the Jewish answer to Jesus was Abraham; Jerome's answer to Abraham – at least for Psalm 45 – was Christ.

Conclusion

In this chapter we moved from piety to polemic. The psalm-suffused environment of Late Antiquity created an echo chamber of Jewish and Christian voices. These would almost inevitably combat and compete with one another. How, exactly, did this occur? Under what historical conditions did this take place? This chapter provides answers by paying attention to the role of channels of transmission in constructing Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction. It argues that networks of communication matter, and that we must examine literature and history in tandem.

The reception of Psalm 45 provided a suitable case-study. Throughout this chapter, I highlighted the fact that nearly every Christian exegete read Psalm 45 in light of Jesus' life, death or resurrection. This popular interpretive trend found a home in Christian anti-Jewish polemic. Debates – or any other scripturally informed public interaction – would include use of Psalm 45 as a textual cudgel. Rabbinic Jews did not remain silent. An interpretive trend that begins in Amoraic Palestine and grows throughout Late Antiquity holistically reads the entirety of Psalm 45 as pertaining to the life of Abraham. Some of these comments have overt polemical valences. Others simply affirm that the psalm refers to Abraham. In total, they present a rabbinic response to a Christocentric reading of Psalm 45. Rabbis responded with Abraham when faced with Jesus, and perhaps Jews not affiliated with the rabbinic movement did as well.

Ultimately, my exploration of Jewish and Christian interpretation of Psalm 45 not only illumines an important piece of cultural and exegetical history, but I also hope provides a model for future comparative work. I thus conclude with four observations that extend beyond the confines of Psalm 45. First, scholars can build more plausible cases of Jewish and Christian exegetical interaction by focusing on the popularity and pervasiveness of an *exegetical trend* as opposed to one very specific motif or piece of interpretation. Second, any literary connection must be set into historical context, one that demonstrates the likelihood of a Jew encountering a Christian claim. Third, perhaps particular to the book of Psalms, we must also focus on units of texts larger than a single verse. As seen above, a whole psalm could be a carrier of a particular historically and geographically contingent meaning. Fourth, not all instances of exegetical interaction are polemical, a contact-point of active tension and aggression. Jews and Christians did not exchange only warring words. Some scripturally based interactions were irenic and inquisitive. It is to such an example we now turn.

Chapter 7: Reading Irenically, Psalm 1 Between Babylonian Jews and East Syrian Christians

PSAL. I. Done into Verse, 1653.

Bless'd is the man who hath not walk'd astray
In counsel of the wicked, and ith' way
Of sinners hath not stood, and in the seat
Of scorners hath not sat. But in the great
Jehovahs Law is ever his delight, [5]
And in his Law he studies day and night.
He shall be as a tree which planted grows
By watry streams, and in his season knows
To yield his fruit, and his leaf shall not fall,
And what he takes in hand shall prosper all. [10]
Not so the wicked, but as chaff which fann'd
The wind drives, so the wicked shall not stand
In judgment, or abide their tryal then,
Nor sinners in th' assembly of just men.
For the Lord knows th' upright way of the just, [15]
And the way of bad men to ruine must.

- *John Milton*[1]

Sometime between the years 1004 and 1038, R. Hai Gaon, the leader of a prestigious Jewish academy in Baghdad, was mulling over Psalm 141:5 with difficulty. He could not understand 141:5b: *"shemen ro'sh al yani ro'shi*." (lit. "let not my head refuse choice oil" – reading *ro'sh* as best of quality.) What does choice oil have to do with 141:5c: "For my prayer is still because of their wickedness"? Instead of glossing over this line, he sent his student – R. Matzliaḥ Even Albatekh of Sicily - to inquire of the Catholicos what his text read. The Catholicos gave R. Matzliaḥ the reading from his Syriac Psalter: "Let the oil of sinners not anoint my head" (originally reading *ro'sh* as *rasha* – wicked person). The verse now made sense: "Let the righteous man smite

[1] https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/psalms/psalm_1/text.shtml

me with kindness, and rebuke me / [but] let not the oil of the wicked anoint my head/ because still, through my prayers are because of their wickedness."[2]

Alone, the previous chapter may give the impression that the relationship between Jewish and Christian exegetes was entirely characterized by warring words. While hostilities and tensions do appear prominently in the landscape of Jewish-Christian interaction in Late Antiquity, these instances cast a much too large a shadow, whose penumbra obscures the benign and informative discussions that the story of R. Hai and the Catholicos exemplify. Even Jerome, the crafter of polemical weapons, studied with Jews and sought their aid.[3]

This chapter will shed light upon non-polemical interaction and further develop the comparative methodology employed in the previous chapter. It will do so by detailing the reception of Psalm 1 in b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b, in the psalm commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia, and among East Syrian Christians. Previous scholarship on the rabbinic reception of Psalm 1 either ignored b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b completely[4] or treated it summarily.[5] The exception is an insightful study by Marc Hirshman, whose work informs my own.[6] To my knowledge, however, no study

[2] For the story and further references see Aharon Maman, "The Remnants of R. Hai Gaon's Dictionary 'Kitāb Al-Ḥāwi' in the Adler and Taylor-Schechter Geniza Collections," *Tarbiz* 69 (2000): 345; Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 301.

[3] See previous chapter as well as Hillel Newman, "Jerome and the Jews" (Hebrew University, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1994).

[4] Susan E. Gillingham, "An Introduction to Reception History with particular reference to Psalm 1," *Revue des sciences religieuses*.85 (2011): 571–599; Susan E. Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms: The Reception of Psalms 1 and 2 in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[5] Johann Maier, "Psalm 1 im Licht antiker jüdisher Zeugnisse," in *Studien zur jüdischen Bibel und ihrer Geschichte*, SJ 28 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 372–73.

[6] Marc G. Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture, 100 C.E.-350 C.E.: Texts on Education and Their Late Antique Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 65–82. In his study, Hirshman notes the overall composition of this sugya as a mini-tractate about Torah study and points out several of its important literary features. For the most part, however, our treatments of the sugya do not overlap. Furthermore, unlike Hirshman, my gaze is firmly fixed on this sugya as a commentary on Psalm 1. Additionally, Hirshman contextualizes parts of this sugya in light of Greco-Roman sources. While informative, I believe the sugya is better examined in light of contemporary Christian claims about Psalm 1. Ultimately, our studies are complementary.

has attempted to analyze the sugya as a redacted whole and then to read its engagement with Psalm 1 in light of the psalm interpretation produced by neighboring Syriac-speaking Christians.

Due to its length, I will not produce a line-by-line commentary on b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b in the pages below. Instead, I will proceed as follows: First, I will succinctly examine the place of Psalm 1 in late antique Jewish and Christian exegesis. Then I will provide an outline of the entire sugya, which will demonstrate that the sugya functions as a thematically consistent commentary on Psalm 1:1-3 that attempts to read Psalm 1 as a guidebook for the production of a rabbinic sage. It makes Psalm 1 answer questions such as: How does one become a sage? What must one avoid? What does rabbinic education look like? I will then ask why our redactors chose to develop this lengthy and unusual sugya by comparing it to its parallel in the Palestinian Talmud and the interpretation of Psalm 1 in Midrash Psalms. I will argue that the sugya makes the most sense in light of a widespread East Syrian Christian interpretation of Psalm 1 that reads it as a psalm about the scholastic study of the Law. I will discuss the place of the book of Psalms in Syriac Christianity in general, psalm education in East Syrian sources and then focus on Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on Psalm 1. Ultimately, I suggest that the unique sugya in b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b was either created or read as a response to the claims about Psalm 1:1-3 made in an East Syrian environment.

In addition to providing a case-study of Jewish-Christian scriptural interaction, this chapter advocates several methodological points. It argues that one could productively look for Jewish-Christian engagement not only in select sources or stories, but also in large redacted units, such as a full sugya.[7] Furthermore, it seeks to read this contact within one of the redactors' immediate

[7] The approach that analyzes motifs and stories, of course, has yielded good results. See, for example, Holger M. Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature*, TSAJ 139 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 137–66; Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). For a recent summary of major

cultural contexts, East Syrian Christianity. It will argue that while the seeds of a particular reading strategy may grow through a logic internal to a particular tradition, the choice to develop a particular reading as well as its implications are best understood comparatively.[8] Additionally, this chapter, as in the one previous, highlights the issue of plausible channels of transmission. Finally, it suggests that Jewish and Christian exegetes interacted not only within the framework of polemic. The story of R. Hai and the Catholicos was likely one of many such irenic encounters.

The Place of Psalm 1 in Jewish and Christian Late Antiquity

The choice to read Psalm 1 as a compact guide on the crafting of the ideal individual who studies Torah and avoids evil seems self-evident. The psalm itself praises those who do not associate with wicked men (verse 1) and instead study Torah (verse 2). At the same time, we must always remember that our reading assumptions were not necessarily shared by late antique interpreters. What seems obvious and literal to us may be only one of many interpretive possibilities for the late ancient reader; it may not even have been a possibility at all. We must allow actual late antique readers to guide our path in determining the meaning of a text at that particular moment in time. In this section, I will briefly explore how late antique Jewish and Christian readers of Psalm 1 understood it. For Jews I will focus on rabbinic literature. For Christians I will focus on Jerome, Origen and Theodore of Mopsuestia. The former two provide a clear window into the interpretive trends that Palestinian Jews may have encountered and the

scholarship and state of the field see Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1–35.

[8] As such, I am attempting to articulate a position that mediates between the "smoking gun"/literary parallel approach, and one that simply assumes a Christian comparative context. For an example of the former, see the insightful studies in Burton L. Visotzky, *Fathers of the World: Essays in Rabbinic and Patristic Literatures*, WUNT 80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995). For an example of the latter see Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

latterm as I will demonstrate in detail below, offers a vista into the kinds of Christian claims that could be known to Babylonian Jews.

As will be evident from the outline of the sugya below, rabbinic Jews in both late antique Babylonia and Palestine read verses from Psalm 1 within the context of unpacking the mechanics Torah study (vv. 2-4) or highlighting the proper moral constitution of a righteous individual (v. 1). Within late antique rabbinic literature, such a hermeneutic, although with varying nuances, also exists outside this sugya. Numerous traditions connect Psalm 1 with Torah study and its mechanics. M. Avot 3:2 calls any assembly that lacks the exchange of Torah a "seating of scoffers" (Ps 1:1); b. Qidd. 32b cites Rava, who accepts the possibility of a Torah scholar relinquishing his honor, and thus the honor of Torah, through a reading of Psalm 1:2; and b. Suk. 21b reads Psalm 1:3 to note that even the mundane conversations of Torah scholars deserve study. Other rabbinic traditions use Psalm 1 to highlight the mechanics and rewards of good ethics. Y. Qidd. 1:10 61d cites a tradition in the name of R. Yosi b. Bun who interprets Psalm 1:1 as saying: "Since he did not go in the council of the wicked, it is as if he went in the council of the righteous," and b. Qidd 40b-41a cites Bar Kappara, who explicitly combines Torah with ethics and reads Psalm 1:1 as advice to avoid benefiting from one who has neither *miqra* nor *Mishnah* nor *derekh eretz*. It is worth noting that none of these traditions is cited in the lengthy commentary of Psalm 1:1-3 in b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b.

A Torah or ethic-centered hermeneutic was not the only tool used to unpack Psalm 1. Y. Ber 1:1 4c reads the tree in Psalm 1:3 as the tree of life, and attempts to measure its dimensions.[9] B. B. Qam. 82a and b. Ketub. 62b praiss those who procreate on Friday night as fulfilling Psalm

[9] Some Christians do too, such as Jerome in his homilies. See Jerome, *The Homilies of Saint Jerome: Volume 1 (1-59 On the Psalms)*, trans. Marie Liguori Ewald, The Fathers of the Church 48 (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America, 2001), 7.

1:3. Lev. Rab. 11:7 employs Psalm 1:3 as a prooftext in a conversation about God's emotions. More importantly, the only other places in late antique rabbinic literature that offer a sustained interpretation of large portions of Psalm 1 do not adopt the sage and mechanics of Torah study as the key to unlocking each and every verse. Gen. Rab. 26:1 reads Psalm 1:1-3 in light of the life of Noah, and Gen. Rab. 61:1 reads Psalm 1:1-3 in light of Abraham. Thus, a Torah-based hermeneutic in late antique rabbinic reading is present, but not understood as necessary.

B. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b is the only sustained reading of large sections of Psalm 1 in light of Torah study in rabbinic literature. Like any lengthy portion of the Babylonian Talmud, it is composed of many smaller and often independent units.[10] These units attest to the caché of a Torah-based hermeneutic in reading select parts of Psalm 1 before the creation of this sugya. Even so, it is worth understanding and analyzing this sugya as a whole. For starters, the sugya itself demonstrates its unity by organizing earlier traditions and perhaps even redacted units into the framework of a lemmatic commentary on Psalm 1:1-3. In my analysis below, I will highlight additional traces left by the redactor and also explore how a final redactor or reader would have understood earlier traditions as a commentary on Psalm 1. Additionally, as scholars of the Talmud have long noted, one can detect in some sugyot thematic coherence and sometimes a unified argument beyond the fissures produced by the redaction of independent traditions.[11] B. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b provides not only a unifying framework – a lemmatic commentary – but also a coherent thematic program, namely, an analysis of the reasons, mechanics and rewards of Torah study.

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[10] In addition to drawing from and re-working many earlier sugyot from elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud, b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b contains numerous variations and other manuscript issues. In some ways, it matches a few of Shamma Friedman's criteria for determining whether a sugya is a late creation. See Shamma Friedman, *Topics in the Study of the Babylonian Talmud: A Collection of Studies on the Topics of Structure, Redaction and Versions* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2010), 22–26. I will not argue here, however, about the literary history of this sugya and its relationship to other sugyot.

[11] For this methodology with regards to the coherence of long talmudic stories see Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

In light of the fact that a lengthy, distinctive, thematically and formally coherent sugya that reads Psalm 1:1-3 as Torah study exists only in the Babylonian Talmud it is fair to ask two questions: Why craft this long sugya in the first place? What function could this sugya have for its Babylonian readers? Below I will argue that this sugya responds or reacts to a well-entrenched East Syrian Christian reading of Psalm 1 as the formation of an ethical Christian who is involved in scholastic study of the Bible. I establish this East Syrian reading by focusing the Psalm commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodore's reception in East Syrian Christianity. Let me make two methodological points clear. First, I am not searching for a smoking gun. I will not argue that the sugya influenced Theodore or that the rabbis had direct knowledge of Theodore's commentary. Rather, Theodore's word was law among East Syiran Christians. His understanding of Psalm 1 was both authoritative and unavoidable in the most immediate cultural context of the Babylonian rabbis. I suggest that the unique sugya in b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b was either created or read as a response to this environment.

Second, while a reading of Psalm 1 as the formation of an ethical Christian who studies and responsibly interprets the Bible within the context of a scholastic culture may seem entirely evident to a modern reader, it is simply not the way that many late antique Christians understood the psalm. In fact, Theodore is distinctive among Christian interpreters in offering a reading of the psalm that 1) focuses on *study of the Law* (as opposed to practice or study of natural law) and 2) does not tether the psalm to a particular historical individual (whether Jesus or an earlier figure). Both of these features are also present in the Babylonian Talmud sugya. Space does not allow for a full reception history of Psalm 1 among early Christians. As a point of comparison, I will quickly examine a key feature in the reading of Psalm 1 by Origen and Jerome – Christians whose claims about Psalm 1 would have been the most readily accessible to rabbis – that set them apart from

both the Babylonian Talmud sugya and Theodore. As I will examine below, Theodore emphasizes the role of *study* in conjunction with ethics in his reading of Psalm 1. Origen and Jerome, in contrast, reject a scholastic reading of the psalm that champions study and instead read Psalm 1:2 as practice. Origen claims that the blessed person does not merely meditate on the law and store it in his memory (as the sugya instructs) but is "one who by meditating performs works consistent with it."[12] Jerome also champions a reading of Psalm 1 that highlights practice at the expense of study, and goes a step further than Origen by actively invoking Jews as emblems of study. He claims, "Meditation of the law does not consist in reading, but in doing … the Jews, indeed, study with the lips but our study is work."[13] Jerome affirms this action-oriented reading of Psalm 1 in his 127th letter. After citing Psalm 1:2, he lauds Marcella by saying: "This meditation in the law she understood not as a review of the written words as among the Jews the Pharisees think, but of action…."[14] Christians under the influence of Origen and Jerome would read Psalm 1 in a way sufficiently distinct from both the Babylonian Talmud sugya and Theodore of Mopsuesita. Noteworthy as well is the fact that Origen and Jerome both read the figure of Jesus into Psalm 1. Theodore reads neither Jesus nor any other historical figure into the psalm. His interpretation, unlike his contemporaries and predecessors, is not driven by character-analysis.

Theodore is not only distinctive in focus on study, but also in the object of that study: the Law. While many Christian interpreters, such as Jerome and Origen, understood "the Law" as the Bible, it is not obvious that the same would be true for Theodore. As is well-known, Theodore's psalm commentary follows and draws heavily upon that of his teacher, Diodore of Tarsus. In many

[12] PG 12:1088. Translation from Craig A. Blaising and Carmen Hardin, eds., *Psalms 1-50*, Ancient Christian commentary on Scripture. Old Testament 7 (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 2008), 6.
[13] Jerome, *Homilies on Psalms*, 6. Ewald translates *meditatio* as prayer. The word, as Moulie Vidas has rightly pointed out, can mean study practices, which is a better translation given the context of the passage. See Moulie Vidas, *The Emergence of Talmudic Culture*, forthcoming (chapter 9). I found Jerome's letter through Vidas, as well.
[14] NPNF^2 6:254.

places, Theodore merely parrots and expands Diodore.[15] In light of this fact, it is important that Diodore of Tarsus begins his exposition on Psalm 1 by skipping to verse 2 and explaining that "Law" here means natural law, the law "by which we distinguish what is bad and what is good."[16] Theodore, as we will see below, clearly understands law as Scripture and seeks to place the moral Christian's formation in "the industrious study of the yoke of the law." This line would form the core understanding of Psalm 1 in the culture of East Syrian Christians, a reading similar to the thematically distinctive Babylonian Talmud sugya and different from those of Christians in Palestine influenced by Jerome and Origen.

Outline of b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b[17]

A full analysis of b. Avod Zar. 18b-19b and its structural components would be a chapter in its own right. As I am interested in demonstrating the formal and thematic coherence of this large sugya in its final redaction, I offer an outline that highlights its structure as a lemmatic commentary and its content as the mechanics of Torah study. Below I will analyze several instances in which a redactor made his hand felt and explore how a reader or redactor interested in understanding earlier traditions in light of a psalm commentary would have done so.

In the outline below, indentations are used to signal the flow of argument. Bolded portions indicate new sections. A single underline signals scriptural quotations of Proverbs and psalms

[15] Robert C. Hill, "His Master's Voice: Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Psalms," *Heythrop Journal* 45 (2004): 42–45.
[16] Everett Ferguson, ed., *Diodore of Tarsus: Commentary on Psalms 1-51*, trans. Robert C. Hill, WGRW 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 5.
[17] For Hirshman's outline see Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 67–71. He seems to skip over the *letz* subsection and treats the Rava subsection as the core of the *sugya*. My outline is more detailed and focused on use of Scripture. Further, his suggestion of a chiasm on pg. 68 skips more sources than a tight chiasm would really allow for. For starters, it omits the true opening of the sugya and the connection between b and b' is exceptionally weak. This sugya contains aspects of literary artistry, but not in the form of a chiasm.

other than Psalm 1, and a double underline indicate places that our sugya connects with other rabbinic sources. Bold plus italics call attention to literary artistry on the part of the redactor.

18b

Part 1: Exposition on Tosefta Avodah Zarah 2:5-7

Citation of t. Avod. Zar. 2:6, contains quotation of Psalm 1:1

Internal contradiction through t. Avod. Zar.2:7 claimed and solved

Stammaitic interjection on previous interpretation

Solved with Tannaitic Statement which employs *moshav letzim* and is similar to t. Avod. Zar. 2:7

Citation of t. Avod. Zar. 2:5, *moshav letzim*

Stammaitic question: What's between these two options?

Answer with a line from R. Ḥannina drawn from b. Avod. Zar. 7b

Part 2: Line-by-Line Commentary on Psalm 1

Verse 1 (+ verse 2)

R. Simon b. Pazzi on causality in verse 1. Intertextuality with Proverbs 9:12

Letz Subsection – Compilation of various homilies on Letz, due to Psalm 1:1:

R. Elazar scoffing leads to affliction, ***Isaiah 28:22***

Warning of Rava to Rabbis not to scoff because it leads to affliction

R. Katina – scoffing leads to reduction of food, Hosea 7:5

Resh Laqish – anyone who scoffs falls into hell, Proverbs 21:24 + Zephaniah 1:15 – from B. Bava Batra 10b

R. Hoshiya – anyone who is haughty falls into hell, Proverbs 21:24 + Zephaniah 1:15 – from B. Bava Batra 10b (in Ms Munich, added in Ms Paris, absent in Ms JTS)

R. Tanḥum b. Ḥanilai – scoffers cause destruction, ***Isaiah 28:22***

R. Shimon b. Pazzi (or Azzai) verse 1 related to going to various forms of gentile entertainment

Perhaps one should sleep? No! Psalm 1:2: learn Torah

19a

R. Samuel b. Naḥmani in name of R. Yoḥanan – verse 1 refers to Abraham's encounters with generation of dispersion (Gen 11:3), Sodom (13:13), and Philistines (Judges 16: 25) (cf. Genesis Rabbah 61:1)

Verse 2: Lemmatic Citation, "For the Law of the Lord is his delight"

Story of Levi and R. Simon studying with Rabbi – Psalms or Proverbs? Rabbi interprets v.2 of Psalm 1 and Levi leaves

R. Avdimi b. Ḥama –anyone who engages with Torah, God will do his will.

Rava Subsection based on Psalm 1:2 but drawing from and potentially interacting with numerous other sugyot

Rava – a person should learn with desire, Psalm 1:2

Rava – at first the Torah is called God's and then it is his, Psalm 1:2, cf**.** B. Qidd. 32a-b

Rava – First learn Torah and then murmur (*hgh*), Psalm 1:2, cf. b. Ber. 63b (only in Ms Paris)

Rava – learn and repeat even if he does not know, Psalm 119:20

Rava – a person should learn and then explain (*sbr*), Psalm 1:2 (only in Ms Munich)

Rava – solving contradiction between Proverbs 9:3 and 9:14, cf. b. Sanh. 38a (only in Ms Munich)

Rava – Solving internal contradiction in Proverbs 8:2

Ulla – Solving contradiction in Proverbs 5:15, cf. Sifre Dueteronomy 48, 306

Rava in name of R. Sahurah in name of R. Huna – interpreting Proverbs 13:11 in terms of Torah study: a person should gather Torah not make them bundles. cf. b. 'Eruv 54b until next Psalm lemma, except re-ordered

Rava – Rabbis knew this and did not do it.

R. Naḥman – I did it and it worked

Interpreting Proverbs 12:27 – Length of days and the trapper (cf. Genesis Rabbah 67:2)

R. Shezbi in name of R. Elazar b. Azariyah – trickster hunter will not live

R. Sheshet – the sly hunter will live long

R. Dimi – Parable to one who captures birds and first breaks their wings.

Verse 3a: Lemmatic Citation, "and he will be like a tree planted by streams of water"

House of Yannai – transplanted; if you learn with one rabbi alone it is not a good sign

R. Ḥisda to Rabbis- You cannot learn from one rabbi alone; they abandon him and go to

Rava, who says this is for *sevarah*, but for *gemara* one is better so you do not mess up language

19b

Verse 3b: Lemmatic Citation, "by streams of water" (*plg*)

R. Tanḥum b. Ḥanilai – a person should divide his days into 3rd for Torah study, cf. b. Qidd. 30a

Verse 3c: Lemmatic Citation, "Whose leaves do not whither" (+ v4)

Rava: If it gives fruit in its time its leaves will not whither, if not student and teacher are to blame. And on them it says Psalm 1:4 (this statement then gets explained by):

R. Abba in name of R. Huna (in name of Rav) – Proverbs 7:26 as when to teach and when not to teach; cf. b. Soṭah 22a**,** Proverbs verse used similarly in Sifre Deuteronomy 306

R. Ada b. Abba in name of R. Ḥamnunah in name of Rav – even plain speech of sages needs study as proven from our verse; cf. b. Sukk. 21b

Verse 3d: Lemmatic Citation, "and everything he does will be successful"
R. Joshua b. Levi - anyone who studies Torah his property will be successful.
Three-fold interpretive string employing Deuteronomy 29:8; Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2-3

Concluding Story
Story Involving R. Alexandri asking who wants life and pointing to Psalm 34:13 ***Perhaps one should sleep? No!*** Psalm 34:15- do good cf. Leviticus Rabbah 16:2
What is good if not Torah based on Proverbs 4:2**;** cf. b. Ber. 5a, 48b; b. Menaḥ. 53b.

Creating a Commentary on Psalm 1: Some Overt Traces of a Redactor

The first overt mark of redaction is the structure of the sugya itself. As the outline above demonstrates, b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b is complicated but well-organized. It begins with an exposition of t. Avod. Zar. 2:5-7, which includes a citation of Psalm 1:1, and then uses it as a platform for presenting a lemmatic commentary on Psalm 1:1-3 organized by verse or stich of a verse. Under each lemma is a comment, or multiple traditions, that connects the lemma to ethics or Torah study. For example: scoffers scoff at themselves (v. 1); a person can only learn what his heart desires (v. 2); do not learn from only one teacher (v. 3a); a person should divide his days into thirds (v. 3b); one who studies Torah will be successful (v. 3b). The sugya concludes with a story that once again highlights the indelible connection between ethics and Torah study. Overall, the sugya reads Psalm 1:1-3 as a mini-manifesto on the mechanics of Torah study and the formation of the student of a sage. The key, to adopt Theodore's language, is the industrious study of the yoke of the law.

The hands of a redactor are felt not merely in the organization of this cohesive sugya, but also in a distinctive feature embedded within it. This sugya contains an envelope, a literary feature in which a segment of near-verbatim text appears at the beginning and end of a large section,

highlighting its unity. In the outline above it is represented by the bold italics. The envelope opens in the middle of the Psalm 1:1 lemma and closes at the end of the sugya. This envelope does more than knit the sugya more tightly. It offers us some insight into the intentions of the redactor, especially as the envelope does not begin in its most expected place: at the opening of the sugya. I argue that the opening and concluding parts of the envelope transform an exegetical tradition that need not be about Torah study into one that necessarily talks about Torah study.[18] This move further highlights the overarching goal of the sugya: to read psalms (and by extension the other passages in the sugya) as a guide to industrious Torah study. Ethics and Torah study must exist in connection.

The opening of the envelope, section [b] below, appears attached to a homily cited in the name of R. Simon b. Pazzi:[19]

> [a] R Simon b. Pazzi said: What does it mean: "Fortunate is the man who has not walked in the advice of the wicked" (Ps 1:1a)? Happy is he who does not go into the theaters and circuses of the non-Jews. "Who does not stand in the path of sinners" (Ps 1:1b): This is one who does not stand in contests with wild beasts. "Who does not sit in the seating of scoffers" (Psalm 1:1c): Who does not sit in (bad) company (or bad thought?).[20]
>
> [b] And perhaps a person would say since I am neither going to theaters or circuses, nor am I standing with (bad) company I will go and engage in sleep? Thus we learn: "But rather the Law of the Lord is his delight" (Ps 1:2).

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[18] The envelope is also noted by Ibid., 67, who also notes that highlights that one must be active. I think more is going on than merely being active. Ethics cannot be divorced from Torah study.

[19] Reading with Ms Paris. Only Ms Paris reads בן פזי; Ms Munich and Ms JTS read בן עזאי. The Shoken Genizah fragment begins with: סימן זר"ק קש"ת סימ"ן פז"י עז"י ונחמנ"י מאח"ר תחבולו"ת אברה"ם, which suggests that it also reads עזי. The actual tradent does not matter for my purposes.

[20] The word תחבולה in this sense appears to be rare in rabbinic literature. According to Maʿagarim, the only other time תחבולה in either singular or plural appears is in Mekh. R. Ishmael VaYissa 1 and in a *siman* found in the Yad Hertzog manuscript version of b. Sanh. 43b. The תחבולה in the Mekhilta passage appears in close proximity to לץ. It is clear that תחבולה can mean either thought or bundle. Perhaps the word was used intentionally to convey both the group and the activity of scoffing. On the problematic nature of תחבולות and the suggestion that it means something like: "devious and harassing thoughts for the purpose of increasing politics and argument," see Samuel Krauss, *Persia and Rome in the Talmud and Midrash* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 1947), 285. Jastrow cites only this sugya for the meaning of תחבולה as bad council.

R. Simon adopts Psalm 1:1 to implore rabbinic Jews to avoid Roman spaces. In this homily, each clause of Psalm 1:1 relates to a different activity. The first two exhortations – to avoid theaters and wild beasts – are decidedly anti-Roman. The final one, not to "sit in bad company," offers a more generalized warning.[21] On its own, the passage employs Psalm 1:1 to mark the boundaries between rabbis and Romans, a use of Psalm 1:1 for which the groundwork was already laid by t. Avod. Zar. 2:6, which forms the opening of Part 1 of the sugya. From the perspective of the final redactor, R. Simon's homily shows that Psalm 1 – the crafting of a rabbinic sage – begins with the advice to avoid any form of moral turpitude.

The hands of the redactor are seen directly in section [b] of the homily. He builds upon R. Simon's logic by asserting that one must not only avoid circuses, theaters and bad company, but also actively engage in Torah study. In adopting and reframing R. Simon's words, the redactor brings R. Simon's homily – which deals only with good ethics – into the orbit of Torah study. Good ethics requires Torah study.

Perhaps the redactor developed his logic from t. Avod. Zar. 2:6, which R. Simon's reading clearly follows. The Tosefta concludes that attending non-sacrificial Roman games leads to *biṭṭul Torah* (lit. nullification of the Torah). The redactor may have flipped the rhetoric of the Tosefta on its head and turned the negative rhetoric of the Tosefta's interpretation of Psalm 1:1-2 as *biṭṭul Torah* into a positive prescription to study Torah. In fact, the parallel between section [b] and the Tosefta was so strong that the scribe of Ms Munich added the last section of the Tosefta to this homily. After quoting Psalm 1:2, the scribe writes: "This teaches you that these words bring a

[21] See also b. Qidd. 40b-41a, where we get this move as well. It is sharper here, however, since it follows the use of Psalm 1 in t. Avod. Zar. 2:5-6. On the place of idols in the reality and rhetoric of the Babylonian rabbis see Richard L. Kalmin, *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 103–20.

person to nullification [of the Torah]."[22] This is absent from the other witnesses and is probably secondary

Regardless, the logic that avoiding evil must be accompanied by Torah study in order to be effective is distinctive to the sugya's redactor, who wishes to view Psalm 1:1-3 as a guide to Torah study and the creation of a sage. He would clearly disagree with the logic of m. Mak. 3:16: "Behold, anyone who sits and does not transgress he receives reward as if he did a commandment."[23] More importantly, he would dispute the interpretation of Psalm 1:1 offered in y. Qidd. 1:10 61d by R. Yosi b. Bun: "What does it mean when it says: 'Fortunate is the man who does not go in the council of the wicked' (Psalm 1:1)? Since he did not go in the council of the wicked, it is as if he went in the council of the righteous." R. Yosi's interpretation demonstrates that the argument of the redactor is not necessary and must be viewed within the context of his larger aims. Unlike the redactor, some rabbis considered inaction righteous, and at least one used Psalm 1:1 to prove it.

The clearest evidence that section [b] above is the work of a redactor and that it is the opening of an envelope appears in the final lines of the sugya:[24]

> (Aramaic) R. Alexandri announced: "Who wants life? who wants life?"[25] The entire world gathered and came to him[26] and said to him: "Give us life!" He said to them, "Whoever desires life, loves his days that he may see good in them, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it" (Ps 34:13-15).
>
> (Hebrew) Perhaps a person will say, "I guarded my tongue from bad and lips from speaking deceit, let me go and engage in sleep?" Thus we learn: "Turn from evil and do good" (Ps

[22] הא למדת שדברי' הללו מביאין את האד' לידי בטול

[23] The parallel to Makkot is noted in Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 152 n.5.

[24] Reading with Ms Paris, but quoting verse in full.

[25] Ms Munich adds: בגוף, physical life.

[26] This action is expressed differently in the manuscripts but to similar effect. Ms JTS has ...איכנוף ואזול כולי; Ms Munich reads: ...ואתו כולי; Ms Paris contains: כניפו כולי עלמא ואתו.

34:15). And what is good if not Torah, as we see: "For a good portion I have given them, do not abandon my Torah" (Prov 4:2).

B. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b concludes with an Aramaic narrative seemingly unconnected to either Psalm 1 or the statement prior to it that the property of one who studies Torah will be bear much fruit. It is, however, related to the opening of the sugya. The narrative employs Psalm 34:13-15 in telling a tale about a rabbi who attempts to convince the entire world that refraining from evil and doing good is the secret of life. The story thus replicates in part the trope found at the near-beginning of the sugya: one must avoid evil. The parallel does not end here. The redactor – clearly evident this time on the basis of a shift from Aramaic into Hebrew – once again directly intervenes and subtly reworks the message of the Aramaic narrative. The story simply asserts that the secret of life is avoiding evil, doing good and seeking peace. Torah is not a necessary part of the equation. The redactor subtly reframes it. He dissects the block quotation of Psalm 34:13-15, adopts the language of the guarding one's tongue and lips as evidence of passivity, and stresses that avoiding evil is not enough. He then employs Psalm 34:15 to argue that one must actively do "good," here intentionally read as Torah through the prism of Proverbs 4:2. Once again, the redactor reframed a prior statement about ethics into one that includes Torah. Worth noting as well is that the envelope consists not only of two statements with similar logic, but also with similar language. In each case the redactor concludes the sequence of inadequate activities with the phrase: "Let me go and engage in sleep." These two places are the only times in rabbinic literature where this phrase occur.[27] Ultimately, the near-opening and concluding statements of b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b should be read as follows: the good rabbinic Jew avoids evil and studies Torah. The avoidance of evil

[27] According to Maʿagarim, the word the איגרה (גרי in *nif'al*) only appears in these two instances in rabbinic literature. See Jastrow, however, where גרי in the passive means "to engage in."

exists as part of the source material the redactor works with, and the link to the study of Torah was created by the redactor himself.

Creating a Commentary on Psalm 1: Less Overt Traces of the Redactor

As evidenced above, the redactor of the sugya wished to frame it as a commentary on Psalm 1:1-3 that focused on the study of Torah and its mechanics. It is possible to find the hands of the redactor in both the material he draws upon to craft the commentary and perhaps even his subtle reworking of earlier sources. As is clear from the outline above, the redactor drew from earlier traditions, as per any lengthy sugya in the Babylonian Talmud. The Rava subsection, which begins with a comment by Rava on Psalm 1:2 and then continues with numerous other traditions by Rava about Torah study, may even be a pre-packaged unit that the redactor inserted as a whole into his sugya. As scholars have shown, however, it is not beyond a redactor to touch up earlier material in order to bring it in line with his overall message.[28] At the very least, the discussion below will highlight how the final redactor or reader may have come to view earlier sources as part of a larger program of understanding Psalm 1:1-3 as a cohesive scholastic guidebook on how to study Torah.

An example in which the redactor may have touched up an earlier tradition appears in the large Rava subunit.[29] Overall, this constellation of citations highlights Rava's many comments on the mechanics of Torah study: learn with desire; scholars own Torah when they study it; first learn then meditate; learn and repeat even if you do not know; how to teach and learn; gather Torah in topics and not in segregated units. From the perspective of the redactor wishing to create a commentary on Psalm 1, these comments read Psalm 1:2 not only as the commandment to learn

[28] See, for example, Friedman, *Topics in the Study of the Babylonian Talmud*, 37–56.
[29] On the larger framing of Rava as an interpretive authority in this unit and elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud see Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 113.

Torah, but also as a manifesto on 'how to' study Torah. Psalm 1 not only provides moral guidance, but instructs the sage on how he is to perform his central task.

One statement of Rava within the subunit reads:[30] "And Rava said, Really a person should study Torah and then afterwards analyze (*hgh*)[31] it, as it says, 'For the law of the Lord is his delight, and on his law he meditates (*hgh*) day and night' (Psalm 1:2)."[32] The exposition and its prooftext are fairly straightforward – the "meditate" (*hgh*) of Rava's statement matching the "meditate" (*hgh*) of Psalm 1:2. A parallel tradition in b. Ber. 63b, however, shows that Rava's statement could exist without the Psalm 1:2 prooftext:[33]

> Another interpretation: "Keep silent and hear, O Israel" (Deut 27:9). God said to Israel, "Be quite *and then afterwards* analyze."[34] This is like what Rava said, since Rava said, "Really a person should learn Torah *and then afterwards* analyze it (*hgh*)."[35]

This section of b. Ber. 63b lists numerous interpretations of Deuteronomy 27:9. The exegete understands the verse as advocating a particular kind of reading practice: first be silent and listen, and afterwards analyze what you hear.[36] This interpretation is then brought into conversation with a comment by Rava, which contains similar conceptual and structural advice: first learn and then

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[30] For a composite understanding of the following section see Dov Zlotnick, *The Iron Pillar Mishnah: Redaction, Form and Intent* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1989), 64–65.

[31] I translate *hgh* here as analyze because I believe that our sugya is working with b.Ber 63. For a discussion on what exactly *hgh* means here see Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 74. He ultimately reads with Rashi and suggests *hgh* here means "thought and reflection." Hirshman does not call attention to the relationship of our sugya with b. Ber 63b.

[32] Reading with Ms Paris. This statement does not appear in Ms JTS. It does appear in Ms Munich where it is transposed and reworked to read: א' רבא ליגמר איני' והדר ליסבר שנ' כי אם בתור' יי חפצו. While the structure of the statement remains the same, the choice of ליגמר and ליסבר are likely influenced by the previous statement: א' רבא לעול' יגמר אע"ג [?]דלישכח וליגרוס אע"ג דלא ידע.

[33] The verse does appear, though, in Ms Paris and Ms Oxford 25, which appear to be one witness for this statement. Ms Munich and the two Genizah fragments (Cambridge - T-S F2 (1) 12 and New York - JTS ENA 2068.24) appear to be independent witnesses. There are many other differences between these manuscripts, especially in terms of the order of homilies. It is more likely a scribe added the verse because of the parallel in b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b than deleted it.

[34] כתת, from grind. This metaphor is used elsewhere for deep understanding.

[35] Reading with Ms Munich.

[36] The Deuteronomy verse, of course, originally referred to Sinaitic revelation. Is our homilist reading שמע as analyze? Zlotnik plausibly suggests that the homilist divide הסכת into הס "silence" and כתת "analyze." Zlotnick, *The Iron Pillar*, 65.

afterwards analyze. Did Rava's initial tradition contain a quotation of Psalm 1:2 or not? If it did, then the redactor of b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b clearly delighted in inserting a unit of tradition that had multiple contact points with Psalm 1:2 into his sugya. One then wonders, however, why the tradition as found in b. Ber 63b does not include the citation. If the initial tradition did not contain a prooftext, I suggest that the redactor himself furnished Rava's statement with a highly appropriate Psalm 1:2 prooftext, a verse connected to lemma at hand and in line with the previous comments by Rava that cite Psalm 1:2.

As the Rava subunit was cited under the lemma of Psalm 1:2, it is possible that the redactor may have read (or wanted his audience to read) other traditions in the unit in light of Psalm 1:2. One such example is Rava's quotation of Psalm 119, the most famous Wisdom Psalm in the Bible[37] and one of the first texts to emphasize Torah study as the central value of wisdom, to describe the mechanics of Torah study:[38]

> And Rava said: Let a person recite (*ligras*) even though he may forget (*mishkakh*) or even though he may not know [what he is reciting]. For what does it say? As it says, "My soul breaks (*garesah*) for desire" (Ps 119:20).

This statement puts a fundamental aspect of rabbinic study culture on display: acquisition of knowledge through rote repetition.[39] A person should recite even if he may forget or be unaware

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[37] David N. Freedman, *Psalm 119: The Exaltation of Torah*, Biblical and Judaic Studies 6 (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1999); Kent A. Reynolds, *Torah As Teacher: The Exemplary Torah Student in Psalm 119*, VTSupp 137 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[38] While I am translating with Ms Paris, the exact formulation of this statement varies by manuscript.
Ms JTS reads: And Rava said: Let a person recite (ליגרס) everything that he finds (כל דמשכח), and even though he does not know [what he is reciting], For what does it say? As it says, "My soul breaks (גרסה) for desire" (Ps 119:20).
Ms Munich reads: And Rava said: Really, a person should study (לגמר) even though [he may forget], and recite (ליגרס) even though he does not know [what he is reciting]. As it says, "my soul breaks (גרסה) for desire" (Ps 119:20). It says "break apart" (גרסה) not "grind" (טחנה).
For an alternative reading based on Ms Ubeda see Zlotnick, *The Iron Pillar*, 64 n.34.

[39] On גרס see Yaakov Sussman, "Oral Torah Simplicter: The Power of the Yod's Tittle," in *Studies on the Talmud 3*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005), 250 nn.21, 356–357. Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 75. He does not examine the use of Ps 119 and its relationship to Ps 1. For the development of the term see Robert Brody, "Geonic Writing and the Text of the Talmud," in *Studies in the Talmud 1*, ed. Yaakov Sussman and David Rosenthal, 1990, 291.

of what he is saying. Rava justifies his opinion by citing Psalm 119:20. Rava likely reads "my soul languishes[40] (*garesah*) for desire" as: "I (my soul) recites the desire (i.e. Torah)." While this tradition can stand on its own, I suggest that the redactor would see in it an intertextual connection between the "desire" (*ta'avah*) [= Torah] of Psakm 119:20 and the semantically similar "his desire" (*ḥeftzo*) [= Torah] of Psalm 1:2. This would be further cemented by the use of words of study: *hgh* and *grs*. Such intertextuality – the reading of a primary passage through the lens of another similar sounding one – is encouraged not only by the lemma under which this tradition is found, but also by the statement of Rava that either precedes or follows, which cites Psalm 1:2 as a prooftext.[41] Thus, from the perspective of the redactor seeking to create a commentary on Psalm 1, a key rabbinic study practice is inscribed into Psalm 1, this time through an intertextual reading of Psalm 119:20.

That such a reading is possible, and perhaps even probable, is evidenced by the fact that it is not the only place in the sugya where the redactor employs intertextuality as a hermeneutic. At the conclusion of the lemma for Psalm 1 appears what I have titled in the outline above the "Ashre Intertextuality Subsection," a self-contained midrash that unpacks Ps 112:1 by quoting and alluding to Mishnah Avot. Previous to it, nearly every tradition either comments directly on Psalm 1:1 or is part of a larger unit triggered by a comment on Psalm 1:1. The Ashre subsection stands apart. It is a self-contained unit of interpretation that does not directly quote Psalm 1:1 and is not obviously tied to the previous tradition that does. It does relate to the Psalm 1, however, in an intertextual manner. Psalm 112:1 reads: "Happy is a man (*ashre ish*) who fears the Lord and

[40] Translating with the entry גרס in Ludwig Köhler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

[41] Ms Paris precedes this tradition and claims that one must first learn Torah and then murmur (*hgh*), quoting Psalm 1:2 as a prooftext. Ms Munich follows this tradition and claims that a person should learn and then explain (*sbr*), quoting Psalm 1:2 as a prooftext.

delights (*ḥafetz*) greatly in His commandments." This verse readily connects to Psalm 1:1-2's "Happy is the man" (*ashre ha'ish*) and "his delight" (*ḥeftzo*).[42] Intertextuality provides the basis for inclusion.

More than intertextuality may be at play in placing the Ashre subsection under the rubric of a commentary on Psalm 1:1. Let us first summarize the tradition. The first part of 112:1, "Happy is a man," is read either as "one who repents while a man,"[43] or "one who overcomes his *yeẓer* like a man." This latter comment clearly alludes to m. Avot 4:1: "Who is strong, one who conquers his *yeẓer*, as it says, 'Better is being slow to anger than strength' (Prov 16:32)." The interest in m. Avot is further illustrated in the comment on Psalm 112:1b, which cites m. Avot 1:3 in explaining "in his laws he delights much." While the unit functions independently without reference to Psalm 1, by including this tradition under the rubric of Psalm 1:1, the redactor may be bringing Psalm 1 into conversation with the most obvious exemplar of Rabbinic Wisdom, Mishnah Avot. Within the context of our sugya, both of these comments accentuate the fact that a rabbinic sage ought to prevail over his desires and serve God without expectation of reward.

b. Avodah Zarah 18b-19b in Internal Comparison: y. Avoda Zara and Midrash Psalms

By now I have demonstrated that the sugya is intricate, highly crafted and produces a fairly consistent argument that Psalm 1:1-3 reads as a manual for the production of the rabbinic sage and

[42] For further on the textual underpinnings of this midrash see Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 121–22; Hirshman, *The Stabilization of Rabbinic Culture*, 67–8 also notes the shared vocabulary. I am hesitant to claim , with Hirshman, that commandments and Torah are truly different entities in the eyes of this sugya.

[43] Rosen-Zvi claims that this may be an allusion to m. Avot 2:10, "Repent one day before you die," i.e., every day. Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires*, 208 n.15. This would then boost the count to one reference and two allusions. Rosen-Zvi does not discuss the other allusion or reference to m. Avot.

his wisdom. In this section, I will once again highlight the distinctiveness of the sugya, this time by briefly comparing it to its parallels in the Palestinian Talmud and Midrash Psalms.

Y. Avod. Zar. 1:7 40a parallels b. Avod. Zar. 18b.[44] Much like Part 1 of our sugya, it engages t. Avod. Zar. 2:6-7, and thus quotes Psalm 1:1's *moshav letzim* in prohibiting Jews from attending Roman events. Unlike b. Avod. Zar.18b-19b, however, it stops there. It does not develop a lengthy exegesis of Psalm 1. Instead, y. Avod. Zar. 1:7 40a continues with a discussion on altar building, which parallels the next sugya in b. Avod. Zar. 19b. In short, the Palestinian Talmud contains no trace of Part 2 of the outline above. This demonstrates that a lengthy sugya in which Psalm 1:1-3 is crafted into a cohesive handbook on Torah study is distinctive to the Babylonian Talmud.

Furthermore, the sugya also does not dwell upon character-driven analysis and exemplifies thematic continuity.[45] The analysis of Psalm 1 in Midrash Psalms exhibits the inverse.[46] It begins its exposition on Psalm 1 by focusing on the character of David.[47] After examining his role in setting up the temple watch, it proceeds to compare him to Moses. It then reads David's life into several verses, highlighting his voice as the central one of the Psalter. Finishing with David, Midrash Psalms transitions to interpreting Psalm 1 in light of Adam. Concluding with Adam, it moves unto Noah, Abraham, the tribe of Levi, and then finally sons of Korah. Once finished with

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[44] On the rhetoric of idolatry in this sugya and a basic interpretation of the Palestinian Talmud see Giuseppe Veltri, "Romishe Religion an der Peripherie des Reiches: Ein Kapital rabbinischer Rhetorik," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Catherine Hezser, vol. 2, 3 vols., TSAJ 79 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 89–94.

[45] The weakness of this argument rests with R. Samuel b. Naḥmani's statement in the sugya. However, note that it is cut short, and the only instance of relating Psalm 1 to a particular biblical character in the entire sugya. This is of different quality than Midrash Psalms and Genesis Rabbah, which place character exegesis at the center.

[46] Full use of Psalm 1 as character analysis also appears in Genesis Rabbah 26:1, 61:1, discussed above. Both of these are incorporated into Midrash Tehillim.

[47] For David in Midrash Psalm see Esther M. Menn, "Praying King and Sanctuary of Prayer, Part I: David and the Temple's Origins in Rabbinic Psalms Commentary (Midrash Tehillim)," *JJS* 52 (2001): 1–26. On "Characters of Faith" in Midrash Psalms's commentary on Psalm 1 see Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms*, 76–79.

character-driven analysis, it proceeds to interpret Psalm 1 verse-by-verse, however without any consistent theme running across its examination of multiple verses. The variegated comments function more like an anthology of loosely connected traditions related to a particular verse (along the lines of Genesis Rabbah) than an argument by constellation and collection (along the lines of Leviticus Rabbah). In contrast to Midrash Psalms, b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b does not privilege character-driven analysis. The Babylonian Talmud sugya contains only one tradition that connects parts of Psalm 1:1 to the life of Abraham. Furthermore, b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b, as demonstrated above, contains a consistent theme that runs throughout its interpretation of Psalm 1:1-3, unlike Midrash Psalms.

Psalms in Syriac Christianity

Why does our sugya eschew character-driven analysis and highlight the themes of the mechanics of Torah study and the making of a sage? I argue that the sugya best makes sense in light of the Babylonian Talmud's Christian context, and particularly in comparison to the popular East Syrian Christian understanding of Psalm 1. Before examining Theodore of Mopsuestia's psalm commentary, I will briefly delineate the place of Psalms in East Syrian Christianity, focusing on its role in East Syrian Christian education. This analysis will set a plausible context in which knowledge of something like Theodore's interpretation of Psalm 1 would be widespread and popular among East Syrian Christians. Or, in other words, I will demonstrate that most East Syrian Christians not only encountered Psalm 1, but also that they would have known about it as inflected through the prism of Theodore's commentary.

Syriac-speaking Christians, like their Greek and Latin brethren, encountered the book of Psalms regularly. Most Syriac Christians would have heard or recited the Psalter liturgically. The

majority of Peshitta manuscripts containing Psalms are actually hymnbooks used for ecclesiastical services. Of the fourty-two manuscripts used for the Leiden critical edition of the Peshitta, four are complete Bibles and the rest are Psalters.[48] Indeed, Weitzman points to evidence of Syriac Christians updating the Peshitta Psalter to reflect its new liturgical setting.[49]

In addition to being an integral part of liturgy, the Psalter was also a center-piece of monastic life,[50] an area fruitfully explored for its relationship to rabbinic Judaism.[51] As Jacob of Serugh lyrically tells the monk: "All day you are delighted with the Psalms of the Spirit, with David's sweet lyre, which will give you increase."[52] It was not only assumed that a monk would learn to memorize and recite the Psalter, but the trope of such activity was exploited in monastic literature. Destined monks, for example, are imagined to have mastered the Psalms with relative ease. When entering the school of Nisibis, Mar Abba "learned the Psalter [lit. 'David'] in a few

[48]Harry van Rooy, "The Psalms in Early Syriac Tradition," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W Flint, Patrick D Miller, and Ryan Roberts, VTSupp 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 537. Syriac Christians also had recourse to non-Peshitta Psalters. See Ibid., 542.

[49] Michael Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 56 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 272.

[50] For further on the Psalms in Syriac monastic settings see Arthur Vööbus, ed., *Syriac and Arabic Documents Regarding Legislation Relative to Syrian Asceticism* (Stockholm: Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1960), 41, 71, 92, 112, 125, 202–3; Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient. a Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East, II. Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria*, vol. 1, CSCO 197 (Louvain: Peeters, 1960), 289–91.See most recently, Columba Stewart, "Psalms and Prayer in Syriac Monasticism: Clues from Psalter Prefaces and Their Greek Sources," in *Prayer and Worship in Eastern Christianities, 5th to 11th Centuries*, ed. Derek Krueger and Bruria Bitton-Ashkelony (London: Routledge, 2017), 44–62. Psalms appears to have also been an important aspect of scribal education. See Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 4:15, Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 9.

[51] See generally Bar-Asher Siegal, *Early Christian Monastic Literature and the Babylonian Talmud*; Schwartz, "Material Culture in the Land of Israel: Monks and Rabbis on Clothing and Dress in the Byzantine Period," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Joshua Schwartz and Marcel Poorthuis, JCP 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 121–38.

[52]Paul Bedjan, ed., *Homiliae Selectae Mar-Jacobi Sarugensis* (Paris: Harrassowitz, 1908), 834. For translation and general discussion of Jacob's view on monasticism Sidney H. Griffith, "Mar Jacob of Serugh on Monks and Monasticism: Reading in His Metrical Homilies 'On the Singles,'" in *Jacob Serugh and His Times*, ed. George Kiraz (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 71–89. Translation on pg. 80.

days and began the study of the Divine Scriptures…."[53] Barhadbeshabba, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, claims that Narsai, "from the fervor of his love and the speedy movements of his soul, in nine months' time he memorized the whole Psalter."[54] He also portrays Narsai in terms of Psalm 1: "For he had along with the possession of virtue also care for the divine teaching, according to the word of the Psalmist: *While he was continually meditating on the law of the Lord* (Psalm 1:2)."[55] (italics in original.)

Psalms was also among the first things that future monks and Christian leaders studied, as the passage about Mar Abba above indicates, and it was often conceptualized as distinct from Scripture.[56] The author of the *Vita Ephrem*, for example, claims that Ephrem went to Mar Jacob of Nisibis in order to study Scripture and the Psalms of David.[57] When he was returning to Edessa and chanting Psalms, a scroll from heaven with his future commentary is given to him.[58] In fact, psalm study is sometimes imagined as the best form of education (and a veritable counter-

[53] Paul Bedjan, ed., *Histoire de Mar-Jabalaha: De Trois Autres Patriarches, D'un Prêtre et de Deux Laïques, Nestoriens* (Paris: Harrassowitz, 1893), 216–17. Translation from Jack B. V. Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010), 234 n.760. For a general discussion of education in the Syriac world and community formation see pp. 316-40. Tannous does not focus attention on Psalms, but his sources do. For more on Mar Abba see Becker, *Fear of God*, 37; Adam Izdebski, "Cultural Contacts between the Superpowers of Late Antiquity: The Syriac School of Nisibis and the Transmission of Greek Educational Experience to the Persian Empire," in *Cultures in Motion: Studies in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods*, ed. Adam Izdebski and Jasiński Damian (Krakow: Jagiellonian University Press, 2014), 185–204.

[54] Adam H. Becker, trans., *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 53.

[55] Ibid., 49–50. On deriving inspiration from Psalm 1, and verse 2 in particular, see also the case of Alexander the Sleepless, Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, TCH 33 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 131. "After passing seven years this way he made another search to see what else to ask. And he found the prophet saying, 'On the law of the Lord he will meditate day and night.' And pondering this he said to himself, 'How is this possible?' And again he reasoned and said, 'Of course, were it not possible, the Holy Spirit would not have commanded it to us through His prophet'"(266).

[56] For a great East Syrian example see Joel T. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq*, TCH 40 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 43. Qardagh, like many monks, learned the Psalms *before* encountering the Gospels.

[57] Joseph P. Amar, ed., *The Syriac Vita Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian*, CSCO 629 (Louvain: Peeters, 2011), 9. When Ephrem leaves and gets baptized he is trained in "Psalms and Scripture," (25). One sees similar locutions in other Syriac texts, see Becker, *Fear of God*, 32, where in the Pethion–Adurhormizd–Anahid cycle, Yazdin, the son of Zoroastrian Mihryar, becomes a monk and "learned also the psalms and to read the holy Scriptures."

[58] Amar, *The Syriac Vita*, 32.

education). John of Tella is sent by his parents to learn the "Wisdom of the Greeks" and ends up studying Psalms instead.[59]

The Psalter was not only memorized by monks in East Syrian Christianity, but was also situated as the bedrock of early childhood education. A canon from the school of Nisbis,[60] an educational institution flourishing during the time of the Babylonian Talmud, claims:

> All the younger ones read the Psalms of David, the books of the New Testament and the lessons which are read on Sundays, feast- and commemoration-days whoever among them is set apart for the priesthood, has to read besides the text also a short commentary by Mār Ephrēm and a long one by Mār Theodore and who ever is set apart for the study of medicine will be sent to the hospital. In short—all children of Christians before their introduction to professional training, shall read David [sc. the Psalter], the New Testament and the sections of the lessons.[61]

Young students would begin their educational journey with the book of Psalms, even if they were not to continue on to the priesthood or medicine. All children, according to this canon, read Psalms.

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[59] "He also learned the psalms in Syriac and the two of them would perform the liturgy, cause his tutor also leaned the psalms with him. When his mother, worthy of blessing, saw the color of her son's face and the radiance of his youth had changed, she began to ask his tutor, 'what is this intention which I see my son he is wholly in sadness?' He said to her in order to please her with his speech, 'it is because he was up late in much reading.' She was pleased by this because he would – so she thought – be instructed in the reading of the pagan Greek writers." For translation and general discussion on John of Tella see Becker, *Fear of God*, 35–36.. See also Sebastian P. Brock, "From Antagonism to Assimilation: Syriac Attitudes to Greek Learning," in *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period. Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, 1980*, ed. Nina Garsoïan, Thomas Mathews, and Robert Thomson (Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 17–34. The replacement of pagan writings by the Psalms appears earlier. Robert Kaster, in his prosopography of late antique grammarians, records a certain Babylas, who was martyred in Nicomedia around 304 CE for teaching his young students Christian hymns and the Psalms instead of Helleneic education. Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity*, TCH 11 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 387. This is not surprising, as poetry was the primary vehicle of Greco-Roman education. See Ibid., 12. See also Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 191.

[60] On school of Nisibis in general see Becker, *Fear of God*. On its comparative dimensions to Rabbinic Judaism see Adam H. Becker, "The Comparative Study of 'Scholasticism' in Late Antique Mesopotamia: Rabbis and East Syrians," *AJS Review* 34 (2010): 91–113. While I agree with Becker that "we should be thinking about religious diversity and structural parallels rather than creating lists of shared terminology and exegesis" (112) and that the content of Syrian schools and rabbinic academies were different (102), I wonder if he does not put enough stock in the fact that rabbinic academies also studied Scripture, the story of Rabbi and his two students in this sugya provides a clear example. Indeed, the terminology that Becker points to on pg. 95 "*sidra*" refers to a Psalm session. Namely, Psalms may speak across the Jewish-Christian divide.

[61] Translation and source Arthur Vööbus, *The Statutes of the School of Nisibis* (Estonian Theological Society in Exile, 1961), 109.

Several centuries later, Bar Hebraeus (1226-1258) records a similar pattern of education: "In the first place, let them read the Psalms of David, then the New Testament, then the Old Testament, then the Doctors, then the Commentators. If they are not approaching the priesthood, after the Psalms, let them read the yearly lectionary cycle and let them pronounce with expertness."[62] A curriculum that places reading the Psalter before the rest of Scripture appears to have been quite enduring. Even village schools, according to Thomas of Marga, would teach Psalms at the beginning of a Christian education.[63]

In fact, some sources indicate that psalm education would directly follow learning the alphabet.[64] When the East Syrian martyr, Isho'sabran asked a priest's child, "What part of knowledge should a person first learn?" the child responded, "A person first learns the letters and then how to read them. Afterwards, he recites the Psalms, and bit by bit, he reads through all the Scriptures. When he has been trained in the recitation of the Scriptures, he sets himself to their interpretation."[65] The child responds with a curriculum mirroring his life experience, or at least the ideal educational template imagined by the author. The move from letters to the Psalter matches the educational curriculum envisioned *Cause for Foundation of the Schools*, a late sixth century

[62] Paul Bedjan, *Nomocanon Gregorii Barhebraei* (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1898), 107. Translation from Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 322 n.757. While we ought not approach this material positivistically, the preponderance of evidence suggests more than mere rhetorical posturing.

[63] Becker, *Fear of God*, 163. For another example of a pre-monastic school doing similar see Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 326.

[64] For the general portrait in terms of school terminology see Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom*, 88.

[65] Jean B. Chabot, "Historie de Jesus-Sabran, ecrite par Jesus-Yad d'Adiabene," *Nouvelles archives des missions scientifiques et litteraires* 5 (1897): 525. Translation from Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 324. For more on the *Life of Isho'sabran* see Becker, *Fear of God*, 205–6. This narrative also exhibits the use of Psalms as a form of counter-education, this time with regards to recitation, reading and murmuring. Isho'sabran, a convert from Zoroastrianism, wanted to first learn the Psalms orally, as a Magian would: "The Blessed One said to the young man, 'While I am concerned with learning the alphabet, I [could] have learned to recite ten Psalms.' Now, he said this because he was accustomed to/ recite with his mouth the murmurings of Magianism, for the offensive teaching of Zardaousht is not written in intelligible letters. He had asked the young man to orally recite for him verses, and as he received a verse, he would move himself with force, making his neck tremble like the Magians. But the youth held him back from this and said, 'Don't act as the Magians do. Instead, speak only with your mouth while you yourself are still.' And in this way, in a short time he chanted many verses." Translation from Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 324–25.

Easy Syrian text that traces the geneology of the School of Nisibis from creation until the sixth century. After God creates the animals according to the order of the letters and has Adam repeat them in "unwritten letters," he teaches Adam law and judgments.[66] Once finished: "He (God) first wrote the short Psalm about the tree, beautiful to look at, so that he might read it and know by it the distinction between good and evil." This statement reads the educational vision of the school of Nisibis back into primeval history.[67] Adam's first task after learning the alphabet is to read a short psalm God writes. While it is possible to read this "psalm" as referring to Genesis 1,[68] the short psalm about the tree likely refers to Psalm 1 of the Psalter, which is both short and contains a depiction of a tree. Much like the Babylonian Talmud sugya, the *Cause for Foundation* posits that a careful reading of Psalm 1 would allow a person, in this case Adam, to distinguish "between good and evil." Psalm 1 is thus a moral roadmap, one given to each East Syrian Christian in the context of early education.

The sources above indicate that the book of Psalms was an integral feature of the religious life of Christians living in the Persian empire. Psalm instruction started young and was quite pervasive. Literacy presumed knowledge of the Psalter; and even rote memorization began with the Psalms. In many respects, this portrait should be unsurprising. It mirrors the place of the Psalter in early Christianity as discussed in chapter 5 of this dissertation. Distinctive, here, is the understanding of Psalm 1 as a moral roadmap set in the context of scholastic education, an

[66] One manuscript has "and wrote for him there." This could be a better reading, especially if Adam is still unlettered. See Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*, 123.
[67] On the *Cause for Foundation* in general see Becker, Becker, *Fear of God*, 98–112.
[68] Becker, *Sources for the Study of the School of Nisibis*, 123 n.239 notes the conflation of Psalm 1 and Genesis 2-3. He further notes that the Syriac words "sit" (*iteb*), seat (*mawtbā*) and meditates (*nethaggē*) of Psalm 1 "may take on a special nuance in an academic context."

interpretation of Psalm 1 championed by the greatest and most influential exegete of the East Syrian tradition: Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Psalm 1 According to Theodore of Mopsuestia

East Syrian Christians invested Theodore's psalm commentary, the first work he is said to have written,[69] with a tremendous amount of cultural capital during the time of the redactors of the Babylonian Talmud. In an East Syrian context, scriptural reading was usually inflected through the voice of "the Interpreter," Theodore of Mopsuestia.[70] Recall that the *Statues of the School of Nisibis*, cited above, claims that those entering priesthood had "to read besides the text also a short commentary by Mār Ephrēm and a long one by Mār Theodore." Theodore's canonical exegesis was the foundation upon which further East Syrian scriptural interpretation was built.

Theodore's psalm commentary was translated into Syriac from Greek very early on[71] and played a decisive role in how East Syrian Christians read the Psalms. For example, nearly all extant East Syrian Psalters contain psalm titles that reflect Theodore's exegesis,[72] and no East Syrian

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[69] See Rowan A. Greer, ed., *Theodore of Mopsuestia: Commentary on Psalms 1-81*, trans. Robert C. Hill, WGRW 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), XVII n.14. This is not unusual, as many church fathers got their start by translating or working through the Psalms. Some of the earliest writings now extant from Origen is his first Alexandrian psalm commentary, Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 69.

[70] On the influence of Theodore on the East Syrian schools and life see Becker, *Fear of God*, 113–25; Lucas van Rompay, "Between the School and the Monk's Cell: The Syriac Old Testament Commentary Tradition," in *The Peshitta: Its Uses in Literature and Liturgy: Papers Read at the Third Peshitta Symposium*, ed. Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 43–44; Lucas van Rompay, "The Christian Syriac Tradition of Interpretation," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament The History of Its Interpretation: Volume 1 From the Beginnings to the Middles Ages (Until 1300)*, ed. Magne Saebo (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 634; van Rooy, "The Psalms in Early Syriac Tradition," 546–47.

[71] A Theodore psalm commentary manuscript was recently discovered in the Princeton University library, and seems to be an early fifth or sixth century Syriac translation of Theodore's Greek psalm commentary. See https://pulsearch.princeton.edu/catalog/6828816. The manuscript contains much of the material that Lucas van Rompay published in CSCO series. For further information about origins and date of the translation, at least as van Rompay saw through his manuscript, see Lucas van Rompay, *Theodore de mopsueste. fragments syriaques du commentaire des psaumes*., CSCO 190 (Louvain: Peeters, 1982), XLVII–L

[72] van Rooy, "The Psalms in Early Syriac Tradition," 543–44.

produced a psalm commentary to replace or supplement Theodore's until near the turn of the millennium. The commentaries that eventually do, such as that by Ishodad of Merv, typically remain within the Theodorian tradition.[73] In short, the many East Syrian Christians who encountered Psalm 1 would almost inevitably have been acquainted with it through the prism of Theodore's commentary, which, as I will show below, focuses on the scholastic study of Scripture as the key to producing a moral and educated Christian. Recall from above that the scholastic mode of analysis contrasts to other popular Christian readings of Psalm 1 that either focus on the practice of the Law as the bedrock of ethics or read the Law as natural law.

Before analyzing Theodore, let me also reiterate another point made at the beginning of this chapter. I do not believe that one finds in Theodore's commentary a smoking gun such that one can definitively say that the sugya influenced Theodore or that the rabbis had direct knowledge of Theodore's commentary. Rather, as just explored, Theodore's understanding of Psalm 1 was both authoritative and unavoidable in the most immediate cultural context of the Babylonian rabbis. The widespread interpretation of Psalm 1 as a psalm about the crafting of a Christian through *study* of Scripture in a scholastic culture sets the stage for the unique sugya of b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b, which I suggest was created in or at the very least can be read as a response to this environment in general and its interpretation of Psalm 1 in particular. As I analyze Theodore's commentary I will also compare it to the sugya, and particularly to its redactor, in order to highlight how the sugya operated in this Christian environment.

[73] For the clearest example of a commentator keeping within that tradition see Clemens Leonhard, *Ishodad of Merw's Exegesis of the Psalms 119 and 139-147: A Study of His Interpretation in the Light of the Syriac Translation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's Commentary*, CSCO 585 (Louvain: Peeters, 2001).

For Theodore, the purpose of Psalm 1 is clear. It is not to be read historically as pertaining to the life of David, or Christologically as Jesus.[74] Rather, Theodore begins his commentary by rejecting the historical interpretation of those who claim that Psalm 1 refers to Joash, the ninth century BCE Judean king. Instead, he introduces his interpretation by saying: "It is thus a moral psalm, as emerges from what follows, where there is question both of desire for virtues and abstinence from faults, something not properly applicable to Joash." For Theodore, Psalm 1 is a moral psalm, a poem that pertains to every Christian. It cannot be tethered to particular historical circumstances. Thus, Theodore, like the sugya, eschews character-driven analysis in favor of crafting a commentary pertaining to all that focuses on a particular theme. Note that influential Christians such as Eusebius, Augustine and Jerome were intent on reading this Psalm as pertaining to Jesus, although each in their own distinctive way.[75]

Theodore continues his introduction to Psalm 1 by describing the character of an ideal and "blessed" Christian, namely, what he thinks in sum the psalm is all about. Theodore envisions two strands that entwine through the nature a good Christian, which he describes as "faith and life."[76] The first is correct interpretive understanding mediated by faith, which leads one to be dutiful. The second and more difficult task is proper moral discipline, the pattern of life "which shows readiness to understand and emerges both in a desire for good things and in a flight from bad things in

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[74] The former is quite common and even expected. The latter only applies to Psalms 2, 8, 45 and 110. The choice to not read it as David is thus important. For a test case of Antiochene exegesis, highlighting in part Theodore's typical working method see Harry van Rooy, "Reading the Psalms Historically: Antiochene Exegesis and a Historical Reading of Psalm 46," *Acta Theologica* 2 (2009): 120–34. For a brief history of Theodore scholarship see pp. 123-25. Daniel of Salah, as another Syriac counter-example, does not read this psalm as a moral one, but rather about David, Adam and Jesus. Syriac text in manuscript facsimile Daniel von Salah, *Commentary on the Psalms* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011), 7–9. For summary, see Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms*, 55.

[75] Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 5. Many church fathers , such as Augustine and Eusebius read the man in the psalm as Jesus. Blaising and Hardin, *Psalms 1-50*, 3. Origen did as well, Gillingham, *A Journey of Two Psalms*, 49. Jerome rejects this interpretation, reading the man more broadly, but re-introduces Jesus in the tree metaphor in verse 3. See Jerome, *Homilies on Psalms*, 3, 7.

[76]Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 5.

understanding everything."[77] For Theodore, the purpose of Psalm 1 can be found in the interweaving of study and morality, a feature that, as I demonstrated above, the redactor of the sugya was very particular about highlighting.

With his introduction complete, Theodore explores Psalm 1 verse-by-verse. Like the statement about Psalm 1:1 in the sugya that the redactor actively reframes, namely the reading of Psalm 1:1 that cautions Jews from attending Roman games, Theodore reads verse 1 as indicating the need to steel oneself against external pressures: "Hence the text of the present psalm classes as blessed the person who avoids such people in everything and who is so attentive to his actions as to avoid any evil entreaty from outside and to be on the watch lest from that quarter his sincerity and purity be defiled by contamination from without."[78]

Theodore continues his exegesis of Psalm 1 with a novel interpretation of verse 2:

> Since for the person aspiring to that blessed state it is not sufficient only to avoid evil, but there is also a requirement to do good, he went on to say: "Instead, his will was for the law of the Lord down to day and night (v. 2)": he not only takes pains to avoid the company of bad people, but also, by industrious study of the yoke of the law, he learns into what sort of person he should develop.[79]

According to Theodore, avoiding evil is not enough. One must also do good,[80] which he frames as the "industrious study of the yoke of the law." Recall from above that understanding Psalm 1:2 as *study* was neither obvious nor necessary among late ancient Christian interpreters, some of whom preferred to read the verse as *practice* of the Law. Further distinctive to Theodore is the phrase "yoke of the law," whose positive valence is somewhat striking in a Christian context.[81] Regardless, it is noteworthy that Theodore's moves – the necessity of reading verses 1 and 2 in

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[77] Ibid., 5–7.
[78] Ibid., 11.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Suggestive, although not enough as sufficient evidence, I find echoes in this phrase of סור מרע ועשה טוב, which is not present in Psalm 1.
[81] For עול תורה see, for example, m. Avot 3:5; y. Rosh Hash. 4:7 59c; b Sanh. 94b.

tandem and reading the Law as particularly study – mirror those made by the sugya's redactor, who actively reframed earlier sources to highlight the connection between ethics and Torah study. Scholastic cultures demand morality be placed directly within the confines of study.

Theodore's commitment to a scholastic-centered reading of Psalm 1 is also evident in his interpretation of verse 3. According to Theodore, the evergreen and untarnished tree resembles the person who abstains from bad and forms his Christian self through proper study: "So too will that person be illustrious who has abstained from evil and given himself to the love of noble exploits, who is unstained by any works of sinners and is distinguished by constant meditation on the law."[82] Theodore, like the redactor of the sugya, uses the lemma of verse 3 as an opportunity to once again highlight the nexus of morality and "constant meditation of the law."

Psalm 1:1-3 in the hands of Theodore, and thus East Syrian Christianity, was fundamentally interpreted to be about two things: 1) the *study* of the law in the crafting of a Christian and 2) the necessary interconnectivity between morality and study. These features are of course somewhat "latent" within Psalm 1:1-3, but at the same time it is undeniable that they are highlighted, highly developed and placed as the central hermeneutical key in East Syrian Christianity in a distinctive manner. Sharing in this distinction is the only non-character driven sugya devoted to unpacking Psalm 1:1-3 in the form a lemmatic commentary: b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b. These themes are especially pronounced in the places of overt redaction explored above. It is thus my opinion that b. Avod. Zar. 18b-19b was either created as a response to the East Syrian environment of the redactors of the Babylonian Talmud or at the very least understood as one by the earliest readers of this sugya in its entirety. Important to note, though, is that the sugya appears non-polemical. It

[82]Greer, *Theodore of Mopsuestia*, 11. Compare this to Jerome, who reads the tree as the Tree of Life, and then as Jesus, arguing that the just person is like Jesus. Jerome does highlight study, but only the inner-meaning of Scripture, not the one Jews produce. Jerome, *Homilies on Psalms*, 6–9.

adopts the moves of its environment, particularizes them as rabbinic, and does not simultaneously undermine their initial setting. It builds from inspiration and not from negation.

Conclusion

This chapter sets into place another puzzle piece in the story of the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity by exploring an instance of irenic reading, a moment of Jewish-Christian engagement not constrained by polemic. In particular, it examined the reception of Psalm 1 in b. Avod. Zar.18b-19b and argued that the unique exegetical sugya makes the most sense in light of the East Syrian reception of the psalm commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia. It shows how both both Theodore and our sugya consistently and distinctively read Psalm 1 as a manifesto for the production of a moral and educated individual who fashions his life through the study of Torah/the Law. Both highlight study as opposed to practice and the necessary connection between morality and study as the central key for understanding Psalm 1:1-3. In fact, the connection of Psalm 1 to study has an afterlife in Milton's paraphrase to Psalm 1, reproduced as the epigram to this chapter. Instead of following the King James Bible, which translates the *hgh* of Psalm 1:2 as "meditate," Milton emphasizes constant study: "But in the great / Jehovahs Law is ever his delight, And in his Law he studies day and night."

In addition to detailing a shared reception of Psalm 1, this chapter advocates for several methodological shifts. First, it argues that examining lengthy sugyot in search of parallels can be just as productive as tracing a single motif or analyzing a single story. Second, it suggests that comparative analysis is most convincing within a shared geographical and temporal context. As expressed in the previous chapter: channels of transmission matter. Attention to the way knowledge travels allows us to avoid totalizing exegetical claims under the rubric "Rabbinic" and

"Christian" as if the part truly represented the whole. For the Babylonian Talmud, this means examining the intellectual and cultural productions of East Syrian Christians. Third, our case study also highlights the need to imagine Jewish and Christian interaction beyond the polemic. While warring words may be the easiest to hear, they oftentimes drown out soft-spoken interaction and intellectual curiosity.

Conclusion

> The prayers (*tefillot*) of David son of Jesse are ended.
>
> - *Psalm 72:20*

The above line concludes Psalm 72 and expresses finality. David has no more to say. He has hung up his harp; he is done. Such hopes of completion, however, are dashed by the final redactors of the Psalter. Just fourteen psalms later one reads the superscription of Psalm 86, appropriately titled: "A prayer (*tefillah*) of David." David's project is far from finished; he begins once again where had left off. As the book of Psalms, so too *The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity*. I offer below a conclusion, knowing full well that I have traversed, like the David of Psalm 72, only part of the distance.

As mentioned in the introduction, I view *The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity* as a literary biography. Biographies are a form of narrative history. Biographies of literature, among which this dissertation counts itself, should strive for similar coherency. The argument of *The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity* may be presented as follows: It opened with a discussion of the materiality upon which reading was enacted and how late antique Jews and Christians made sense of and crafted the material medium of the Psalter (chapter 1). It then connected materiality to reading by examining scenes of reading, narratives in which an agent reads from a physical Psalter (chapter 2). Not all forms of reading, however, could be traced back to its material reality. The narrative continued with an exploration of the most expected form of late ancient reading: scholastic reading, namely, reading the Psalter as an interpretive activity (chapter 3). The narrative then broadened our horizons of expectations by exploring the reading of Psalms in liturgy (chapter 4) and its use in magical and pietistic practice (chapter 5). These chapters established the popularity and

pervasiveness of Psalms, which allowed the story to then recurve back to exegesis, this time, however, with a focus on identity and religious competition. The narrative concluded with an exploration of how the shared late antique psalmscape fostered both Jewish and Christian polemical exchange (chapter 6), and even irenic exegetical interaction (chapter 7).

Also mentioned in the introduction is that I view *The Life of Psalms in Late Antiquity* as a prolegomenon, an invitation to further study. The chapters of this dissertation do not present the full story. I will use the space of this conclusion, therefore, to suggest some further directions of inquiry. Seven chapters cannot do justice to a book as important and cherished as the Psalter. In the process of writing this biography, I have left to the side many other important and exciting dimensions of the life of Psalms in Late Antiquity. I have not discussed topics such as the place of translation, the use of Psalms in crafting temple memories, the role of Psalms in Jewish and Christian eschatological imagination and conceptions of Davidic and non-Davdic authorship. Even topics I do touch upon above deserve fuller treatments. I discuss liturgical psalmody but focus on daily psalmody as opposed to seasonal psalmody. What would a history that examined Hallel look like? The chapter on Psalm piety explores Jewish magic but makes only limited use of the available evidence. What would a more complete study of psalm-based magic look like? Would it uncover something distinctive about Psalms?

The chapters presented as case studies in this dissertation offer a distinctive set of questions. The case study of Psalm 29, for example, suggests an entirely new way to read rabbinic hermeneutics. Could such a study and its results be replicated with other psalms? The analysis of Psalm 45 in chapter 6 demonstrates that it can. Could my holistic methodology be reproduced for other biblical texts? Is the Psalter distinctive in the eyes of rabbis? These questions will surely reward further study, and I hope to return to them in the future.

The chapters on Jewish and Christian interaction highlight similar concerns. Is the Psalter truly unique in the history of Jewish and Christian relations? Are there overarching discourses that Jews and Christians have with regards to Psalter as a whole, or does each Psalm house particular and isolated conversations?

This project has focused on the book of Psalms. Could the questions posed and methodologies developed about the Psalter apply to other biblical books? Could they too be profitably analyzed from the vantage point of a history of reading, a scholarly methodology that focuses on materiality, reader, and social context? How would analysis of other rabbinic scenes of reading revise the portrait presented here? Do Jews and Christians share reading strategies for books other than the Psalms? The Psalter is certainly distinctive in providing an abundant amount of information on non-interpretive practices such as magic, piety and liturgy; but is it unique? Is Pslam peity actually a subset of a larger culture of scriptural piety? What would a *Life of Genesis*, or *Life of Samuel* look like? I imagine that one would find more upon which to build a narrative for Genesis than for Samuel. What about other bodies of literature? Can a history of Mishnah practice or Jerome practice be told? Would such studies expand, or limit, the utility of setting reading within a matrix of materiality, reader and sociocultural context?

Having posited a series of open questions, let me return to one in particular, the query that started this project: How did Jews and Christians read and make meaning of the Psalter in Late Antiquity? We are now in a better position to offer an answer. Jews and Christians read the Psalter in many formats: on scrolls, codices, monumental inscriptions, incantation texts and even by heart. Late antique Jews and Christians shaped their encounter with the Psalter, and, in turn, let the Psalter shape them. They recited Psalms as a pious practice, and hoped that a life of psalmody would mold them into emblems of piety. They sung the Psalms liturgically, chanted it ceaselessly, and clutched

it with hopes of protection. Jews and Christians made the Psalter meaningful through both use and interpretation. They saw themselves speaking in the voice of the Psalter – expecting aid, salvation and assurance – at the same time that they imagined David as their saintly exemplar. They used the Psalms to contract and expand the boundaries between Judaism and Christianity, sometimes employing the Psalter as a textual plowshare with which to till common ground, and other times beating it into verbal swords with which to wage a war of words. Ultimately, by consistently making the Psalter into an object of discourse and practice, late antique Jews and Christians constantly renewed its vitality and reinvested it with life.

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