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A CONVICTION OF TEXTS NOT SEEN:
PERCEIVING EXODUS AS THE GENERATIVE TEXT OF HEBREWS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the University of Denver and
the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Scott R. Moore
June 2017
Advisor: Pamela Eisenbaum, Ph.D.

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Title: A CONVICTION OF TEXTS NOT SEEN: PERCEIVING EXODUS AS THE GENERATIVE TEXT OF HEBREWS

Advisor: Pamela Eisenbaum, Ph.D.

Degree Date: June 2017

ABSTRACT

The Book of Hebrews has increasingly come to be regarded as a remarkable example of Jewish-Christian scriptural exegesis and biblical intertextuality. Scholars routinely apply terms associated with ancient Jewish exegesis to Hebrews, including “midrash,” “*gezerah shewa*,” “*qal wahomer*,” and “synagogue homily.” One problem, however, is that most analyses in which Christian views of scripture are operative tend to overlook key elements of Jewish concepts of scripture, particularly with regard to the significance of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch, or Torah, forms the nucleus of the Scriptures from a Jewish perspective, the first and most important division of the Scriptures, different in nature and priority than the rest of the Hebrew Bible. The majority of ancient Jewish exegesis was Torah-centric, as is evident by the prominence of the Books of Moses in works like the Mekilta on Exodus, the oldest collections of rabbinic midrash, and even biblical texts and exegetical works like Jubilees among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Most studies of Hebrews, on the other hand, prioritize texts from the Psalms and Prophets in interpretation. Hebrews has often been characterized as a midrash on Ps 110 or as a series expositions on texts from the Prophets and Writings, for instance. Those approaches do not adequately account for the fundamental and generative role of the Pentateuch. If Hebrews is, indeed, an exegetical work like midrash or a form of

synagogue homily, we would, instead, expect it to be based on a generative text (or texts) from the Pentateuch.

This study proposes that the Sinai pericope of Exodus (Exod 19-40) serves as the primary generative text of Hebrews and that the many citations of the Prophets and Writings function exegetically in relation to Exodus. Hebrews' message emerges from the juxtaposition of texts and themes of Exodus with texts from the Prophets and Writings. The Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Haggai are all used to explain and expound upon Pentateuchal paradigms such as the Sinai Covenant, Moses, Aaron's priesthood, and the wilderness sanctuary, showing how Jesus and his ministry relate to what had been the reigning paradigms for centuries. This study examines five major exegetical sections of Hebrews to demonstrate how Hebrews uses texts from the Prophets and Writings in its exegesis of themes, passages and verses from Exodus 19-40 to legitimize and explain the person and ministry of Jesus in relation to the Law of Moses.

NOTES TO THE READER

Abbreviations throughout are in accordance with the Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style, 2nd edition (2014).

Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the Greek text of Hebrews are my translations.

Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the Septuagint are from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (NETS), edited by Albert Pietersma and Benjamin C. Wright, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the Hebrew biblical text are from the New Revised Standard Version (1989).

Where chapter and verse numbers differ between the MT and LXX, both are normally indicated initially, e.g. Ps 22:22 (21:23 LXX) or Ps 110(109):4, with only the MT references are used thereafter. This is done for ease of reference and for the sake of uncluttered text.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	II
NOTES TO THE READER	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF TABLES	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	X
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: REIMAGINING HEBREWS' TEXTUAL UNIVERSE.....	20
I. REIMAGINING OPERATIVE VIEWS OF SCRIPTURE	25
<i>Jewish vs. Christian Perceptions of Scripture</i>	25
<i>The Primacy of the Pentateuch</i>	30
II. REVISITING EXEGETICAL STRATEGIES.....	35
III. SELECT ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCRIPTURAL EXEGESIS	40
<i>Torah & Haftarah: Gen 1-6 & Isa 42.....</i>	41
<i>Mekilta Bahodesh 1 on Exod 19:1-2.....</i>	42
<i>11QMelchizedek (11Q13): Lev 25 & Isa 61</i>	48
<i>Wisdom of Solomon 10-12: Exodus & Prov 8</i>	54
<i>Johannine Prologue: Gen 1 & Prov 8</i>	56
IV. METHODOLOGICAL NOTES ON INTERTEXTUALITY, GENERATIVE TEXTS, ALLUSION AND MIDRASH ..	62
<i>Generative Texts</i>	62
<i>Scriptural Allusions</i>	68
<i>Hebrews and Midrash</i>	73
CHAPTER TWO: BEGINNING AT SINAI (HEB 1:1-3:6).....	82
I. OVERVIEW AND CORRESPONDENCE OF 1:1-3:6 AND 12:1-29	84
II. HEBREWS 1:1-3:6: THE SON AND THE AGENTS OF SINAI.....	87
<i>The Prologue (1:1-4) and Son vs. Angels (1:5-2:9).....</i>	90
Interpretive Views: 1:1-2:9	91
Analysis 1:1-2:9	98
Passage Outline 1:1-2:9	99
<i>The Son vs. Moses 2:10-3:6.....</i>	112
Passage Outline 2:10-3:6	114
The unity of 2:10-3:6	116
Exodus and Moses as Paradigmatic in 2:10-3:6	120
Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17, 18 as exegetical texts in 2:10-3:6.....	128
The Use and Interpretation of Num 12:7 in 3:1-6	132
Interpretive effects of the juxtaposition of texts in 2:10-3:6.....	135
III. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY	138
CHAPTER THREE: EXODUS, REST AND PROMISE (HEB 3:7-4:14).....	142
I. PASSAGE OVERVIEW	145
<i>Passage summary</i>	145
<i>3:7-4:13 in Context.....</i>	147

II. PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN 3:7-4:14.....	149
David Flusser	150
Daniel Boyarin	152
Gabriella Gelardini.....	153
III. READING 3:7-4:14 AS EXEGESIS	156
<i>The Pentateuch in 3:7-4:14</i>	157
Exodus.....	157
Exodus themes.....	157
Allusions to Exodus	158
Numbers.....	163
Rebellion and Meribah—a dual allusion.....	165
Deuteronomy.....	166
<i>Psalm 95 as an Exegetical Text</i>	169
First exegetical layer: Interpretations and transformations in Ps 95:7-11 (MT).....	170
Second exegetical layer: Interpretation and transformation of Ps 95(94) by the LXX	171
Third exegetical layer: Hebrews' exegesis using Ps 95:7-11	172
IV. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY IN 3:7-4:14	176
CHAPTER FOUR: PERPETUAL PRIESTHOODS (HEB 4:14-7:28)	181
I. PASSAGE OVERVIEW.....	184
<i>4:14-7:28 in Context</i>	184
<i>Passage Summary</i>	186
II. PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN 4:14-7:28.....	188
<i>Exposition(s) based on Ps 110(109 LXX)</i>	188
Simon Kistemaker.....	190
George Wesley Buchanan	191
James Kurianal	192
Jared Compton	193
Gareth Cockerill	194
<i>Exposition on Genesis 14</i>	196
<i>Additional Perspectives</i>	198
Gabriella Gelardini.....	198
Craig Koester	199
III. ANALYSIS OF 4:14-7:28.....	200
<i>The Pentateuch in 4:14-7:28</i>	202
Aaron and the Levitical Priests as Paradigm	202
1. Appointment to priesthood from among the people.....	203
2. Atonement and Intercession.....	204
3. Priestly genealogy	205
4. Perpetual priesthoods	206
5. Receiving tithes.....	207
6. The Priesthood and the Law/covenant.....	208
Additional characteristics of Jesus' priesthood.....	209
Genesis 22:16-17 in Heb 6:13-20.....	210
Gen 14:17-20 in Hebrews 7.....	212
<i>The Psalms as Exegetical Texts in 4:14-7:28</i>	216
Psalms 2 and 110(109 LXX).....	217
Ps 110:4 as the key exegetical text.....	219
Ps 110:4 in 4:14-5:10	221
Ps 110:4 in 6:13-20	222
Ps 110:4 in 7:1-10	223
Ps 110:4 in 7:11-25	224
Ps 110:4 in 7:26-28	224
IV. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY IN 4:14-7:28	226
CHAPTER FIVE: ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN (HEB 8:1-10:18).....	230
I. PASSAGE OVERVIEW.....	233
<i>8:1-10:18 in Context</i>	233
<i>Passage Summary</i>	235

II. PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN 8:1-10:18.....	240
III. ANALYSIS OF 8:1-10:18.....	247
<i>Introduction: Priesthood, Sanctuary, Covenant, Law and Forgiveness in 8:1-13</i>	250
Pentateuch in 8:1-13.....	251
Prophets and Writings in 8:1-13.....	258
Synthesis: Texts and exegesis in 8:1-13.....	259
<i>The Sanctuary and the Conscience: 9:1-14.....</i>	260
Pentateuch in 9:1-14.....	261
Prophets and Writings in 9:1-14.....	267
Synthesis: Texts and exegesis in 9:1-14.....	268
<i>Blood, Death and Covenant: 9:15-23.....</i>	269
Pentateuch in 9:15-23.....	272
Prophets and Writings in 9:15-23.....	275
Synthesis: Texts and exegesis in 9:15-23.....	275
<i>Sacrifice and Forgiveness in 9:24-10:18.....</i>	276
Pentateuch in 9:24-10:18.....	278
Prophets and Writings in 9:24-10:18.....	279
Synthesis—Texts and exegesis in 9:24-10:18	282
Hebrews contrasts	282
<i>Summary and Exhortation in 10:19-22.....</i>	283
IV. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY IN 8:1-10:18.....	284
CHAPTER 6: FROM SINAI TO ZION (HEB 12:1-29)	287
I. UNITY OF 12:1-29	291
II. PRIOR PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN 12:1-29.....	293
R.T. France: An exposition on Mount Sinai.....	295
Matthew Thiessen: Prov 3:11-12 and Deut 8:5 in Heb 12.....	296
Gabriella Gelardini: Deut 9:19 as the key citation	297
David M. Allen: Deuteronomy in Hebrews 12.....	298
Kiwoong Son: Zion and Sinai Symbolism	300
III. ANALYSIS OF 12:1-17: THE JOURNEY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD	302
<i>The Prophets and Writings in 12:1-17.....</i>	304
Psalm 110.....	304
Prov 3:11-12	305
Isaiah 35.....	305
Proverbs 4:26.....	306
Summary.....	306
<i>The Pentateuch and Exegesis in 12:1-17.....</i>	307
IV. ANALYSIS OF 12:18-29: QUAKING SINAI AND THE UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM	310
<i>Textual Composition of 12:18-29</i>	312
Summary of texts used in 12:18-29	312
Exodus and the composition of the Sinai description in 12:18-29.....	314
<i>Themes and lexical clusters related to Exodus</i>	318
Approach and avoidance: Sinai vs. Zion.....	319
Fear and trembling	320
Shaking the cosmos.....	321
Speech and response	322
<i>Exegetical Juxtapositions</i>	323
The Juxtaposition of Sinai and Zion.....	324
Sinai vs. Zion	324
Sinai as the paradigm for Zion	326
Sinai through the lens of Haggai 2:6	327
The Wilderness Generation and the Audience in 12:18-29	330

V. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OR GRAVITY IN 12:1-29	333
CONCLUSION.....	340
I. EVIDENCE FOR HEBREWS' USE OF EXODUS.....	340
II. THE INFLUENCE OF EXODUS IN HEBREWS.....	344
III. COMPARISON TO OTHER APPROACHES	347
IV. PERCEIVING EXODUS AS THE PRIMARY GENERATIVE TEXT IN HEBREWS	353
REFERENCES	356

LIST OF TABLES

Table I.1 Major Contrasts between Sinai/Exodus & Jesus/minstry.....	8
Table I.2 Examples of text-oriented structures	12
Table 2.4 Keywords in 2:10-3:6	119
Table 2.5 Key language from Pentateuch in 2:10-3:6	120
Table 2.4 Key language from exegetical texts in 2:10-18	129
Table 5.1 Descriptions of the Sanctuary in 9:2-5	264
Table 6.1 Use of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in 12:18-29	314
Table 6.2 Parallel use of specific vocabulary in the Sinai description	316
Table 6.3 Sinai Description Vocabulary from Deut 4 & 5 in Heb 12:18-19	317
Table C.6 Pentateuchal topics and themes in Hebrews (by book).....	342
Table C.2 Major Contrasts between Sinai/Exodus & Jesus/minstry	353

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Basic units of Heb 1:1-3:6.....	88
Figure 2.2. Units within Heb. 1:1-2:9	91
Figure 2.3 Basic units of Heb 1:1-3:6.....	113
Figure 2.4 Jesus and the Moses paradigm	123
Figure 3.1 Structural Use of Citations and Allusions in 4:14-8:2.....	218
Figure 3.2 Psalm 110:4 in 4:14-7:28—Citations, Allusions & Juxtapositions.....	221
Figure 3.3 Texts and Arguments in 4:14-7:28	226
Figure 5.1 Plan and Construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus	262
Figure 6.1 Citations and Allusions in Hebrews 12	294
Figure 6.2 Citations and Allusions in 12:1-17 featuring allusions to Isaiah 35.....	304
Figure 6.3 Citations and Allusions in 12:18-29 (with Hag 2:6 as main exegetical text)	329

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Hebrews, which repeatedly contrasts Jesus and his ministry to Moses, angels, Aaron and other aspects of the Sinai Covenant, has increasingly come to be regarded, by both Christian and Jewish scholars, as a remarkable example of Jewish-Christian scriptural exegesis¹ and a fascinating example of biblical intertextuality.² This is due, at least in part, to the unparalleled density of scriptural citations and allusions in

¹ A great many examples could be cited here, in addition to those that follow. Some of the most thorough or influential are: Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 29. Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Hebrews," in *Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin, Scripta Hierosolymitana (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1965). Jeremy Punt, "Hebrews, Thought-patterns and Context: Aspects of the Background of Hebrews," *Neotestamentica* 31, no. 1 (1997). Herbert W. Bateman IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5-13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage*, American University Studies 7 (New York: Peter Lang, 1997); "Second Temple Exegetical Practices: Extra-biblical Examples of Exegesis Compared with Those in the Book of Hebrews," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 53, no. 1 (2010). Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 140. Elke Tönges, "The Epistle to the Hebrews as a 'Jesus-Midrash,'" in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods, New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini, Biblical Interpretation (Leiden: Brill, 2005). Bryan J. Whitfield, *Joshua Traditions and the Argument of Hebrews 3 and 4*, vol. 194, BZNW (Berlin: Boston, 2013). Susan Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

² See, for example: David M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews: A Study in Narrative Re-presentation*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 12-15. Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North*, JSNT (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Seán Freyne, "Reading Hebrews and Revelation Intertextually," in *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen, Netherlands: J H Kok, 1989). David Arthur DeSilva, "The Invention and Argumentative Function of Priestly Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 16, no. 2 (2006). Gert Jacobus Steyn, "'Perfecting Knowledge and Piety' (Philo, Contempl. 3,25): Intertextual Similarities between Philo's Therapeutae and Lukian Early Christianity," *Neotestamentica* 43, no. 2 (2009); "Some Possible Intertextual Influences from the Jewish Scriptures on the (Moral) Language of Hebrews," in *Moral Language in the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

Hebrews; scholars count from 29 to 40 citations, depending on their criteria. Luke

Timothy Johnson describes Hebrews' intensely scriptural nature as he writes,

Through its multiple citations from the Greek text of scripture, its mode of introducing those citations that treat scripture as a living and spoken word, and its intricate interpretations of scripture in light of a contemporary experience, Hebrews constructs a world for its hearers that is entirely and profoundly scriptural. The interweaving of ancient writings into startling new patterns, as well as the many allusions and echoes, serves to make even the diction of this letter scriptural.³

In commentaries, monographs and articles on Hebrews one regularly encounters such terms as “midrash,” “*gezerah shewa*,” “*qal wahomer*,” “synagogue homily,” “*haftarah*,” “*aggadah*,” “*pesher*,”⁴ as the authors suggest Hebrews was written using Jewish exegetical conventions.

Daniel Boyarin, in an address to a Hebrews section during the 2011 Annual Conference of the Society of Biblical Literature, stated that “On my first reading of Hebrews, my immediate and powerful impression was that this is midrash, midrash in style, midrashic even in the structure of its content.”⁵ He went on to say,

I wouldn’t dream, of course, of thinking of a rabbinic “background” to Hebrews nor even of so-called Jewish influence on the book. I would rather see it as a

³ Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Scriptural World of Hebrews," *Interpretation* 57, no. 3 (2003): 247.

⁴ Peter Enns, "The Interpretation of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 352.

⁵ Daniel Boyarin, "Prolegomena to a Jewish Christology in Hebrews: The Jewish Soundscape of the Midrash on Psalm 95" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, San Francisco, Nov. 21 2011). Accessed 3/16/17. He notes in the introduction: “My purpose in this talk is to offer a naive reading—perhaps too naive for some—of aspects of the text from the perspective of a rank and file outsider, a Hebrew scholar if not a scholar of Hebrews. I do not seek to supersede the interpretations of expert New Testament scholars but to supplement them by turning up the volume and more precisely focusing the midrashic nature of one crucial passage in the Epistle. My modest suggestion is that Hebrews is resounding in a much more ‘Jewish’ soundscape than is usually predicated of it. On my first reading of Hebrews, my immediate and powerful impression was that this is midrash, midrash in style, midrashic even in the structure of its content.”

Jewish text, a homily presumably closely related to other Jewish homilies of the time, in style and to a great extent, yet to be determined and specified, in content as well—with a twist, of course, a fateful twist but not a whole new martini, as it were. . . . Perhaps we ought to be allowing into the theorized genealogy of Hebrews some deeper and wider connections with the hermeneutical resources from which Palestinian midrash developed as well. As such, Hebrews may provide very important and exciting evidence for the existence of midrashic forms earlier than any attestations in Palestinian Hebrew literature.⁶

Many agree with Boyarin when it comes to seeing Hebrews “as a Jewish text,” with the potential for valuable insights in multiple directions.

Although Hebrews had once been considered one of the most “anti-Jewish” books in the NT,⁷ David Flusser sought to alter that perception. Flusser proposed that Hebrews be viewed as part of a broad Jewish-Christian textual and exegetical matrix. In his chapter in a collection of essays on “Creative Biblical Exegesis,”⁸ he examines the exposition on Psalm 95 and the wilderness generation in Hebrews 3-4, suggesting that Hebrews’ exegesis is similar in “method” and “spirit” to exegesis in rabbinic Judaism.⁹ Flusser expresses the hope that his study of the Hebrews passage in conjunction with examples of rabbinic midrash and references to the Dead Sea Scrolls “has helped to clarify the age, the form and the method of ancient Jewish midrashim from a period during which Jewish witnesses are extremely rare.” From his perspective, the analysis of Hebrews and the study of Jewish midrash inform each other.

⁶ "Prolegomena," 1.

⁷ Pamela M. Eisenbaum, "The Letter to the Hebrews," in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler (New York: Oxford, 2011), 406-07.

⁸ David Flusser, "'Today if You Will Listen to this Voice': Creative Exegesis in Hebrews 3-4," in *Creative Biblical Exegesis* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1988).

⁹ "Today," 59.

Of course, describing Hebrews as within a Jewish-Christian textual matrix, as resembling an ancient synagogue homily or as midrash immediately raises all sorts of questions. If it is an example of ancient Jewish exegesis, how does that exegesis work? Approaching the task of understanding how the author worked with the scriptures of his day, scholars have often asked critical questions about those scriptures: Which scriptures did he have? Which ones did he know? Did he have both Greek and Hebrew texts? Did he understand both? Did biblical context matter to him? Which manuscript tradition did he use? Did he feel at liberty to change or rephrase the Scriptures? Since the Scriptures constituted the very yarn from which Hebrews is woven, we seek to know what he knew and to understand what he thought about it.

One major question driving this study is a different one, however, one that is more abstract but also more fundamental. That is, how did the author perceive the Scriptures themselves. What is scripture? What does it do? What was (what we now call) the author's theology of scripture?

A number of scholars, when looking at Hebrews within a Jewish textual matrix, have come to the conclusion that Hebrews is either a midrash or synagogue homily on Psalm 110, or a series of scriptural expositions on texts from several psalms,¹⁰ Jeremiah 31, Habakkuk 2, Haggai 2 and, perhaps, Proverbs 3. Several of these proposals will be examined in the course of this study and a number of them have made positive contributions to the study of Hebrews. The problem is that the majority of those proposals operate more from a traditionally Christian view of scripture than a

¹⁰ E.g. Psalms 110, 2, 8, 95, etc.

traditionally Jewish one, particularly with regard to the role and significance of the Pentateuch or Torah. From a traditional Jewish perspective, the Pentateuch forms the nucleus of the scriptures, the default anchor point for most scriptural interpretation—the first and most important division of scripture, quite different in nature and priority than the rest of the Hebrew Bible.¹¹ In contrast, Christians tend to see the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament as either (a) an indistinct unity—all books being of equal importance and equally inspired—or perhaps (b) that the Pentateuch is the least important division of those scriptures. As a result, I will suggest, many of the proposals related to Hebrews' use of scripture unintentionally fail to perceive the fundamental role that texts from the Pentateuch play in its exegesis.

To state this problem another way, scholars have suggested a variety of ways that Hebrews resembles midrash and/or synagogue homily. The default mode for the majority of Jewish exegesis—especially the sorts of texts to which Hebrews is often compared¹²—is that a text from the *Pentateuch* would be the main text being exegeted; that is, the base text of a homily or the text being interpreted in midrash.¹³ Most studies of Hebrews to this point, however, focus on the abundance of texts from the Psalms and Prophets cited in Hebrews, overlooking the potential role of a text, or texts, from the Pentateuch as

¹¹ See the discussion in chapter 1, below.

¹² This claim will be examined in greater detail in subsequent chapters. Hebrews is often compared to rabbinic midrashim, the writings of Philo, and works like Jubilees; all of which tend overwhelmingly to be generated from Pentateuchal texts. The most obvious (and rare) exception would be comparisons made to Qumran *pesharim* generated from prophetic texts. Hebrews has also been compared to the Wisdom of Solomon with some frequency and, while that may not give the initial impression of being a Torah-based text, it does interpret Pentateuchal narratives in ways that are similar to Hebrews at points. (See further discussion in ch. 1.)

¹³ This point will be taken up extensively in chapter 1.

fundamental to Hebrews' exegesis. In other words, if Hebrews is an exegetical work like midrash or a form of synagogue homily, we would typically expect it to be based on the Pentateuch, not a Psalm, nor a series of texts from Psalms and the Prophets.

The thesis of this study is that the Sinai pericope of Exodus (Exod 19-40) serves as the principal generative text¹⁴ of Hebrews and that the abundant citations of texts from the Prophets and Writings function exegetically and dialogically in relation to Exodus.

Put another way, from an exegetical standpoint, Hebrews' message emerges from the juxtaposition of texts and themes from Exodus with texts from the Prophets and Writings. Texts from the Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Haggai are all used to explain and expound upon Pentateuchal paradigms such as the Sinai Covenant, Moses, Aaron's priesthood, the wilderness sanctuary, showing how Jesus and his ministry relate to what had been the reigning paradigms for centuries.

Hebrews repeatedly compares Jesus and/or aspects of his ministry and the so-called New Covenant to the Sinai Covenant, Sinai narrative and the key characters therein. In fact, Hebrews operates with Sinai in view from beginning to end and from top to bottom. This study intends to show that Exodus provides Hebrews' guiding narrative and serves as its lexical reservoir. It holds that, in the world of Hebrews' author, Exodus was a familiar text which he uses to explain Jesus and his ministry, his message, his priesthood, his covenant, and his sacrifice. In a carefully-crafted series of arguments and

¹⁴ A “generative text,” for the purposes of this study is a text which serves as the basis and starting point for another composition; e.g. a homily, exegesis, commentary, revision, adaptation, parody, etc. It is the text that launches or inspires—that generates—another work or discourse, a text to which the subsequent text refers in a fundamental way. This is further discussed and clarified toward the end of chapter 1.

exhortations, the Sinai Covenant serves simultaneously as paradigm and antitype for the New Covenant. The Exodus narrative, at times extending into the larger wilderness narrative, represents both a glorious inspiration and a devastating warning. Hebrews' readers find themselves at the same fork in the road that once confronted the wilderness generation, a choice between faith and apostasy. In the remainder of this introduction, I will briefly highlight some of the key elements from Exodus that are found in Hebrews to set the stage, followed by a summary of related work in Hebrews and an overview of the rest of the study.

Topics and themes from the Sinai section of Exodus (Exod 19-40) emerge throughout Hebrews. As noted above, Hebrews discusses angels as agents of God's revelation at Sinai (2:1-4), the Sinai theophany (12:18-21), Moses as God's servant (3:1-3), and the wilderness generation (3:7-4:13). Hebrews also mentions "signs and wonders" (2:4; cf. Exod 7:3, 9; 11:9-10, 15:11), Aaron and the Levitical priesthood (5:1-10; 7:1-28), the tabernacle and the ark (8:1-9:11), the sacrificial system (8:1-31), the Law of Moses (7:5-28; 8:4; 9:22; 10:1, 8, 28) and the ratification of the Sinai Covenant with blood (9:18). The following chart shows the major contrasts between Jesus and/or aspects of his ministry to characters, institutions or themes related to Sinai:

Table I.1 Major Contrasts between Sinai/Exodus & Jesus/minstry

Exodus/Sinai Covenant	Jesus/New Covenant
Angels as servants/messengers (1:4-2:9)	Jesus as divine Son/messenger (1:1-3:1)
Moses as deliverer and leader of God's household (3:1-6)	Jesus as deliverer and leader of God's household (2:10-3:6; 12:1-6)
Aaron as priest (4:14-5:10; 7:1-28)	Jesus as priest (2:10-18, 4:14-5:10; 7:1-28)
Levitical priests ministering in the tabernacle (8:1-10:18)	Jesus ministering in a heavenly sanctuary (8:1-10:18)
Sacrificial system (9:1-10:23)	Jesus' sacrifice (9:1-10:18)
Moses as mediator of the Sinai Covenant (3:1-6; 12:18-29)	Jesus as mediator of the New Covenant (2:9-3:6; 8:1-13; 9:15-23; 12:18-29)

We also find an extended contrast of Hebrews' audience to the wilderness generation, which comes in the form of exhortations warning them not to follow that generation in their failures (3:7-4:13; 12:25-29). In each of these major contrasts, we find Jesus and his audience on one side of the ledger and some aspect of the Sinai event or Sinai Covenant—including the wilderness generation—on the other.

Despite the prominence of those themes, perceiving Exodus as the principal generative text of Hebrews is not at all common. In fact, the generative role of Exodus in Hebrews is rarely emphasized by scholars, to the point that it seems as if the role of Exodus is somehow hidden in plain sight. Of course, it can be a challenge to demonstrate what scholars are *not* concerned with or *not* emphasizing in commentaries, but two types of data help to illustrate that scholarship, generally, has been much more interested in texts other than Exodus when it comes to Hebrews.

First, it is noteworthy that only a handful of full-length studies in the last several decades (three from 2000-2015 and three from the 1970s)¹⁵ and a few articles or essays¹⁶ have focused on Hebrews' relationship to Exodus. Works clearly focused on Hebrews' use of Psalms, on the other hand, include at least seven monographs and dissertations¹⁷

¹⁵ Monographs or dissertations: Three from 2000-2015: King Long She, *The Use of Exodus in Hebrews*, Studies in Biblical Literature (New York: Peter Lang, 2011) [Dissertation in 2008]. Ted Miller, *Into His Rest: Refuting Liberation Theology's Use of the Exodus with Hebrews 3-4* (Greenville, S.C.: Bob Jones University Press, 2009). I am not aware of any full-length studies on the relationship between Exodus and Hebrews in the 1980s-1990s. Two dissertations in the 1970s: Streeter Stanley Stuart, "The Exodus Tradition in Late Jewish and Early Christian Literature: A General Survey of the Literature and a Particular Analysis of the Wisdom of Solomon, II Esdras and the Epistle to the Hebrews," (Vanderbilt University 1973); James Ellis Reynolds, "A Comparative Study of the Exodus Motif in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976). To those we might also add the important study by Mary Rose D'Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews*, SBLDS (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

¹⁶ Radu Gheorghita, "Περὶ τῆς ἔξοδου...ἐμνημόνευσεν, 'He spoke about the Exodus': Echoes of Exodus in Hebrews" in *Reverberations of the Exodus in Scripture*, ed. R. Michael Fox (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014); Alphonso Groenewald, "Exodus, Psalms and Hebrews: A God Abounding in Steadfast Love (Ex 34:6)," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 64, no. 3 (2008); Matthew Thiessen, "Hebrews 12.5-13, the Wilderness period, and Israel's Discipline," *New Testament Studies* 55, no. 3 (2009); "Hebrews and the End of the Exodus," *Novum Testamentum* 49, no. 4 (2007).

Gheorghita takes a thematic approach, arguing very effectively that "a careful reading of Hebrews evinces that no book of the Jewish Scriptures surpasses Exodus's presence in its fabric" (p. 161) and that the author of Hebrews "would unequivocally rank Exodus among his paramount scriptural influence, not a whisper, but a reverberating thunder" (p. 186). He presents strong evidence for that thesis in terms of three Exodus themes in Hebrews: the exodus event, the Mosaic covenant (incl. covenant, law, priesthood tabernacle) and Moses as the leader of God's people. Many of his arguments for the thematic influence of Exodus in Hebrews are similar or complementary to those presented in this study. Two notable differences between his and the present study (other than scale) are that Gheorghita focuses more on Heb 11 than the present study, and that the aspect of Hebrews' use of the Prophets and Writings as texts is not a major focus of his chapter as it is here. Gheroghit's chapter is referenced at several points throughout this study.

Thiessen's article "Hebrews as the end of the Exodus" is discussed in chapter 3 of this study and his article on Heb 12:5-13 is referenced extensively in chapter 6.

¹⁷ David R. Anderson, *The King-Priest of Psalm 110 in Hebrews* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); George Wesley Buchanan, *To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972); *The Book of Hebrews: Its Challenge from Zion* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2006); Jared M. Compton, *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015); Simon Kistemaker, *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Amsterdam: Wed. G. van Soest, 1961); James Kurianal, *Jesus Our High Priest: Ps. 110,4 as the Substructure of Heb 5,1-7,28*, Europäische Hochschulschriften (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000); Dale F. Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*, vol. 10 (Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen, 1994).

and well over two dozen articles¹⁸ and chapters or essays.¹⁹ Of particular note is George Wesley Buchanan's Anchor Bible volume on Hebrews which famously begins "The document entitled 'To the Hebrews' is a homiletical midrash on Psalm 110,"²⁰ as well as

¹⁸ Some of the articles related to the Psalms in/and Hebrews Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Psalm 45:6-7 and its Christological Contributions to Hebrews," *Trinity Journal* 22, no. 1 (2001); John Joseph Collins, "The Interpretation of Psalm 2," in *Echoes from the Caves: Qumran and the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Jared M. Compton, "The Origin of σωμα in Heb 10:5: Another Look at a Recent Proposal," *Trinity Journal* 32, no. 1 (2011); Chris L. De Wet, "Some Semantic and Rhetorical Considerations on Psalm 22:23 (21:23 LXX) in Hebrews 2:12: A Case-Study on the Septuagint as *Praeparatio Evangelica*," *Journal for Semitics* 18, no. 2 (2009); Peter Enns, "Creation and Re-Creation : Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1-4:13," *Westminster Theological Journal* 55, no. 2 (1993); "Interpretation."; Groenewald, "Exodus."; George H. Guthrie and Russell D. Quinn, "A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 2 (2006); Karen H. Jobes, "Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 'Misquote' of Psalm 40," *Biblica* 72, no. 3 (1991); Theo C. de Kruif, "The Priest-King Melchizedek: The Reception of Gen 14,18-20 in Hebrews Mediated by Psalm 110," *Bijdragen* 54, no. 4 (1993); Armando J. Levoratti, "Tú no has querido sacrificio ni oblación": Salmo 40:7; Hebreos 10:5; pt 1," *Revista Bíblica* 48, no. 1 (1986); "Tú no has querido sacrificio ni oblación": Salmo 40:7; Hebreos 10:5; pt 2," *Revista Bíblica* 48, no. 3 (1986); Stephen Motyer, "The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?," *Tyndale Bulletin* 50, no. 1 (1999); Gert Jacobus Steyn, "Psalm 2 in Hebrews," *Neotestamentica* 37, no. 2 (2003); "The Vorlage of Psalm 45:6-7 (44:7-8) in Hebrews 1:8-9," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 60, no. 3 (2004); "The Occurrence of Psalm 118(117):6 in Hebrews 13:6: Possible Liturgical Origins?," *Neotestamentica* 40, no. 1 (2006); "Notes on Ps 101 (LXX) and Ps 103 (LXX) in Hebrews 1 in the Light of Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls and Papyrus Bodmer XXIV," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 20 (2009); L. Timothy Swinson, "'Wind' and 'Fire' in Hebrews 1:7: A Reflection upon the Use of Psalm 104 (103)," *Trinity Journal* 28, no. 2 (2007); Ronald H. van der Bergh, "A Textual Comparison of Hebrews 10:5b-7 and LXX Psalm 39:7-9," *Neotestamentica* 42, no. 2 (2008); Albert Vanhoye, "Longue marche ou accès tout proche: Le contexte biblique de Hébreux 3:7-4:11," *Biblica* 49, no. 1 (1968); David Wallace, "The Use of Psalms in the Shaping of a Text: Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:1 in Hebrews 1," *Restoration Quarterly* 45, no. 1-2 (2003); Wilber B. Wallis, "The Use of Psalms 8 and 110 in I Corinthians 15:25-27 and in Hebrews 1 and 2," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15, no. 1 (1972).

¹⁹ Chapters and essays: Harold W. Attridge, "The Psalms in Hebrews," in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Martinus J. J. Menken (London: T & T Clark, 2004); Collins, "Interpretation."; Gert J. C. Jordaan and Pieter Nel, "From Priest-King to King-Priest: Psalm 110 and the Basic Structure of Hebrews," in *Psalms and Hebrews : Studies in Reception*, ed. Gert Jacobus Steyn and Dirk J. Human (New York: T & T Clark, 2010); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Abolition of the Old Order and the Establishment of the New: A Study of Psalm 40:6-8 and Hebrews 10:5-10," in *Tradition and Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981); Wolfgang Kraus, "Heb 3,7-4,11 as a Midrash on Ps 94 (LXX)," in *Florilegium Lovaniense* (Leuven: Peeters, 2008); Paul-Gerhard Müller, "Die Funktion der Psalmzitate im Hebräerbrief," in *Freude an der Weisung des Herrn: Beiträge zur Theologie der Psalmen: FS Heinrich Gross* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1986).

²⁰ Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, XIX.

full length studies by Simon Kistemaker,²¹ Dale Leschert,²² James Kurianal,²³ and Jared Compton²⁴; and a collection of essays edited by Gert Steyn & Dirk Human.²⁵

A second indicator that Exodus does not often play a major role in the overall interpretation of Hebrews can be seen in an assortment of outlines or structures developed by scholars based on scripture in Hebrews. As mentioned above, some scholars have described Hebrews as a series of several scriptural expositions. Caird, for instance, suggested that Hebrews contains a series of four expositions on Pss 8, 95, 110 and Jer 31.²⁶ Richard Longenecker sees a series of five scriptural expositions; the first on Ps 2, 2 Sam 7, and Deut 32; followed by expositions on Ps 8:4-6; Ps 95:7-11; Ps 110:4; and Jer 31 with a final exposition on “prior sections.”²⁷ R. T. France sees a series of seven expositions, six from the Psalms, Proverbs and Prophets and a final one on the “Mt.

²¹ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*.

²² Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle’s Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*, 10.

²³ Kurianal, *Jesus*.

²⁴ Jared M. Compton, "Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews" (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School 2013).

²⁵ Gert Jacobus Steyn and Dirk J. Human, *Psalms and Hebrews: Studies in Reception*, T & T Clark Library of Biblical Studies (New York: T & T Clark International, 2010).

²⁶ George B. Caird, "Exegetical Method of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1 (1959).

²⁷ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*.

Sinai motif.”²⁸ Ben Witherington,²⁹ incorporating the work of John Walters³⁰ articulates a text-oriented structure similar to that of France.

Table I.2 Examples of text-oriented structures

Caird (1959) ³¹	Longenecker (1975/1999) ³²	France (1996) ³³
	Heb 1:3-2:9 based on Ps 2, 2 Sam 7, Deut 32	
Heb 2 based on Ps 8	Heb 2:15-18 on Ps 8:4-6	Heb 2:15-18 on Ps 8:4-6
Heb 3-4 on Ps 95	Heb 3:1-4:13 on Ps 95:7-11	Heb 3:7-4:13 on Ps 95:7-11
Heb 5-7 on Ps 110	Heb 4:14-7:28 on Ps 110:4	Heb 5:5-7:28 on Ps 110
Heb 8-10 on Jer 31	Heb 8:1-10:39 on Jer 31	Heb 8:1-10:18 on Jer 31:31-34
	Heb 11-13 on prior sections	Heb 10:32-12:3 on Hab 2:3-4
		Heb 12:4-13 on Prov 3:11-12/Isa 26:11/Hag 2:6
		Heb 12:18-29 on “Mt. Sinai motif”

Others, following Buchanan’s lead,³⁴ see Hebrews as an extended exposition on Psalm 110. Given that Ps 110:1 and 110:4 are each cited or alluded to several times in Hebrews, Steve Stanley, Gert Jordaan and Pieter Nel all see that psalm as essential to Hebrews’ structure, although in different ways.³⁵ Harold Attridge remarks that Psalm 110

²⁸ R. T. France, "The Writer of Hebrews as a Biblical Expositor," *Tyndale Bulletin* 47, no. 2 (1996).

²⁹ Ben Witherington, III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James, and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 51.

³⁰ John R. Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews," *Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (1996).

³¹ Caird, "Exegetical Method," 44-51.

³² Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 151-56.

³³ France, "Writer."

³⁴ Buchanan, *To the Hebrews; Book of Hebrews*.

³⁵ Jordaan and Nel, "From Priest-King." Jordaan and Nel present a scheme that is unique in that it incorporates *all* of Ps 110 into the structure, not just the two verses cited or alluded to in Hebrews (110:1, 4). Steve Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives," *Tyndale Bulletin* 45, no. 2 (1994). Stanley develops outlines based on literary genre, rhetorical character and content, leading to a composite structure. The literary outline (p. 254) is takes particular note of citations and allusions to Ps 110:1 and 4 in marking off the units. While Buchanan describes Hebrews as a homiletical midrash on Ps 110, he does not devote much attention to the structure of Hebrews.

“is a critical text for Hebrews, providing elements of the surface structure of the homily and leverage for the conceptual claims that undergird the text’s Christology.”³⁶

All the views just mentioned see texts from the Hebrew Bible guiding or indicating the structure and message of Hebrews, but none of them perceive Exodus as having a dominant influence on Hebrews. In fact, none of the textual-structural schemes above refer to any text from Exodus, or to texts from any other book of the Pentateuch for that matter. The one instance that comes closest to doing so is the final section in France’s outline that references the “Mt. Sinai motif” in Hebrews 12:18-29. Each of the text-oriented outlines above focus exclusively on citations from the Prophets and Writings as the basis for the exegetical sections throughout Hebrews.

The disparity of interest in Exodus versus the Psalms in Hebrews can, no doubt, be explained to some degree by the fact that there are a great many more *citations* of verses from Psalms in Hebrews in comparison to citations of Exodus (20 citations from 11 Psalms versus 2 citations from Exodus according the margin notes in the NA28). But, since many readers do not *expect* the Pentateuch to play a foundational role in the book—especially if they read it as declaring the Law to be obsolete—that likely also contributes to overlooking the significance of the topics, themes and references to Exodus. We often fail to notice that for which we are not looking.

The work of Gabriella Gelardini, presents a notable contrast to the approaches, above, however. In her monograph *'Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht': der Hebräer, eine*

³⁶ Attridge, "Psalms," 199.

Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw,³⁷ and an article that summarizes it,³⁸ Gelardini has proposed that Hebrews is a synagogue homily for which the extended quotation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Heb 8) is the *haftarah*³⁹ and Exodus 31:18-32:35⁴⁰ is the Torah reading, or *seder* text. Apart from Hebrews, that pair of texts is associated with each other in Jacob Mann's Palestinian Triennial Lectionary Cycle.⁴¹ In that context, the breaking of the newly ratified covenant in the incident golden calf narrative (Exod 32) is linked to the "new covenant" passage in Jeremiah 31. According to some sources, the two passages were read together on the 9th of Av as part of a remembrance of the destruction of the first and second temples, lamenting the consequences associated with the breaking of the covenant.⁴² Although her proposal has been met with resistance from some scholars, related mainly to potential anachronism and the form of synagogue homily,⁴³ Gelardini has made an extremely important contribution to Hebrews' scholarship. Hebrews is often considered by scholars as (a) a homily—even a synagogue homily⁴⁴ and/or (b) a type of

³⁷ Gabriella Gelardini, *'Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht': der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw*, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

³⁸ "Hebrews, An Ancient Synagogue Homily for Tisha be-Av: Its Function, its Basis, its Theological Interpretation," in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights*, ed. Gabriella Gelardini, Biblical Interpretation Series (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 107-27.

³⁹ The reading from the Prophets that accompanies the Torah text in the lectionary.

⁴⁰ Or, possibly 31:18-34:35.

⁴¹ Jacob Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue, Vol. 1: The Palestinian Triennial Cycle: Genesis and Exodus* (New York: KTAV, 1971). See also the very helpful summary chart in Gelardini, "Hebrews," 125-27.

⁴² "Hebrews," 120-22.

⁴³ The most vigorous criticism levelled by Carl Mosser, "Review of Gabriella Gelardini, 'Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht': Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw," *Review of Biblical Literature* (2009). https://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5808_6132.pdf. Accessed May 22, 2017.

⁴⁴ Often regarded as the first to have done this is Hartwig Thyen, *Der Stil der jüdisch-hellenistischen Homilie*, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1955).

ancient Jewish exegesis.⁴⁵ Whether or not one agrees with her conclusions on the particulars of the formal characteristics of synagogue homily or the applicability of the occasion of the 9th of Av, by pointing out that a synagogue homily would normally be based on a pair of texts, a text from the Torah and a related text from the Prophets, Gelardini seems to have exposed a significant weakness in the status quo of Hebrews scholarship with respect to Hebrews' view of the Scriptures and exegesis.

Overview of the Study

In order to bring the often overlooked or underestimated influence of Exodus in Hebrews to the fore, this study will begin with a consideration of ancient Jewish concepts of scripture and how they relate to exegesis. Then each of the major exegetical sections of Hebrews will be studied in turn with the aim of demonstrating the foundational role of Exodus, in each case, and the exegetical functions of texts from the Prophets and Writings (P&W). Chapter 1 sets about reimagining Hebrews' textual universe from the perspective of Jewish concepts of scripture. Based on the fact that Hebrews is frequently analyzed as an example of ancient Jewish exegesis, the first chapter explains the most important and distinctive presupposition of this study: that author's perception of the nature of the Scriptures is likely to have been "Torah-centric." Here it is proposed that Hebrews' perception of the Scriptures was closer to a traditionally Jewish view than it was to later Christian views in which the Pentateuch's role was greatly diminished. Hebrews' author still perceived the Pentateuch as the scriptural center of gravity, a different category of scriptures than the P&W. From that point of view, the P&W existed

⁴⁵ More specifics on each of these perspectives will be presented below.

for the purpose of interpreting (broadly defined) the Five Books of Moses. Several examples of ancient Jewish exegesis are offered to illustrate the primacy of the Pentateuch and the interpretive role of the P&W, including a Torah and *haftarah* to be read in synagogues, a passage from the Mekilta which interprets Exodus using different psalms and Isaiah, Proverbs 8 juxtaposed with the Genesis creation narrative in the Johannine Prologue (as analyzed by Boyarin), the figure of *Sophia* from Proverbs 8 superimposed over the Pentateuchal narrative in Wisdom 10-12, and an eschatological interpretation of jubilee (Lev 25) by means of Isaiah 61 in 11QMelchizedek. Chapter 1 also addresses some methodological issues related to generative texts, intertextuality, scriptural allusions and the use of the term “midrash.”

Chapter 2 examines the first major section of Hebrews (1:1-3:6). Sinai is the unifying theme of the section as Hebrews uses a series of exegetical texts from the Psalms and Prophets, many of which are connected to Jesus in some way, in order to portray him as a greater agent of revelation than the angels at Sinai and a greater leader, deliverer and priestly mediator than Moses. One key text is 2:1-4, where Hebrews alerts the audience to the urgency of the message they have heard through Christ, placing them in their own Sinai moment.

Chapter 3 considers the second major exegetical section (3:7-4:13), which directly compares the audience to the exodus generation by means of Ps 95:7-11. Hebrews creates a productive tension by claiming that the promise of rest, which had originated in Exodus 33:14, had been denied to the exodus generation with an oath (Ps 95:11) due to their hard-heartedness. The promise of rest has gone unfulfilled since that time. Through the

use of various phrases from the psalm as an exegetical text, “Do not harden your hearts...,” “...today...,” “I swore in my anger...” and “...My rest,” Hebrews (re)defines the promised rest as a kind of Sabbath in a transcendent realm and proclaims that rest still to be available to the faithful.

Chapter 4 explicates Hebrews’ argument comparing Jesus’ priesthood to Aaron’s. In 4:14-7:28, Hebrews juxtaposes the ambiguous or mysterious priestly figure in Ps 110:4, declared by God to be “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek,” with the inaugural appointment of Aaron to priesthood at Sinai (Exod 28:1). Hebrews argues for both the legitimacy and superiority of Jesus as a great high priest by showing his sufficiency in a set of categories based directly on the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood, including his appointment, atoning work, priestly mediation, genealogy, and the perpetual nature of his priesthood. Jesus is also compared to Melchizedek on the basis of the claim that God swore that he would be “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4), a comparison meant to show Jesus to be greater than Aaron and to resolve the tribal/genealogical problem of Jesus not being a descendant of Levi.

In chapter 5 we see that the argument for the legitimacy and effectiveness of Jesus’ priesthood continues in 8:1-10:18 but, instead of Melchizedek, the sanctuary (or wilderness tabernacle) becomes the hub on which the argument turns. A cluster of sanctuary texts, including the citation of Exod 25:40 and an allusion to Exod 15:17, form the Pentateuchal basis and starting point of the exposition. Psalm 110:1 and Jer 31:31-34 are paired as the main exegetical texts. In this section, Hebrews draws extensively from Jer 31 as it looks forward to the internalization of the Law and complete forgiveness of

sins under a new covenant mediated by Jesus. Psalm 40:6-8, another exegetical text, supports the premise that Jesus' priestly sacrifice is capable of affecting the permanent forgiveness foreseen under a new covenant in Jer 31:31-34. The heavenly sanctuary paradigm, the priesthood and the sacrificial system are all major themes in Exodus which Hebrews juxtaposes with the concept of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary (Ps 110:1) after which the Tabernacle was patterned (Exod 25:40).

Chapter 6 discusses Hebrews' return to the topic of Sinai in Heb 12, following the famous list of heroes of the faith (Heb 11). In 12:1-17, the audience is implicitly compared to the wilderness generation enduring divine discipline. Numerous allusions to Isa 35 hint at a journey toward Zion, which is then mentioned explicitly in 12:18-29. A composite description assembled from Exodus, Deuteronomy and the Psalms portrays Sinai, the historic earthly mountain, as fearsome and unapproachable with severe boundaries all around it. This is contrasted with Hebrews' vision of a heavenly Jerusalem on an eschatological Mount Zion, the future abode of God's people, beckoning with the promise that the perfected saints will dwell in the city of the living God. There, Jesus will be the priestly mediator of the New Covenant. Hebrews uses the prophetic word of Haggai 2:6 as a lens through which to view the cataclysmic moment when Sinai will be shaken to bits and the age of heavenly Zion is ushered in.

The conclusion of the study reviews the most significant evidence to suggest that the Sinai pericope of Exodus is the primary generative text for Hebrews. It also compares this proposal to others with regard to interpretive ramifications. My hope is that enhanced perceptions of the foundational and paradigmatic role of Exodus in Hebrews and a fresh

consideration of the author's exegetical thinking will spark further imagination and reimagining as to the use of the Scriptures by ancient Jewish and Christian exegetes.

CHAPTER ONE: REIMAGINING HEBREWS' TEXTUAL UNIVERSE

New Testament exegesis is not simply the exegesis of scripture; it is the *exegesis of the exegesis* of scripture, more often than not. We seek to interpret the work of interpreters of the Jewish scriptures who lived and wrote long ago. We work with texts comprised of texts, venturing into an ancient world “that is profoundly scriptural.”¹ In *The Exegetical Imagination*, Michael Fishbane studies the collected work of a different group of Jewish exegetes encountered in the rabbinic traditions. He writes: “The task for the interpreter is...to examine carefully the exegetical reasoning manifest in the text at hand—in the thickness of citations and expression—and re-imagine the earlier exegete’s habit of mind.”² While the writing of Hebrews antedates most of the rabbinic traditions Fishbane treats,³ his approach resonates well with the task of interpreting the NT as he

¹ Johnson, "Scriptural World," 247.

² Michael A. Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4.

³ Scholars have most frequently dated Hebrews in a range from 60-100 CE. Some are of the opinion that the Jerusalem temple cult was still active at the time it was written (pre-70 CE), while others see a post-70 CE setting, but with a *terminus ad quem* connected to a reference in 1 Clement that seems to indicate an awareness of Hebrews around the end of the first century. Pamela Eisenbaum makes a good case for extending the *terminus ad quem* to the first quarter of the early second century. The intent of this study is to argue that Jewish concepts of scripture and Jewish exegetical strategies would have applied just as well from 60 CE to 125 CE, so it is unnecessary—and potentially counterproductive—to attempt to narrow that range for the present purposes. For discussions on the date, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 6-9; Pamela M. Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews within the Literary Landscape of Christian Origins," in *Hebrews* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

The dating of rabbinic writings and traditions is more complex. The earliest compilations of midrash attributed to the *tanna'im* (70-220 CE), including the Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael (on Exod), Sifra (Lev), Sifrei (Num and Deut), include some traditions that may indeed have been contemporary with Hebrews, but many are later and the compilations may have not reached written form (at least the forms we have) until the amoraic period (200-500 CE). I describe Hebrews as ancedating “most” of the rabbinic

writes of the importance of perceptions of Scripture in exegesis. “Rabbinic thought and theology” he writes, “are quintessentially Bible-based—whether they are explanations, interpretations or allegories of their scriptural source.”⁴ The key for interpreters of second-order texts (e.g., Midrashim, the NT), according to Fishbane, is to seek to understand how those texts are derived from the first-order discourse (usu. Scripture). Doing that effectively “involves close attention to the texture of Scripture and to all the verbal conditions and nuances that elicit the exegetical imagination.”⁵ The intention here is to take further steps in reimagining the thinking of earlier exegetes and to grapple with their perceptions of the textual universe in which they lived and worked.

In the introduction, I highlighted the fact that many consider the Book of Hebrews to be an example of ancient Jewish exegesis. This happens directly and indirectly with the use of terms like midrash, *qal wahomer*, *gezerah shewa*, etc. I also suggested that there are inconsistencies between what we know of ancient Jewish exegetical conventions, generally, and the way Hebrews is understood, especially when it comes to Hebrews’ perception and use of scripture. In making such a claim, it is important to acknowledge that Judaism in the first century was by no means monolithic. There were significant differences between the various sects in Palestine, most notably the Pharisees,

traditions to allow for the possibility of some first century traditions. See Carol Bakhos, "Midrash," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Steven D. Fraade, "Midrashim," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Alan J. Avery-Peck, "Rabbinic Literature," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Books of the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford: 'Oxford University Press', 2011); Judah Goldin, "Midrash and Aggadah [First Edition]," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005).

⁴ Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination*, 1.

⁵ *Exegetical Imagination*, 1.

Sadducees and Essenes, as well as differences between those living in the diaspora and Palestine and even between those of eastern and western diasporic communities.

However, there were also decisive commonalities. Seth Schwartz describes the “three pillars of ancient Judaism” as “the one God, the one Torah, and the one Temple.”⁶ In suggesting that scholarship has tended to overlook key aspects of ancient Jewish exegesis, I do not mean to assert either that all of Judaism was homogeneous in the late first or early second centuries, nor do I make the even more problematic claim that all Jewish exegesis of the era was essentially the same. What I do mean to suggest is that there are two basic assumptions about the Torah and the Jewish scriptures that can be broadly applied and were consistent with the fundamental God-Torah-Temple worldview. These two assumptions, which govern most ancient Jewish exegesis, are: (1) The primacy of the Pentateuch among the scriptures and (2) the tendency of the Prophets and Writings to function as exegetical texts; texts which exist to explain or, in some way, elucidate the Pentateuch. I will expand upon these two assumptions below and seek to demonstrate that these were widespread perspectives, not specific to any one particular exegetical stream or school. The approach will be to demonstrate that Hebrews has important commonalities with ancient Jewish exegesis in the broadest sense and at the most fundamental level—and in ways that have often been overlooked.

⁶ 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, 2009), 49. He goes on to assert that the observance of the laws of the Torah would have been a major point of their identification with Judaism for most first-century Jews, and that “In ritual, and in public assemblies, images associated with the Temple or Torah, or rhetorical evocations of them, or the actual Torah scroll, might function synechdochically to evoke Judaism as a whole, hence, for example, the (Temple-associated) menorah so often carved on ancient (especially post-70) C.E. Jewish tombstones, the ceremonial display of a Torah scroll before battle ascribed to Judah Maccabee, and so on” (p. 50).

The main problem *in nuce* is this: Most approaches to Hebrews' use of scripture focus mainly on the texts it cites from the Prophets and Writings (P&W) rather than on the ways Hebrews engages the Pentateuch. Such a predominant focus on Hebrews' use of the P&W is inconsistent with the most basic element of Jewish views of the scriptures, the concept that the Pentateuch is primary. Doubtless, this is due in part to the fact that most of the scripture Hebrews *cites* is from the P&W. But, the root of the problem runs deeper. The underlying cause, I suggest, is a set of largely unexamined Christian assumptions about Hebrews' treatment of scripture that run contrary to Jewish concepts of scripture. These include viewing the Hebrew Bible as uniformly scriptural rather than a collection of books with gradations of authority and varying functions. In addition, since the P&W are more frequently used by Hebrews with reference to Jesus than the Pentateuch is, it is assumed that the P&W have usurped the authority of the Books of Moses in the mind of the author. Further, and perhaps most importantly, it seems to be assumed that Christology among early Christian communities developed and changed at the same rate as theology of scripture; a radical redefinition of scripture is imagined to have gone hand-in-hand with new understandings of Jesus as Messiah. Those two theological categories—Christology and theology of scripture—as moderns think of them, were not necessarily so closely connected, however. As I hope to demonstrate, the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah need not have demanded an instant and radical reordering of the scriptural universe.

The rest of this chapter will consider two seldom discussed ramifications of the difference between these Jewish and Christian perspectives on scriptural exegesis. The

first is the possibility that by overlooking the supreme status of the Five Books of Moses among the Jewish Scriptures—even in early Christian contexts—we miss the fact that the Pentateuch forms the scriptural and exegetical center of gravity for Hebrews. To put it bluntly, Hebrews does exegesis of the Pentateuch, not the Psalms. That leads to the second point, which is that we may miss, or misapprehend, the exegetical “division of labor” between the Torah, *Nevi’im* and *Ketuvim*. The *Nevi’im* are there to interpret the Torah, not *instead* of the Torah, not to be interpreted *by* the Torah and definitely not to *replace* the Torah.

The purposes of this first chapter include the reexamination of views of scripture evident in ancient Jewish homily, literature and exegesis from periods before, during and after the time we estimate Hebrews to have been written, and to observe how those views of scripture affect exegesis. This will be done, first, by reimagining operative views of scripture of Christian and Jewish exegetes, then revisiting ancient Jewish exegetical strategies in light of those views. Much of this chapter is comprised of five examples of scriptural exegesis to illustrate these principles from a modest cross-section of Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism. The examples chosen from the synagogue, Dead Sea Scrolls, Mekilta, Wisdom of Solomon and Gospel of John intentionally bracket the NT chronologically by at least a century (before and after). This chapter concludes with a few thoughts on perceiving generative texts⁷ to set the stage for subsequent chapters. The hope is that taking a fresh look at these aspects of ancient Jewish exegesis will enhance

⁷ As noted in the introduction and expanded upon later in this chapter, a “generative text,” is described as a text that serves as the basis and starting point for another composition; e.g. a homily, exegesis, commentary, revision, adaptation, parody, etc.; the text from which another work or discourse is generated and a text to which the subsequent text refers in a fundamental way.

our understanding of the exegetical habit of mind of Hebrews' author. This, in turn, will better explain how and why Exodus functions as the primary generative text in Hebrews (in contradistinction to other proposals) as the study proceeds, and how the texts cited in Hebrews relate to Exodus exegetically.

I. REIMAGINING OPERATIVE VIEWS OF SCRIPTURE

Implicit in Fishbane's suggestion that we "*reimagine*" an ancient exegete's "habit of mind" is the idea that we have already imagined how ancient authors went about understanding and interpreting texts, but that there is room to continue in that endeavor. By calling us to "*reimagine*," rather than "*re-deduce*" or "*re-determine*," Fishbane reminds us of creative and intuitive elements in our own explorations of the work of our exegetical predecessors, and of the gulfs that will forever determine those explorations to be an uncertain (but fascinating) enterprise. With that in mind, we turn to reimagining what scripture is and what scripture does in ancient Jewish exegesis, in hopes of reassessing some familiar mental maps: perceptions of what the scriptures *are* and what the scriptures *do*.

Jewish vs. Christian Perceptions of Scripture

Jewish and Christian traditions perceive the Jewish scriptures in radically different ways, as Benjamin Sommer describes:

To be sure, all twenty-four books of Jewish scripture are part of the Christian Bible in its various forms. Nonetheless, in many respects these texts function so differently in the two traditions that one can rightly say that the books in question

are not the same books at all but entirely different works that happen to have the same words.⁸

The differences Sommer refers to obviously go beyond reading right to left or left to right, back to front or front to back, or to different interpretations or translations of the same ancient texts. Jews and Christians have developed profoundly different notions of scripture. It is not difficult to think of ways that the “Old Testament” and the “Tanakh” are *not* the same thing—even if they do “happen to have the same words.”

We gain some insight by comparing how congregants experience the Five Books of Moses and the four books of Jesus in their respective traditions, even today. A pair of descriptions of liturgical encounters with the Scriptures will serve to illustrate profound contrasts between how scripture is perceived in Jewish and Christian settings. While the following illustration has its limits, it is offered as an example of the ritualization and externalization of mental paradigms of scripture. Observing the exercise of reverence for the respective scriptures in practice provides a useful metaphor by which to consider the habit of mind of ancient and modern exegetes in approaching those scriptures.

Beginning with Judaism and synagogue traditions, it is obvious that the Torah scroll, or Sefer Torah, containing the Five Books of Moses is an exceptionally sacred object.⁹ Torah scrolls are, to this day, written on parchment by scribes, covered in ornate

⁸ Benjamin D. Sommer, *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 2.

⁹ As Louis Isaac Rabinowitz writes: “The Sefer Torah is the most sacred of all Jewish books. A valid Sefer Torah must be treated with special sanctity and great reverence (Yad, Sefer Torah 10:2). Its sanctity is higher than that of all other scrolls of the books of the Bible, and therefore, though one Sefer Torah may be placed on top of another, or on the scroll of another book, another scroll must not be placed on it (Meg. 27a).” “Sefer Torah,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007).

mantles and stored in an ark at the front of the synagogue. Congregants must stand as the ark is opened and the Sefer Torah processes through the congregation. It is customary to touch the mantle of the scroll and kiss the hand that touched it as a sign of reverent affection. The Chumash (the Pentateuch in codex form, used in the synagogue) is organized on the basis of Torah readings—*parashot* or *sedarim*. The Five Books of Moses are chanted in their entirety during the year.¹⁰ Selections from the Former or Latter Prophets—*haftarot*—are read in conjunction with Torah. The *haftarot* have been linked to the Torah passages since long ago, usually based on verbal or thematic connections between them.¹¹ The synagogue liturgy, as a whole, is oriented around the Torah—visually, audibly, spatially, physically, chronologically and textually.

A remarkable set of parallels and contrasts become evident when the role of scripture in the synagogue is compared to the experience of a Catholic mass, as one example of Christian tradition. The Ministry of the Word in Catholic liturgy includes readings from the Old Testament and the latter parts of the New Testament but, as described in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the Book of the Gospels takes center stage:

The reading of the Gospel is the high point of the Liturgy of the Word. The Liturgy itself teaches that great reverence is to be shown to it by setting it off from the other readings with special marks of honor: whether on the part of the minister appointed to proclaim it, who prepares himself by a blessing or prayer; or on the part of the faithful, who stand as they listen to it being read and through their

¹⁰ Most synagogue lectionary cycles are annual, although there have been triennial reading cycles at different places and times; see Louis Jacobs, "Torah, Reading of," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007). For an informative discussion of Torah readings in the ancient synagogue, see Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue : The First Thousand Years*, vol. 2nd ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), Book.; esp. pp. 150-152

¹¹ Michael A. Fishbane, *Haftarat: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS translation*, JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 13-14.

acclamations acknowledge and confess Christ present and speaking to them; or by the very marks of reverence that are given to the Book of the Gospels.¹²

In Catholic tradition, the lectionary is organized on the basis of the three synoptic gospels, which are read through during the lectionary cycle.¹³ The often ornate Book of the Gospels, or Evangelary, is given special reverence as it is held up during the Gospel procession. Following the Gospel reading, the officiant may customarily kiss the Evangelary.

We can imagine the first generations of Jewish Christians standing in the synagogues as the Torah scroll was removed from the ark and carried through the congregation and listening as readings from the Five Books of Moses were chanted. But, at some point in time, Christians started walking down the street to the church instead of the synagogue. They began preaching from texts that had not been scripture before. They no longer revered Torah scrolls as sacred objects, nor did cantors lead congregants in churches through the Torah. Priests would process through the congregation but, instead of the Torah scroll, they would carry a book of the Gospels for the climactic readings of the liturgy. What we might call a “Torah-centric” ordering of the scriptural universe in the synagogues was reordered by the church. If the Jewish liturgy and Chumash could be characterized as “Torah-centric,” the Catholic mass could certainly be described as “Gospel-centric,” especially if the Eucharist is regarded as an embodiment of the Gospel.

¹² *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 3rd ed., vol. 2, Liturgy Documentary Series (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2003), 32-33.

¹³ The Fourth Gospel is used on special occasions, during the Easter season, for instance. <http://www.usccb.org/bible/liturgy/> Accessed March 14, 2017.

Torah-centric became Gospel-centric, the change in practice reflecting a change in thought and belief.

The key question I want to pose is this: Where do we imagine the author of Hebrews to have been situated along the route of that transformation? We can reasonably interpolate and fill in some of the steps in the Christian journey from Torah-centric to Gospel-centric concepts of scripture, but there are things we do not know for certain. Does Hebrews' theology of scripture reflect something closer to the Torah-centric or Gospel-centric end of the spectrum? Metaphorically speaking, did the author of Hebrews kiss the Torah? Or the Evangelary? Of course, it is highly doubtful that there *was* a book of Gospels to which one might show reverence at the time Hebrews was written. It seems to me that, even if we put a later date on Hebrews, early second century for instance, and if Hebrews was written at a time when there was not yet a New Testament canon in place to provoke a rethinking of the nature of scripture, there may not have been a compelling reason for our author to have thought any differently about the nature of the Scriptures or methods of exegesis than any other Jewish teacher at the time.

Hebrews is certainly a Christian text but it has also been described as a Jewish text in the ways that David Flusser, Daniel Boyarin and many others have. It is worth considering, then, whether Hebrews would have been closer to what we think of, centuries later, as Jewish or Christian concepts of scripture. It is not at all farfetched to think that the author of Hebrews would have been accustomed to what we might call a "Torah-centric" environment, to preaching that was based on readings from the Torah by default and would have had a mindset that would naturally have ascribed a higher status

to the Five Books of Moses than to the Prophets and Writings. If that were the case, how would it have affected his scriptural exegesis? Are functional differences between texts from the Law and the Prophets reflected in Hebrews? In preparation for doing exegesis of Hebrews from this perspective in subsequent chapters of this study, two major aspects of ancient Jewish exegesis must be examined more fully.

The Primacy of the Pentateuch

The most profound difference between Jewish and Christian concepts of scripture is the *primacy of the Pentateuch* from a Jewish perspective. Sommer describes the differentiation among the divisions of scripture from a Jewish perspective:

We should begin by noting that the twenty-four books of the Jewish canon are not all equal. The first five books...are by far the most important, the most authoritative and the most familiar to Jews. The remaining books are traditionally divided into two groups, the *Nevi'im*, or Prophets...and the *Ketuvim*, or Writings (sometimes called the Hagiographa). On a practical level, however, it would be more helpful to say that the Jewish Bible has two parts: First and foremost, there is the Torah—the *T* in the acronym *Tanakh*. Also, there is the rest of the Bible—the *Nakh* of the acronym; in fact, one does sometimes hear the term *Nakh* used among Jews to refer to “the part of the Bible coming after the Torah.” Only the Torah is chanted in its entirety in the course of synagogue worship (usually, over the course of a year); only a fraction of the remaining material is chanted in the synagogue. ...While Jewish beliefs flow from and to some degree claim to be based on the whole *Tanakh*, Jewish law—the core of Jewish practice and identity—claims to be based on the Torah alone.¹⁴

The Torah—here referring to the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses—constitutes the heart of the Jewish Scriptures. That it holds privileged status is obvious, from the reverence shown to the Sefer Torah, to its foundational role in the liturgical readings of the Torah and the *haftarot*, to the theological sense that the (written) Torah contains

¹⁴ Sommer, *Jewish Concepts*, 3-4.

divine speech unlike any other part of the Scriptures, to even the practical priority evident in referring customarily to “the Law and the Prophets” (not the “Prophets and the Law”). The status of the Mosaic Torah as *the supreme text* among scriptural texts is as apparent from what we know from antiquity as it is in much Jewish biblical thought and liturgy even today.

A brief survey of Second Temple and rabbinic literature will serve to illustrate the predominance of the Pentateuch across many types of exegetical and liturgical writings. The roles of the Torah and *haftarot* in the synagogue have already been mentioned. Most of the major midrash collections—especially the early ones—are based on texts from the Pentateuch, including Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael (Exod) and Mekilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (Exod); Sifra (Lev); Sifrei devrei Rav, and Sifrei Zuṭa (Num); Sifrei (Deut) and Midrash Tanna'im and Midrash Rabbah on the Pentateuch (Gen. Rab., Exod. Rab., Lev. Rab., Num. Rab., Deut. Rab.); Tanhuma on the Pentateuch and Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana (homilies on Torah and haftarot).¹⁵ Philo wrote all his exegetical works on texts from the Pentateuch.¹⁶ On the rare occasions when he did cite texts from the Psalms or

¹⁵ Goldin, for example lists what he calls “principal midrashic compilations and treatises,” most of which focus on the Pentateuch. His complete list (Pentateuch-based in bold): (**Tannaitic Exodus: Mekhilta’ de-Rabbi Yishma’el and Mekhilta’ de Rabbi Shim’on bar Yoh’ai; Leviticus: Sifra’; Numbers: Sifrei devei Rav, and Sifrei zuṭa’;** **Deuteronomy: Sifrei and Midrash Tanna’im;** (Amoraic) **Midrash Rabbah on the Pentateuch [Gen. Rab., Exod. Rab., Lev. Rab., Num. Rab., Deut. Rab.]** and the Five Scrolls (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther); **Tanhuma’ on the Pentateuch, Pesiqta’ de-Rav Kahana’ [homilies on Torah and haftarot];** Midrash Tehillim (Midrash of the Psalms); **Midrash ha-gadol on the Pentateuch;** and Yalqut Shim’oni, “also of the thirteenth century, by a rabbi Shim’on, which gathers its material from many earlier midrashim and covers the whole of Hebrew scriptures.” Goldin, “Midrash and Aggadah [First Edition].”

¹⁶ Amir and Niehoff succinctly summarize Philo’s exegetical works in three categories: (1) The exposition of the Pentateuch, (2) allegorical commentary on passages from Genesis, and (3) Questions and Answers on Exodus. Yehoyada Amir and Maren Niehoff, “Philo Judaeus,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007).

Prophets, they were in the service of his exegesis of Pentateuchal texts.¹⁷ Among the (OT) Pseudepigrapha, the Pentateuch provides the generative texts for the majority of testamental literature and rewritten Bible,¹⁸ Enochic literature and other apocalyptic works.¹⁹ We do find a few collections of midrashim on the books of Psalms, Esther, Ruth and Ecclesiastes, but these tend to be later traditions than some of the others, and are far fewer in number.²⁰

A commonly held view is that the Dead Sea Scrolls are the great exception to the rule when it comes the primacy of Torah, for two reasons: First, because most of the well-known *pesharim* are focused on biblical texts from the Prophets and Writings and, second, because it is uncertain how clear or settled or fixed any divisions of scripture may have been in the second and first centuries BCE to begin with. Yet, taking a comprehensive look at the interpretation of scripture as found in the scrolls, Moshe Bernstein sees the Pentateuch as being as much at the center of the textual universe as we observe it to have been in other sectors of ancient Judaism. He writes:

Unsurprisingly, the books of the Pentateuch dominate at Qumran as objects of interpretation. In addition to texts such as the Genesis Commentaries, the Genesis Apocryphon, the Reworked Pentateuch, and the Temple Scroll, we find substantial literature pertaining to Enoch, Noah, and Levi, “Moses-

¹⁷ For an excellent descriptive inventory of the use of the Psalms in the Philonic corpus, see David T. Runia, "Philo's Reading of the Psalms," in *In the Spirit of Faith: Studies in Philo and Early Christianity in Honor of David Hay*, ed. David M. Hay, David T. Runia, and Gregory E. Sterling (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001). Regarding possibility that Philo was aware of Torah/*haftarah* lectionary pairings, see the interesting study by Naomi G. Cohen, *Philo's Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings: Evidence for a Haftarah Cycle in Second Temple Judaism*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Boston, 2007).

¹⁸ E.g. Gen and Exod in Jubilees, T. Adam, T. 12 Patr. T. 3 Patr.; Pr. Jac., Pr. Jos., Pr. Man. Pr. Mos.; Jos. Asen., etc.

¹⁹ Apoc. Ab., Apoc. Adam., Apoc. Mos.,

²⁰ E.g. Midr. Tehillim, Midr. Proverbs, Midr. Samuel; Songs Rab., Ruth Rab., Eccl. Rab. See Goldin, "Midrash and Aggadah [First Edition]."

pseudepigrapha," other legal texts related to the Torah, as well as Jubilees and works related to Jubilees within the Qumran corpus. A very substantial proportion of Qumran pentateuchal interpretation pertains to Genesis, and even as far as that biblical book, there seems to be particularly heavy interest in the narrative of Genesis from Creation through the Aqedah (the binding of Isaac, Gn. 22.1–19). The other divisions of the Hebrew scriptures in their later form, the Prophets and Writings,...attracted less written attention.²¹

The importance of the Pentateuch is further evident as one takes stock of the biblical manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls; with 86 of the so-called biblical scrolls containing portions the Five Books of Moses (the largest category), compared to 68 of the Writings and 55 of the Prophets.²² In addition, despite the fact that most or all of the scrolls antedate the official recognition of a canon, there is evidence that the Books of Moses were deemed to be especially authoritative, and that other groups or divisions within scripture—such as “the books of the Prophets and David”—were recognized.²³

²¹ Moshe J. Bernstein, "Interpretation of Scriptures," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Regarding the other divisions, Bernstein continues: "Among the latter prophets, Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Nahum were the object of pesharim, while Jeremiah and Ezekiel [among the former prophets] engendered works that have been classified by scholars as "Apocryphon of Jeremiah" and "Pseudo-Ezekiel." ... The Aramaic Targum of Job...represents the most extended interpretation on any book of the Writings. Beyond translation, focused and sustained interpretation of the Writings is to be found primarily in pesharim on Psalms from Caves 1 and 4, with only one of the manuscripts, Pesher Psalms (4Q171), being at all substantial."

²² Based on Ulrich's index of mss: Eugene Ulrich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls: Transcriptions and Textual Variants*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 779–81. Notably, the two individual books with the highest number of extant mss are the Psalms (37) and Isaiah (21), suggesting frequent liturgical use.

²³ The divisions of scripture may well not have been established in the ways they were a century or two or three later, but we can still observe that the Books of Moses were regarded as authoritative, or had a "special status." In the section of the *Damascus Document* known as a midrash on Amos (CD 7:14–18), the Law and the Prophets are recognized: "...as it says, 'I will exile the tents of your king and the foundation of your images beyond the tents of Damascus'" (Amos 5:27). The books of Law (*ספרי התורה*) are the tents of the king, as it says, "I will re-erect the fallen tent of David" (Amos 9:11). The "king" is the congregation and the "foundation of your images" is the books of the prophets (*ספרי הנביאים*) whose words Israel despised. [Translation from Michael Owen Wise and Martin G. Cook Edward M. Abegg, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005).] Whether there was perhaps some semblance of another collection of the literature of the Writings is not certain, but there is some evidence that such may have been the case, or at least beginning to be formed, as in 4QMMT:

Thus, the nature of the Pentateuch as the textual center of gravity it is evident across the spectrum of ancient Judaism, in the quantity of works and manuscripts that are overtly oriented toward Torah, and in its characters and themes. This is even the case, arguably, in sectors where it is least anticipated from a modern perspective, such as at Qumran—and perhaps the NT. It may be that, because this pentateuchal orientation is so pervasive and so obvious, we have come to assume it, rather than consciously grappling with it.

The primacy of the Pentateuch in Jewish thought and exegesis shines light on the fact that Jews and Christians differ with regard to whether there are variations of status within the respective canons. Sommer maintains that Christians have historically tended to view scripture as “an either/or category”; a given writing is either scriptural or it is not.²⁴ Within Judaism, on the other hand, he describes gradations: “Biblical books and some postbiblical texts are scriptural, but in different ways and to different extents.

2 [...] we [have written that you must understand the bo]ok of Moses

3 [and the **books of the prophets and David** (ובספרי הנביאים ובדוד) and the annals of each] generation [and in] the book is written (4QMMTe/4Q398/4QHalakhicLetter, col. 1:2)

[Translation: Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (translations)” (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997–1998), 803.]

²⁴ I agree with Sommer. To assert that “all scripture is not created equal” is jarring to many modern Christians who have at the foundation of their theology of scripture 2 Timothy 3:16, which begins, “All scripture is inspired by God...” This has led to what, at least in theory, is a more uniform view of scripture. Now, in practice, as seen in the liturgical illustration above, Christians of different stripes tend toward unofficial, implicit canons within the canon, privileging the Gospels for instance, seeing the “deutero-Pauline” as having a different status than the “undisputed Pauline epistles,” or diminishing the importance of the Pentateuch while elevating the NT. Within Christianity there is not a consistent—or overt—scriptural hierarchy directly equivalent to what Sommer and others describe within Judaism, although this is debatable to an extent. What is more certain, at any rate, is that Christians do not normally tend to make qualitative or functional distinctions between the Torah, Prophets and Writings in the same way that Jews have.

Within the Tanakh, the Torah is more scriptural than the Prophets and Writings are.”²⁵ To be clear, Sommer is not declaring that only some of the Tanakh is regarded as *inspired*—all of it is. But, there is a canon within the canon in that the Torah is perceived as the *words of God*, direct divine speech, as opposed to simply being inspired by God.²⁶

This point is highly relevant to an exegete’s operative view of scripture and habit of mind. Fishbane’s assertion that “the task of the interpreter” includes “re-imagin[ing] the earlier exegete’s habit of mind”²⁷ presents certain challenges when it comes to Hebrews (and much of the NT). We take on the challenge of determining whether the author’s habit of mind have privileged the Torah over and above the *Nevi’im* and *Ketuvim* and to carefully examining “the exegetical reasoning manifest in the text at hand—in the thickness of citations and expression.”

II. REVISITING EXEGETICAL STRATEGIES

The Torah has long occupied the center of the textual universe of the Jewish scriptures with the Prophets and Writings suspended in orbit around it. This was observable in the ancient synagogue, for example, with evidence pointing to public reading of the Torah as a central feature of synagogue life and liturgy by the first century CE, and probably earlier than that. Evidence from Qumran suggests public readings of the Law, although little can be ascertained about the specifics, or how they related to what went on in surrounding Jewish communities or synagogues.²⁸ Lee I. Levine notes that,

²⁵ Sommer, *Jewish Concepts*.

²⁶ *Jewish Concepts*, 66.

²⁷ Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination*, 4.

²⁸ See Lawrence Schiffman’s discussion, in which he maintains a high standard for evidence of public readings. Among several texts mentioned, the most persuasive with regard to indicating the public

whereas shrines within pagan temples typically contained statues of deities, a Torah scroll occupied the shrine in synagogues. He contends that “the centrality of the Torah-reading ceremony in Jewish worship of the pre-70 synagogue should come as no surprise. In fact, almost every source from the Second Temple period indicates this importance explicitly.”²⁹ Among those sources are Josephus,³⁰ Philo,³¹ 1 Maccabees 3:48, Acts 13:14-15 and 15:21, and the Theodotus inscription;³² all of which describe Torah reading and/or study in synagogues.³³ Indeed, within the scriptures themselves we find the importance of the public reading of the Torah described in Deut 31:11, Joshua 8:34-35 and Nehemiah 8-9.

reading of Torah is the declaration “and anyone whoes [speech] is too soft [?] or speaks with a staccato [voice] not dividing his words so that [his voice may be heard, none of these(?)] shall read from the bo[ok of the Law], lest [he cause error in a capital manner],” found in the Zadokite Fragments (4Q266, 4Q267, 4Q273). Lawrence H. Schiffman, “The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue*, ed. Steven Fine (New York: Routledge, 1999).

²⁹ Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, US: Yale University Press, 2005), 148.

³⁰ *Ag. Ap.* 2.175: “[Moses] appointed all the Law to be the most excellent and necessary form of instruction, ordaining, not that it should be heard once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice which all other legislators seem to have neglected...”; cf. *Ant.* 16.43. Flavius Josephus, *The Life Against Apion*, trans. H. St J. Thackeray, vol. 186, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

³¹ *Legat.* 156: “He knew therefore that they have houses of prayer and meet together in them, particularly on the sacred sabbaths when they receive as a body a training in their ancestral philosophy.” Philo, *The Embassy to Gaius*, trans. F. H. Colson, vol. 379, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

³² The Theodotus inscription refers to Theodosius’ having built a synagogue “...for the reading of the Law and the teaching of the commandments.” Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 58.

³³ Or, in some places, three years. Sommer, *Jewish Concepts*; Elsie Stern, “Concepts of Scripture in the Synagogue Service,” in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 17-19; Fishbane, *Haftaratot*, xx-xxii; Jacobs, “Torah, Reading of.” For through recent treatments of much debated triennial vs. annual lectionary issues Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 146-55, 535-40. and Schiffman, “Jews,” 43-47, in addition to the aforementioned.

Research on scripture readings in the ancient synagogue strongly suggests that the Torah was read regularly in synagogues pre-70 CE, even if standardized reading practices or lectionaries had not yet been established.³⁴ Lawrence Schiffman thoroughly evaluates the available evidence in an effort to determine when the public reading of Torah can confidently be said to have begun. Perhaps the most important and intriguing of his many examples are debates recorded between early *tanna'im* (70-220 CE) about when and how readings on special sabbaths should interrupt the regular sequence of Torah readings, indicating that such readings had already been established to some degree.³⁵ Schiffman concludes:

The Torah reading was certainly a prominent part of the synagogue ritual by the first century of our era...It would seem that the widespread and organized reading rituals in Pharasaic-rabbinic circles so soon after 70 CE lead to the conclusion that the reading of the Torah and most of its procedures...would have been practiced in synagogues in the early first century, even before the destruction.³⁶

Eventually, as reading practices did become standardized, the entire Torah came to be read every year or three years (in different places and traditions), while only a modest percentage of the Prophets and Writings were ever read liturgically in the synagogue and,

³⁴ For a thorough discussion see Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 146-58. On synagogue lectionaries from several perspectives, see also Mann, *Bible*. From the perspective of NT scholarship see Gelardini, "Hebrews."; Verhartet and Mark S. Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels: An Examination of a New Paradigm*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), Book, (part III).

³⁵ See the discussion of *m. Yoma* 7:1 and *m. Sotah* 7:2-8 in conjunction with Josephus *Ant.* 4:209-11, that describe at least some aspects of the reading practices reflected in the Mishnah being in place pre-70. The fact that the *tanna'im* were debating when to alter the established reading regimen suggests that there were established routines for reading, even if we lack data to know precisely what or how widespread those reading regimens were. Schiffman, "Jews," 41-46.

³⁶ "Jews," 47.

when they were, they were selected for reading because of lexical or thematic connections that anchored them to Torah passages.³⁷

One's view of Scripture inevitably affects one's view of exegesis. Applying a scriptural view that prioritizes the Pentateuch to the topic of "Jewish Exegesis," Raphael Loewe describes one of the key principles as: "The axiom that the Pentateuch (the 'written' Torah) epitomizes the supreme and most comprehensive instance of divine revelation [and] subordinates and refracts exegesis of the remainder of the Bible..."³⁸ Gerald Bruns explains how texts from the Prophets and Writings play different roles from Torah texts in midrashic hermeneutics:

Scripture is one, but it is also a non-linear text whose letters and words can be discovered in heterogeneous combinations. ... Indeed, the Rabbis treated the scriptures as a self-interpreting text, on the (again) ordinary philological principle that what is plain (i.e. understood) in one place can be used to clarify what is obscure or in question in another. "Words of Torah need each other. What one passage locks up, the other discloses." In most cases this means using later texts to comment on earlier ones. In principle, one needs nothing but scripture to interpret scripture, as both Augustine and Luther would later argue (asserting, however, as Christians do, that one needs only the New Testament to interpret the Old). But the Rabbis also read the scriptures as being already hermeneutical, that is as works of interpretation as well as scripture: the prophetic books and wisdom

³⁷ As noted above: Sommer, *Jewish Concepts*, 3-4.

³⁸ Raphael Loewe, "Jewish Exegesis," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. John Haralson Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999). While Loewe has post-biblical, mainly rabbinic, exegesis in mind as he explains that the Pentateuch "subordinates and refracts exegesis" of the other sections of Scripture, based on evidence already mentioned, including Philo and some material at Qumran, it is reasonable to apply his axiom more broadly, as we will see. I note that Loewe does *not* see NT exegetical practices as being very consistent with rabbinic exegesis once the Messiah was considered to have "subsumed and transcended" Torah, as he sees it. As we will see, Boyarin, Flusser, Docherty and others take a different view, detecting many more similarities between the NT and rabbinic exegesis, however. Hebrews does not, in my view, "subsume" the Pentateuch to teachings of the Messiah to the degree that many Jewish and Christian scholars have assumed for so long. I will argue in following chapters that the phenomena of Jesus' ministry and the New Covenant are, indeed, "refracted" by the Pentateuch.

writings, for example, are characterized as texts composed specifically for the elucidation of the first five books of Moses.³⁹

Like Bruns, Boyarin also describes the scriptures as self-interpreting, although he articulates that from an intertextual perspective on midrash and midrashic hermeneutics. The scriptures include a great diversity of ideas and perspectives which developed over time and can be read as contradictory. Boyarin notes that “the Bible, despite its textual heterogeneity, can be read as a self-glossing book.” He describes how the different divisions of the Tanakh are seen to function in midrash:

...the parts are made to relate to one another reflexively, with later texts, for example, throwing light on the earlier, even as they themselves always stand in the light of what precedes and follows them. ...This perspective comprehends how later texts interpret and rewrite the earlier ones to change the meaning of the entire canon, and how recognizing the presence of the earlier texts in the later changes our understanding of these later texts as well. We have here, then, an almost classic intertextuality, defined as, “the transformation of a signifying system.” This is what the midrash itself refers to as “stringing [like beads or pearls] the words of Torah together. . . from the Torah to the Prophets and from the Prophets to the Writings.”⁴⁰

Loewe, Bruns and Boyarin all approach midrash from different perspectives:

Loewe from a traditional historical perspective, Bruns looking at midrashic hermeneutics in social terms and Boyarin from the theoretical standpoint of intertextuality. The three agree, however, that the Pentateuch is in a different, more dominant, category than the Prophets and the Writings when it comes to exegesis. The normal exegetical process is directional—the Prophets and Writings serve in the exegesis of the Pentateuch as the

³⁹ Gerald Bruns, "The Hermeneutics of Midrash," in *The Book and the Text: The Bible and Literary Theory*, ed. Regina M. Schwartz (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 195.

⁴⁰ Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the reading of Midrash*, Indiana studies in Biblical Literature (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 16.

more authoritative text, not the other way around.⁴¹ Although texts from the Pentateuch are also used in the exegesis of other Pentateuchal texts, texts from the Pentateuch are the texts being interpreted, generally speaking, and texts from the P&W (and sometimes also Pentateuchal texts) are used to do the interpretation. The next section will show how this textual universe is manifested in several different primary texts.

III. SELECT ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCRIPTURAL EXEGESIS

The following examples represent a cross-section of ancient Jewish sources, each of which illustrates ways in which texts from the Pentateuch are generative and the Prophets and Writings function as exegetical texts. The examples include a Torah and *haftarah* lectionary pair, a passage from the Mekilta, the prologue to the Gospel of John, a section of the Wisdom of Solomon and 11QMelchizedek. These have been selected not only because they show the use of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in conjunction with a variety of exegetical strategies, but also because they represent Jewish literature from different sects, geographical locations and periods before and after the composition of the NT that show the primacy of the Pentateuch. This diverse selection of illustrations demonstrates that the hermeneutical practice of using the Writings and Prophets to interpret or illuminate the Torah was not limited to the synagogue or Midrash collections; these views of scripture and hermeneutical tendencies transcend form and genre.⁴²

⁴¹ As noted above, there are exceptions to the rule, especially among later midrashim such as Midrash on Psalms, or Midrash Rabbah on Esther, Ruth and Qoheleth. Those represent a minority of the traditions, however.

⁴² While Hebrews is not referenced throughout much of the rest of this chapter, a few comments may be necessary to situate it in relation to the texts chosen as illustrations so as not to give a misleading impression. The intent is to provide a broad sense of the pervasiveness of these tendencies within ancient Jewish exegesis, not to present a precise, form-critical approach. Using the example of a synagogue homily or a passage from the Mekilta, for example, is not intended to imply that Hebrews is of the identical genre

Torah & Haftarah: Gen 1-6 & Isa 42

The first example is a pair of readings from the chumash, or lectionary, still in use today. Elsie Stern discusses the practice of scripture reading in the ancient synagogue and the logic of Torah/*haftarah* pairings. According to Stern,

For [synagogue] audience members, the basic prophetic unit would have been a single pericope which was conjoined to a “corresponding” pentateuchal text. By creating these parashah/haftarah pairs, the rabbinic redactors of the lectionary cycle create new, second-order biblical texts which might underscore, subvert or transform the meaning of the lectionary texts in their biblical contexts.⁴³

The three exegetical functions Stern mentions—to underscore, subvert or transform the Torah text—form a helpful set of basic categories to work with. She illustrates the hermeneutical effect of a lectionary pairing with the first reading of the year, Genesis 1-6, with its *haftarah*, Isaiah 42:5-43:11. The relevant portion of the Isaiah passage reads as follows:

Thus says God, the LORD,
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
 who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:
I am the LORD,
 I have called you in righteousness,
 I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
 I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations
(Isa 42:5-6 NRSV)

in either case (or that it is not). Rather, the idea is to look beyond the constraints of form-critical approaches toward broader principles.

⁴³ Elsie Stern, *From Rebuke to Consolation: Exegesis and Theology in the Liturgical Anthology of the Ninth of Av Season*, ed. David C. Jacobson, et al., Brown Judaic Studies (Providence, RI: Brown University, 2004), 19.

The two passages are connected both lexically and thematically, mainly through language and description of creation recalling Gen 1.⁴⁴ The effect of juxtaposing these readings (Gen 1-6 and Isa 42:5-43:11), according to Stern, is to demonstrate the status of Israel as a special nation, even from the time of creation. The Genesis reading describes creation and the interaction between God and the first human beings. The text from Isaiah presents a poetic summary of creation followed by the element of calling and “a covenant” and “a light to the nations” (Isa 42:6). As Stern sees it, “By selecting Isa 42:5-6 as the *haftarah* for the beginning of Genesis, the redactors of the lectionary cycle retroject the special status of Israel to the beginning of time and assert that it is an intrinsic part of the created order of the world.”⁴⁵ Through the juxtaposition of the texts, Isaiah 42 transforms Genesis 1-6 by implying a longstanding covenant relationship that Genesis does not mention, while remaining in basic continuity with the creation narrative. The *haftarah* brings out a covenant element that, it seems, was latent in the text of the Torah’s creation passage. This first example, then, situates Israel (and thus the audience in the synagogue) in the grander scheme of things by means of reading the two texts together.

Mekilta Bahodesh 1 on Exod 19:1-2

The next illustration is from the Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael. It is an overtly exegetical text in which a Psalm and then a verse from Isaiah 45 are used successively in

⁴⁴ *Rebuke*, 19. A lexical connection might also have been seen in the use of the term covenant in Isa 42:6 and Gen 6:18, although the latter would be an indirect connection—the Noachic covenant in Gen 6 is not the covenant to which Isa 42 refers.

⁴⁵ Elsie Stern, *Rebuke*, 19.

the exegesis of a short phrase found in the Sinai narrative of Exodus. The resulting exegesis addresses a question of considerable concern to the rabbis: Was the Torah given only to Israel? The Mekilta is a collection of early rabbinic interpretations of portions of Exodus attributed to tannaitic sages who lived prior to 220 C.E., before the production of the Mishnah.⁴⁶ It is one of the earliest midrash collections, considered halakhic (as opposed to homiletical), but also includes aggadic material and cites scholars associated with the school of R. Ishmael.⁴⁷ The Mekilta is effectively a tannaitic commentary on Exodus 12-23 and portions of Exodus 31 and 35.

In the Mekilta Bahodesh 1 on Exodus 19:2, the phrase “and they encamped in the wilderness” (בְּמִדְבָּר וַיַּחֲנֹן) generates two expositions, one using Psalm 29 and one using Isaiah 45. Both expositions argue that the phrase “they encamped in the wilderness” upon their arrival to Sinai signifies that “The Torah was given in public, openly in a free place;” that is, the Torah was given to all humankind (not just Israel). Lexical connections to “wilderness” (מִדְבָּר, Ps 29:8, twice) and the “voice of the Lord” (קֹול יְהָוָה) in Psalm 29:3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 launch the first exposition, which uses several verses of the Psalm to show that the voice of the LORD went out to the nations and, as a result, the nations blessed the Israelites. The second exposition makes a deft lexical connection between the “empty space” (זָהָם) of Isa 45:19c and “wilderness,” using Isa 45:19 (and its somewhat universalist context) to interpret Exod 19:2 in a similar vein.

⁴⁶ Jacob Zallel Lauterbach and David M. Stern, *Mekilta De-Rabbi Ishmael*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), ix.

⁴⁷ Philip S. Alexander, "Midrash," in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. R. J. Coggins and J. L. Houlden (London: SCM Press, 1990); Bakhos, "Midrash."; Lauterbach and Stern, *Mekilta*, 1.

The first part of the exposition reads:

They Encamped in the Wilderness. The Torah was given in public, openly in a free place. For had the Torah been given in the land of Israel, the Israelites could have said to the nations of the world: You have no share in it. But now that it was given in the wilderness publicly and openly in a place that is free for all, everyone wishing to accept it could come and accept it.

One might suppose that it was given at night, but Scripture says: “And it came to pass on the third day when it was morning” ([Exod 19:16]).

One might suppose that it was given in silence, but Scripture says: “When there were thunders and lightning” (*ibid.*).

One might suppose that they could not hear the voice, but Scripture says: “The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of majesty,” etc. (Ps. 29.4). “The Lord sat enthroned at the flood,” etc. (*ibid.* v. 10).⁴⁸

Balaam said to all the people who stood around him: “The Lord is giving strength unto His people” (*ibid.* v. 11). And they all opened their mouths and said: “The Lord will bless His people with peace” (*ibid.*).⁴⁹

The two expositions of “in the wilderness” within Bahodesh 1 both discuss the significance of the wilderness location, transforming the geographical narrative element into a theological statement. The initial exposition begins:

For had the Torah been given in the land of Israel, the Israelites could have said to the nations of the world: You have no share in it. But now that it was given in the wilderness publicly and openly in a place that is free for all, everyone wishing to accept it could come and accept it.

After two brief proof texts from Exodus 19:16, the exposition moves to a series of short proofs from Psalm 29. The psalm is an encomium to the voice of the Lord, a good fit thematically with the Sinai setting of Exod 19. An important connecting verse in the

⁴⁸ Jacob Lauterbach’s note makes reference here to a prior section: Mek. Amalek III (see below). *Mekilta De-Rabbi Ishmael*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), 294.

⁴⁹ Text from: Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, 3 vols., The JPS Library of Jewish Classics (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976).

psalm, “The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh” (29:8), is *not* cited by the Mekilta but clearly strengthens the connection between the texts since it refers to the spectacular phenomenon of the voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Sinai. The exegesis focuses on the fact the Torah was given publicly and cites various verses from the psalm to support the guiding premise:

One might suppose that they could not hear the voice,
but Scripture says:

“The voice of the Lord is powerful, the voice of the Lord is full of
majesty,” etc. (Ps. 29:4).

The middle section of this exposition refers to a prior exposition on the same psalm in Mek. Amalek III that transforms Ps 29 into a narrative in which kings across the earth trembled in their palaces when the Torah was given. That text is included here, since Bahodesh 1 refers to and includes it:⁵⁰

For, at the time that the Torah was given to Israel all the kings of the world trembled in their palaces, as it is said: “And in his palace everyone says: ‘Glory’” (Ps. 29.9).

At that time all the kings of the nations of the world assembled and they came to Balaam the wicked. They said to him: “Balaam! Perhaps God is about to do unto us as He did to the generation of the Flood.” For it is said: “The Lord sat enthroned at the flood” (29:10).

He said to them: “Fools that ye are! Long ago the Holy One, blessed be He, swore that He would not bring a flood upon the world,” as it is said: “For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth” (Isa. 54.9).

They, then, said to him: “Perhaps He will not bring a flood of water, but He may bring a flood of fire.”

But he said to them: “He is not going to bring a flood of water or a flood of fire.
He is just going to give the Torah to His people.”

For it is said: “The Lord will give strength unto His people” (Ps. 29.11).

⁵⁰ See Lauterbach’s n 11, Mekilta, 2:198.

The exposition in Bahodesh 1 imports a scenario of foreign kings responding far and wide.⁵¹ It then continues,

“The Lord is giving strength [=Torah]⁵² unto His people” (Ps. 29:11).
And they all opened their mouths and said:
“The Lord will bless His people with peace” (Ps. 29:11).

Because Psalm 29 deals with God’s seismic voice in the wilderness and was also considered to allude to the nations hearing of the Sinai event, it is harnessed in this exposition to help illustrate the public nature of the giving of Torah.

The second exposition, attributed to R. Jose, is a much more direct and concise prooftext for the assertion that the Torah was given publicly:

R. Jose says:
Behold it says:
“I have not spoken in secret,” etc. (Isa. 45:19a).
When I gave the Torah from the very start, I gave it not in the place of a land of darkness, not in a secret place, not in an obscure place.

“I said not: ‘It is unto the seed of Jacob’ ” (45:19b),
that is, to these only will I give it.
“They sought Me in the desert” (45:19c).
Did I not give it in broad daylight? And thus it says: “I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right” (45:19d).

Here the connection to Sinai is established through the phenomenon of divine speech (Isa 45:19a) and the narrative elements of it being given in daylight (again cf. Exod 19:16) and the desert location. A lexical connection is made through the use of

⁵¹ Mek. Amalek III, lines 1-24. Mekilta, 2:162-63.

⁵² The midrash has “Torah” as the interpretive equivalent of “strength” in Ps 29:11.

synonyms—**תֹּהֵה** or “empty space” in Isa 45:19 is related to the wilderness (**בָּמָקֹם**) of Exod 19:2.⁵³

In an interesting and important turn, the phrase **לֹא אָמַרְתִּי לִזְרֹעַ יִשְׂקַב** (MT) from Isa 45:19b is read in the Mekilta as “I said not: ‘It is unto the seed of Jacob”” (*Mek.*, Lauterbach) rather than the way most translations of the MT render it: “I said not unto the seed of Jacob...” (JPS). The segmenting, retranslation and (re-)use of that phrase allow for the assertion that the Torah was not spoken exclusively to Jacob’s descendants (“...not ‘to these only will I give it...’”), rather than what Isa 45:19 otherwise seemed to be saying; i.e., that the Torah *was* only given to the Israelites. R. Jose takes what seems to be decisive proof of that the Torah was given only to Jacob’s descendants and turns it around to argue the opposite by retranslating the sense of **לֹא אָמַרְתִּי**.

Both of the main interpretive texts (Ps 29, Isa 45:19) in *Mek. Bah. 1*—the encomium to the divine voice (Ps 29) and the verse about the LORD speaking to the seed of Jacob (Isa 45:19)—have the dual connections to the Sinai narrative of wilderness and divine speech. They are used to transform the reference to the encampment of the people in the wilderness into a theological statement about the giving of Torah to all humankind. A narrative infused with Psalm 29 from elsewhere in the Mekilta brings in the dimension of the nations hearing and responding to the voice of the LORD, universalizing the Sinai event. The section attributed to R. Jose uses a different strategy to head in the same

⁵³ **תֹּהֵה** (empty space) is rendered “desert” by many translations, which was apparently considered close enough to “wilderness.” A parallelism between the two terms is evident in Deut 32:10: “He found him in a wilderness land, in an empty space [*or* wasteland]...” (**וְבָמָקָם בָּאָרֶץ מִלְּבָד וְבָמָקָה**).

direction, reading the Isaiah creatively to show that the Torah was not given exclusively to Israel.

This addressed a significant issue among the rabbis. As Marc Hirschman notes,

No event is more important to the rabbis than the revelation at Sinai. Scripture describes the occasion when the Holy One, blessed be He, was revealed before the whole people and gave them the Torah. Scripture does not explicitly state why, of all nations on earth, the Torah was given to this particular people on this unique occasion. The rabbis were troubled by this problem and offered a variety of answers...This is one instance of a trend that was quite prominent in the rabbinic exegesis of the Sinai theophany. The rabbis dealt with the question that the nations' writers insisted on asking: Why does the Creator bestow all His grace on one nation while neglecting all the others?⁵⁴

In this part of Mek. Bah. I, then, texts from the Writings are mustered to work out a theological issue that the Exodus narrative did not address. Ps 29 itself *re-reads* and interprets the Sinai event, while Isaiah 45:19 is read in such a way as to apply it to the Sinai/wilderness event via lexical connections. These expositions reinterpret the generative text (Exod 19) in such a way to make it more universal without appearing to directly subvert it.

11QMelchizedek (11Q13): Lev 25 & Isa 61

We now turn to an illustration from the Dead Sea Scrolls; an exegetical work in which several scriptural texts from the Prophets (Isa 61:1-3; 52:7-9) and Writings (Pss 82 & 7; Dan 9) are combined to produce an eschatological discourse generated by the language and paradigm of the year of jubilee in Lev 25 (supplemented by Deut 15).⁵⁵ The

⁵⁴ Marc Hirshman, *A Rivalry of Genius: Jewish and Christian Biblical Interpretation in Late Antiquity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 6. Hirschman cites two different instances of the *Mekilta* addressing the same issue.

⁵⁵ Merrill P. Miller, "Function of Isa 61:1-2 in 11Q Melchizedek," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, no. 4 (1969); William Horbury, "Josephus and 11Q13 on Melchizedek," in *Studies on the Text and Versions of the Hebrew Bible in Honour of Robert Gordon*, Vetus Testamentum, Supplements (Leiden:

text, 11QMelchizedek (11Q13), is considered by some to be the oldest exegetical text among the Dead Sea Scrolls.⁵⁶ It “seems to be a *pesher* interpretation of Lev 25, in which other passages of Scripture are brought in to aid in interpretation,” according to John Bergsma’s analysis.⁵⁷

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most of the Qumran pesharim are known for developing running eschatological interpretations of passages from the Prophets and Psalms (e.g. 1QpHabakkuk, 4QPsalms Pesher^{a-b}, 4QIsaiah Pesher^{a-e}). The basic pesher form has been described as follows:

This self-defining citation from Pesher Habakkuk also serves as an illustration of the basic structure of pesharim: citation of a biblical text (the lemma); an introductory formula typically using the word “pesher,” such as “its pesher is upon...”; and an application of the text to a contemporary reality outside of its original context. These formal elements are common to all pesharim, but they also may serve to highlight variability among particular pesher compositions.⁵⁸

But, texts from the Pentateuch play more prominent roles in the exegetical or thematic pesharim than in the so-called “continuous pesharim.” Shani Tzoref notes that:

Among the defining characteristics of Qumran *pesher* is the use of poetic/prophetic biblical texts as the bases for contemporizing interpretation. Most of these base-texts are taken from compositions that later canonical traditions designate as ‘Latter Prophets’ or ‘Greater and Lesser Prophets,’ as well as from the book of Psalms. The obvious significance of the Prophets and Psalms in the

Brill, 2011), 246-50 and Shani Tzoref, "Qumran Pesharim and the Pentateuch: Explicit Citation, Overt Typologies, and Implicit Interpretive Traditions," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 16, no. 2 (2009).

⁵⁶ According to Annette Steudel, "Melchizedek," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵⁷ John Sietze Bergsma, *The Jubilee From Leviticus to Qumran: A History of Interpretation*, Supplements to *Vetus Testamentum* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁵⁸ Shani Berrin, "Pesharim," in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

pesharim and related works has overshadowed the influence of the Pentateuch in these compositions, resulting in a gap in *pesher* research...”.⁵⁹

The so-called “exegetical texts,” including 11QMelchizedek (11Q13), 4QFlorilegium (4Q174) and 4QCatena^a (4Q177), are routinely described as being unified by a theme rather than a verse or passage of scripture⁶⁰ and thus also classified as “thematic pesharim.”⁶¹ As can be seen in the following analysis of 11Q13, however, specific texts from the Pentateuch serve as the basis of the exegesis, not merely *themes*.

The main portion of the extant text of 11Q13 is column 2,⁶² which begins (line 2) and ends (line 25) with citations from Lev 25 related to the year of jubilee. The exposition pairs Lev 25:13 with a citation of Deut 15:2 referring to the cancellation of debts every seventh year, setting a paradigm of the year of jubilee as a time of release, return and remission of debts. The text of 11Q13 then signals that it will give an interpretation of this jubilee, or time of release and remission of debts, “for the last days.” It then uses clear allusions to Isa 61:1-2⁶³ to craft a sort of brief eschatological narrative, describing the “captives” as the “inheritance of Melchizedek” to be released at the time of “the tenth jubilee” (line 5).

⁵⁹ Tzoref, "Qumran Pesharim," 190-91.

⁶⁰ Berrin, "Melchizedek."

⁶¹ Tzoref, "Qumran Pesharim"; Berrin, "Melchizedek."

⁶² Most of the extant/reconstructed text comes from col. 2 (of 3), with 25 lines “substantially restored,” (Campbell) while only two complete words remain from col. 1 and brief parts of about 20 lines have been reconstructed of col. 3. See Jonathan G. Campbell, *The Exegetical Texts*, Companion to the Qumran Scrolls (New York: T&T Clark, 2004); Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov, *Exegetical Texts*, Dead Sea Scrolls Reader (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁶³ Michael Bartos and Bernard M. Levinson, "'This is the Manner of the Remission': Implicit Legal Exegesis in 11QMelchizedek as a Response to the Formation of the Torah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132, no. 2 (2013): 356, 60-62; Miller, "Function of Isa 61:1-2 in 11Q Melchizedek."

Melchizedek enters the exegesis as if filling the shoes of the unnamed speaker/deliverer of Isa 61. The captives—“the lot of Melchizedek”—will be freed from the debts of their sins on the Day of Atonement that concludes the “tenth jubilee” (lines 7-8). The year of jubilee in view is “the year of grace” of Melchizedek and his armies, the holy ones of God” (line 9).

Having introduced Melchizedek as an exalted deliverer, the discourse then shifts to a narrative segment built around the imagery of the divine council in Ps 82. Melchizedek seems to be identified as one of the *elohim* (Ps 82:1/line 10), cast as a judge in contrast to the unjust judge identified as Belial (Ps 82:2/line 12). The citation of Ps 7:8-9 (lines 10-11) reinforces the identification of Melchizedek as “El,” a divine being and judge (or agent of judgment) who will carry out vengeance on “Belial and the spirits of his lot” (lines 13-14). The focus then shifts from Melchizedek as judge to his role as deliverer. Citing Isaiah 52:7, Melchizedek is implicitly identified with the one whose feet bring good news (which line 25 makes clear). 11Q13 also specifies that the mountains in the poetic verse “are the prophets” (line 17) and that Zion symbolizes “those who establish the covenant, those who avoid walking on the path of the people” (lines 23-24). Verbal connections are made with the “weeks” and an “anointed prince” in the apocalyptic vision of Daniel 9:25, further developing the portrait of Melchizedek as an exalted eschatological figure.

Having developed the extensive eschatological interpretation of the year of jubilee, 11Q13 returns to another verse from Lev 25 in the final line of column 2 (line 25). A citation of Lev 25:9, which describes the announcement of the arrival of the year

of jubilee: “You shall blow the horn in the land of...,” brings the exposition back, full circle, to Lev 25, the generative text from the Pentateuch.

Several passages of scripture are involved in an interpretation of the Pentateuchal concept of the jubilee, which, as Bergsma sees it, “is re-interpreted as an eschatological event—primarily through the use of Isa 61—which will bring blessing to the righteous and judgment to the wicked.”⁶⁴ Shani Tzoref sees Lev 25 as the “base text” for 11Q13:

The author relies upon a pre-existing interpretive tradition that takes the final chapters of Leviticus in an eschatological sense, relating the legal institutions in ch. 25 to the covenant curses and blessings in ch. 26. More specifically, it is through the implicit mediation of Isa 61:1-2 that the Pentateuchal jubilee laws can function as biblical precedents for eschatological predictions.⁶⁵

The exegesis in 11Q13 is generated from the Lev 25 jubilee concept (laws and description) which is combined with the concept of the sabbatical year (*shemittah*) in Deut 15—two concepts frequently linked in the DSS⁶⁶—to form a jubilee paradigm that is interpreted “for the last days” (11Q13 2:4).

The combination of Lev 25 and Deut 15 forms the foundation for the exegetical work in 11Q13, in part through their lexical contributions, the controlling language that drives and governs the exegesis. From Lev 25 come vocabulary of jubilee (יּוֹבֵל), “return” and “property” or “inheritance” (אֶחָזֶת). From Deut 15:2, the terms “remission” and “release” (הַשְׁמִיטָה, הַשְׁמָמָה) enter the discourse, demonstrating that *people* are to be released in the year of jubilee, and making the remission of sins (line 6) analogous with the

⁶⁴ Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 15.

⁶⁵ Tzoref, "Qumran Pesharim," 198-99.

⁶⁶ Bergsma, *Jubilee*, 277-91; Bartos and Levinson, "This is the Manner of the Remission": Implicit Legal Exegesis in 11QMelchizedek as a Response to the Formation of the Torah," 359-65.

sabbatical remission of debts in Deut 15.⁶⁷ An additional term for inheritance (*נַחֲלָה*) from Deut 15:4 probably lies behind the chosen term for “the inheritance of Melchizedek” (11Q13 2:5).⁶⁸ The juxtaposition with Isaiah 61 transposes the jubilee concept (11Q13 2:2) into an eschatological mode. Isaiah 61 contributes the proclamations of “good news” and a “day of vengeance” (*יְמִינֵם נֶקֶד*, Isa 61:2), the release of the captives at the jubilee (or “year of the Lord’s favor”) and, most importantly, the figure of an unnamed, potent deliverer. These provide points of connection to the rest of the texts (Pss 82, 7; Isa 52:7, Dan 9:25). Leviticus 25 is not on hiatus between lines 2 and 20, however. The scheme of weeks of years in Lev 25:8 —“You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years”— is a lexical and thematic link to the chronological schemes of weeks in Daniel 9.

In 11Q13, what may be the oldest text of this series of illustrations, we find an exposition generated from the Pentateuch and spun out eschatologically by means of two psalms, two Isaiah passages and a verse from Daniel. The Pentateuchal jubilee concept is established as a paradigm of relief and redemption and then dramatically transposed into an eschatological key. It seems as if the author could have accomplished most of the eschatological agenda without having involved Lev 25 but, by setting the exegesis on the foundation of the Books of Moses, a greater sense of authority was gained.

⁶⁷ Bergsma, *Jubilee*.

⁶⁸ *Jubilee*, 282-83.

Wisdom of Solomon 10-12: Exodus & Prov 8

The next example comes from a Hellenistic work dated by most from the later part of the 1st c. BCE to the early 1st c. CE., the Wisdom of Solomon.⁶⁹ Wisdom 10-12 recounts salvation history from Adam through the wilderness years with a focus on the active and salvific role of *Sophia* (Σοφία), Lady Wisdom. Drawing on the personification of *Sophia* in Proverbs 8, Wisdom 10-12 transforms broad contours of the narrative of Genesis and Exodus into one that is both paraenetic and faith-affirming.

Following a sapiential narrative warning of the dangers of the adulteress in Prov 7, Lady Wisdom—Σοφία—takes the stage in Prov 8:1. *Sophia*'s monologue in Prov 8 begins with her call and appeal to all humankind to listen to her instruction (Prov 8:1-11). In 8:12-21, she touts the value of her instruction and the rewards to those who love her. *Sophia* (personified) begins to be associated with what we might otherwise refer to as Providence or divine action in history...

Prov 8:14-16

I have good advice and sound wisdom; I have insight, I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly.

Sophia's role as God's agent is expanded upon dramatically in 8:22-31, where she recalls being present with the Lord for eternity past and poetically describes her participation in creation:

⁶⁹ One recent and comprehensive study by Andrew Glicksman suggests a date for Wisdom in the early Imperial period, beginning with the reign of Augustus (ca. 31 BCE) to a terminus ad quem of 41 CE. Recent scholarship, according to Glicksman, posits a date no earlier than the late 1st c. BCE. He presents a thorough review of evidence for the date. Andrew T. Glicksman, *Wisdom of Solomon 10: A Jewish Hellenistic Reinterpretation of Early Israelite History through Sapiential Lenses*, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 14-24.

Prov 8:22-24

The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water...

Prov 8:29b-31

...when he marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

The representation of *Sophia* in Wisdom 10-12 juxtaposes Proverbs' *Sophia*, the providential agent of God, with major narratives from the Pentateuch. Wisdom 10-12 is a narrative (rather than a monologue) which tells how she protected Adam after he was created and after his transgression (10:1), saved the human race in the flood by guiding the ark (10:4) and rescued Lot "when the ungodly were perishing" (10:6), for example. *Sophia* delivered Joseph and gave him power over his accusers (10:13-14). When it came to the Exodus generation, *Sophia* "entered the soul of a servant of the Lord and withstood dread kings with wonders and signs" (10:16), delivering the people through the Red Sea (10:18-21). *Sophia* prospered the people (11:1), led them to water (4-8) and "tested them as a parent does" (11:9-10).

In its sapiential exegesis of the Pentateuch, the Wisdom of Solomon draws its underlying themes and narrative from Genesis and Exodus; Proverbs' *Sophia* contributes the interpretive framework. The biblical characters involved (Adam, Moses, etc.) are never named in Wis 10-12, no doubt testifying to their familiarity, but probably also to avoid any confusion as to *Sophia*'s lead role in the drama. The retelling highlights God's good and continuous action toward Israel, along with the punishment of the wicked. *Sophia*'s parental role, described in Proverbs 8:32-33, also works its way into the

Exodus/wilderness portion (Wis. 11:9-10). The result is a sapiential and paraenetic hybrid narrative that ultimately exhorts the audience to accept Wisdom's correction "so that they may be freed from wickedness and put their trust in you, O Lord" (12:2, NRSV).

The reading-together of *Sophia* from Proverbs 8 with the foundational Torah narrative produces an exegetical retelling in which scripture interprets scripture and the Writings bring the Pentateuch into proximity with the reader. The arc of the Pentateuchal narrative is preserved without radical transformation. The introduction of Wisdom is unexpected, however, as a behind-the-scenes character who apparently had a much more important role in biblical history than the reader may have suspected. Thus, the overlaying of Proverbs 8 on the Genesis-Exodus narrative produces a fresh sapiential text that reinterprets God's providential acts.

Johannine Prologue: Gen 1 & Prov 8

Having considered the respective roles of the Pentateuch and the P&W in a few overtly exegetical examples and one sapiential narrative, we move to a final illustration from the New Testament. The prologue to the Gospel of John (1:1-18) begins "In the beginning was the Word ($\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\varsigma$) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. Everything came into being through him, and apart from him nothing came into being..." Throughout the prologue, as Daniel Boyarin points out, the Fourth Gospel brings the Genesis creation account together with $\delta\lambda\circ\gamma\circ\varsigma$ as a personified actor, not unlike *Sophia* in Prov 8:22-31. This produces a new and profoundly

theological narrative prologue, not unlike Wis 10-12. In “The Gospel and the Memra,”⁷⁰ and later in *Border Lines*,⁷¹ Boyarin challenges long-held assumptions about the early formation of firm and definite “border lines” between Judaism and Christianity, and the reasons for them. He does this, in part, through a comparative study of “Logos theology” as a Jewish (not exclusively Christian) concept. Logos theology is discernible in the work of Philo, in “the Memra” found in some Aramaic *targumim*, as well in the prologue to the Gospel of John⁷² (the focus here strictly on the latter).

There is ample disagreement regarding the nature of the Johannine Prologue, as Boyarin notes; some have claimed that John 1:1-18 is an exposition of Genesis 1,⁷³ while others have claimed that the prologue is based on the model of a hymn to Wisdom, such as Proverbs 8, Job 28, Sirach 24, Wisdom 7. A number of commentators have proposed that the prologue was not originally in its current form but shows stages of redaction.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Daniel Boyarin, "The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John," *Harvard Theological Review* 94, no. 3 (2001): 243-84.

⁷¹ *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*, Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁷² Boyarin sets up his study in “The Gospel of the Memra” as follows: “The idea that the Logos/Sophia (and other variants as well) was the site of God’s presence in the world—indeed of God’s Word or Wisdom as a mediator figure—was a very widespread one in the thought-world of first-century and even second-century Judaism. Rather than treating Logos theology, therefore, as the specific product of ‘Christianity,’ with Philo a sort of Christian *avant la lettre*, I wish to explore the evidence for Logos theology as a common element in much Jewish, including Christian Jewish, religious imagination. As Dunn has recently written of Wisdom christology: ‘the usage is Jewish through and through’” (p. 248). A comparative study of Philo’s Logos, the Memra of the Targum, and the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel supports this suggestion.”

⁷³ Boyarin notes Peder Borgen, for example: Peder Borgen, "Observation on the Midrashic character of John 6," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 54, no. 3-4 (1963); "Logos was the True Light: Contributions to the Interpretation of the Prologue of John," *Novum Testamentum* 14, no. 2 (1972).

⁷⁴ Here, Boyarin has in mind Haenchen and Brown. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966); Ernst Haenchen, *John: A Commentary on the Gospel of John*, ed. Robert Walter Funk, Ulrich Busse, and Ernst Haenchen (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

Approaching the problem from the perspective of midrash and intertextuality, Boyarin's solution is to see the Johannine Prologue as reading Genesis 1 together with Wisdom personified from Proverbs 8:22-31.⁷⁵ Viewing the prologue as midrash, and midrash as "a mode of reading scripture," he describes the exegetical use of texts from the Prophets and Writings from an intertextual perspective:

One of the most characteristic forms of midrash is a homily on a pericope, or extract from the Pentateuch that invokes, explicitly or implicitly, texts from either the Prophets or the Hagiographa (specifically, very frequently Psalms, Song of Songs, or Wisdom literature) as the intertextual framework of ideas and language that is used to interpret and expand the Pentateuchal text being preached. This hermeneutical practice is founded on a theological notion of the oneness of Scripture as a self-interpreting text, especially the notion that the latter books are a form of interpretation of the Five Books of Moses...Gaps are not filled with philosophical ideas but with allusions to or citations of other texts.

In this reading of the prologue, Genesis 1 is the text being preached (generative text) and Proverbs 8:22-31 is the "hermeneutic intertext"⁷⁶ (or the exegetical text). The "controlling language" of the passage comes from the Pentateuchal passage (Gen 1).⁷⁷ Boyarin suggests that the "primacy of Genesis as exegeted text [as opposed to Prov 8]

⁷⁵ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 95-105.

⁷⁶ "Intertext" has been defined and used in a variety of ways. As Chris Baldick notes, "The term intertext has been used variously for a text drawing on other texts, for a text thus drawn upon, and for the relationship between both" in "Intertextuality," in *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford University Press, 2008). Boyarin here uses it to signify the text "drawn upon."

⁷⁷ Although he does not go into great detail, we can surmise that this includes the language of beginnings (Gen 1:1; John 1:1), creation (Gen 1; John 1:1-5, 10), light and darkness (Gen 1:1-5; John 1:4-5, 7-9), *kosmos* (Gen 2:1; John 1:9-10), and speech /*logos* (Gen 1:3, 5, 6, 8, etc.; John 1:1-2, 14). The prologue draws language and imagery from the Proverbs passage, as well: references to being with God at the time of creation and participating in creation (Prov 8:22-30, cf. John 1:1-3, 10), language of "begetting" (Prov 8:25) and—if we extend the influence of the Proverbs passage a few verses past Boyarin's delimiters—language of life (Prov 8:34) and children of God/*Logos* (Prov 8:32; John 1:12-13 and the trope of the rejection of the *Logos* (Prov 8:36; John 1:10-11).

explains why we have here ‘Logos’ and not ‘Sophia,’ ...”⁷⁸ The Proverbs 8 text is laid on top of Genesis and language from Genesis shows through.

How, then, does Proverbs 8 function as an exegetical text? Prior traditions had already linked the hymn to wisdom in Proverbs 8 to Genesis 1 based on creation language and placed Wisdom—*Sophia*—at the scene of creation, participating with the Creator.⁷⁹ As Philo had also done, the hermeneutics of John allow Proverbs’ *Sophia* to be transposed to the *Logos*.⁸⁰ John then identifies Jesus as the *Logos* so that Jesus becomes both an agent present at creation and the incarnation of the Wisdom/*Logos* who calls out to those who will listen. Consistent with the traditional Wisdom narrative (cf. Prov 8:36), the *Logos* has difficulty “finding a home” on earth, as does Jesus (John 1:10-11).⁸¹

Boyarin summarizes the results of his reading as follows:

The three sections of the Prologue are thus a general narrative of the activity of the Logos based on a midrash on Genesis 1, an expansion of that narrative via the myth of Wisdom’s misfortune in the world, narrating as well the failure of Torah to bring the Logos to the People, and then the new denouement to that myth in the incarnation of the Logos as Jesus. The Gospel writer has accomplished two great works through the structure of its narrative unfolding: he anchors the story of the incarnation and the life of Christ in the whole cosmology and myth of the coming and rejection of the light, and he moors his own christological narrative in a traditional Jewish midrash on Genesis 1.⁸²

⁷⁸ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 95.

⁷⁹ Cf. the Palestinian Targum on Gen 1:1, “With Wisdom God created...” as cited by Boyarin from Klein, *Fragment-Targums. Border Lines*, 96-97.

⁸⁰ *Border Lines*, 96.

⁸¹ *Border Lines*, 99.

⁸² *Border Lines*, 103.

By this reading, the Johannine Prologue appropriates an existing hybrid narrative begotten of the union of Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8, which merges the divine *Logos* with *Sophia*. The Genesis creation account infuses the narrative with a divine quality that *Sophia* did not have on her own as well as an eternal perspective. The character *Sophia* has certain immanence and power to engage, setting a choice before the audience. Placing Jesus in this hybrid narrative, then, imputes the qualities of that *Logos* to him.

Whether or how the Johannine Prologue “contemporizes” Torah—as midrash is often said to do—depends, to some extent, on perspective and definition. At various places in the canonical gospels, famously in the Sermon on the Mount, the discourses of Jesus include material that contemporizes Torah in a *halakhic* sense.⁸³ While descriptions of midrash in the gospels are often concerned with halakhah, that is clearly not the case with the prologue. Someone might argue that this passage takes a portion of the Torah (Gen 1-2) and applies it to the contemporary situation—the incarnation and resultant theology or mission. In my opinion, however, rather than a “contemporization” of Torah, what we see here is the “Torahization” of the contemporary. That is, via Proverbs’ hymn to Wisdom, John reads Jesus-as-*Logos* back into the *paradigm* of Torah and thus writes Jesus and Christianity into existing Jewish salvation history. This invites the consideration of another intertextual aspect of midrash raised by Boyarin in other contexts: continuity and discontinuity of tradition in midrash.

⁸³ Just one of innumerable possible examples that discuss that perspective: Phillip Sigal, *The Halakhah of Jesus of Nazareth According to the Gospel of Matthew*, Studies in Biblical Literature (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

Is the Johannine Prologue in continuity or discontinuity with the Jewish Scriptures? Does it maintain tradition or breach it? The answer to both of these, according to Boyarin, is “yes.” By quoting and alluding to authoritative texts, midrash preserves the tradition of those texts.⁸⁴ Indeed, it relies upon that tradition for its own authority. At the same time, the combination and “re-contexting” of texts inevitably breaches tradition to some extent. Using the Mekilta as an example, Boyarin claims that “explicit intertextuality carries with it both ‘disruptive’ and ‘reconstructive’ features; ...with regard to midrash, at least, this double movement of disruption and regeneration is precisely its *raison d'être*.⁸⁵ So it is, in the case of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel—and of Hebrews, as we will see—that Christ can both *fulfill* Torah and *bring new* Torah. In John (and in Hebrews), in order to disrupt and regenerate the tradition, Jesus will also have had to continue or fulfill it in significant ways. Christ-as-Logos is significant *in light of* Genesis 1, just as *Sophia* in Proverbs 8 is significant *in light of* the connection to Genesis 1.

Like all of the illustrations just mentioned, the Johannine Prologue builds its exegesis on the foundation of the Pentateuch, it does not skirt it. Genesis is harnessed, not overturned nor cast aside. Not unlike the use of Isa 42 to retroject God’s covenant with Israel into the creation narrative, the last Gospel reads Jesus in, and into, the first words of the scriptures. Having begun at the beginning, the primacy of the Pentateuch is evident

⁸⁴ See Boyarin’s extended explanation of this phenomenon, based to an extent on Morawski’s analysis of poetics in *Intertextuality and the reading of Midrash*, 24-26.

⁸⁵ *Intertextuality and the reading of Midrash*, 25.

in the poetic and narrative exegesis of John. We now turn to consider how the Pentateuch functions as a scriptural center of gravity in these examples, and more broadly.

IV. METHODOLOGICAL NOTES ON INTERTEXTUALITY, GENERATIVE TEXTS, ALLUSION AND MIDRASH

Now that we have the illustrations of the Torah and *haftarah*, Mekilta, 11QMelchizedek, Wisdom 10-12 and the Johannine Prologue to work with, some methodological notes are in order with regard to the concepts of “generative texts,” scriptural allusions and the use of the term midrash before moving to the exegesis in subsequent chapters.

Generative Texts

It is necessary to clarify what is meant by the term “generative text,” to distinguish between generative texts generally and a principal or primary generative text, and to differentiate generative texts from texts which have exegetical functions. As stated in the introduction, a “generative text,” for the purposes of this study, is a text which serves as the basis and starting point for another composition of some sort, whether that new composition be homiletical, exegetical, a commentary, a revision, an adaptation, or a parody, etc. The principal generative text may sometimes be considered a governing text, but it is even more important to recognize it as the text that launches or inspires—that generates—another discourse, exposition or work. In the first example above, the Torah reading (Gen 1-6), is the principal generative text and the *haftarah* was determined on the basis of perceived connections to the Genesis portion. In Boyarin’s analysis of the Johannine Prologue, Genesis 1 is the principal generative text, contributing the

underlying narrative and “controlling language.”⁸⁶ Exodus is the generative text of the Mekilta as a whole, and a phrase from Exod 19:2, “encamped in the wilderness,” is the (very brief) generative text for the Mek. Bah. 1. Leviticus 25 is the primary generative text for 11QMelchizedek, two verses of which are cited (25:9, 13) with others alluded to (25:8, 10).

In other examples of Second Temple literature, Genesis and Exodus are the principal generative texts for *Jubilees*, the Book of Job for the *Testament of Job*, and so on. As another sort of example, Eugene Boring describes Mark as the generative text for the other gospels.⁸⁷ Generative texts influence other texts in a variety of ways, to varying degrees. The resulting compositions often incorporate several additional texts in the process. Central to the concept of a generative text is the idea that the later composition would not exist if the generative text(s) did not.

An important point of distinction and clarification should be made between the term “generative text,” as used here, and the terms “intertext” and “hypotext” which are often used in literary and biblical studies connected with intertextuality. “Intertext” has come to be commonly used in biblical studies as a generic term for texts included in other texts through citations, paraphrases, allusions, etc. Any or all of the scriptural texts referred to in the illustrations above might routinely be referred to as intertexts. The word is somewhat problematic in that it is not used consistently, however. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, “The term intertext has been used variously for a

⁸⁶ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 95-97.

⁸⁷ M. Eugene Boring, *Mark* (Louisville, KY: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2006), 453.

text drawing on other texts, for a text thus drawn upon, and for the relationship between both.”⁸⁸ The background of the idea of intertexts is also somewhat freighted by its roots in the broader context of studies of intertextuality. Because a number of theorists of intertextuality consider relationships between texts to be fluid, synchronic, non- or multi-directional, or to be viewed more from the perspective of the reader than the author, “intertext” is not well-suited for the present study.⁸⁹ I am interested, instead, in highlighting the directional, diachronic, hierarchical and intentional hermeneutical nature of the relationships between the texts.⁹⁰

Those who come to this study from a perspective of intertextuality are also likely to link the term “generative text” with Genette’s “hypotext.” That is not without reason, and Genette’s work can be useful, but there are some key distinctions to be made between my use of “generative text” and common uses of “hypotext.” The main distinction is that Genette’s paradigm is usually concerned with the relationship between *two texts at a time*: a “hypertext” or later text, and a “hypotext,” or earlier text,⁹¹ although he

⁸⁸ Baldick, “Intertextuality.” As seen above, for example, Boyarin uses it to signify the text “drawn upon” whereas many others use it in a much broader sense. For Riffaterre, on the other hand, “intertext” signifies a much broader group of texts as part of a sociolect, where neither sources or direct influence are of significant concern. Michael Riffaterre, “Intertextuality vs. Hypertextuality,” *New Literary History* 25, no. 4 (1994); Graham Allen, *Intertextuality: The New Critical Idiom*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 116-18.

⁸⁹ In this context, I avoid the ahistoric or multi-directional sorts of analyses engendered by Kristeva and Barthes, for example, and Bloom’s “anxiety of influence.” Along those lines, while Bakhtin has much to offer and has made incalculably important contributions to literary and, in some cases, biblical studies, I take Hebrews to be a monological (not dialogical in a Bakhtinian sense) work, so such language is set aside here, however productive it may be for other purposes.

⁹⁰ This is not to invalidate the potential gains to be made using other intertextual methods, perspectives or modalities that are more fluid or reader-centered. It simply goes beyond the intention of this study.

⁹¹ Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Stages (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 5.

acknowledges that multiple texts can be involved in the composition of a hypertext.⁹² That paradigm is often inadequate for our exegetical scenario. In each of the cases discussed above, we would have at least two hypotexts—e.g., Gen 1-6 and Isa 42; Exod 19:2 and Ps 29 and Isa 45; Prov 8 and Gen 1—involved in the production of each hypertext—the synagogue homily, section of the Mekilta, Wis 10-12 and John 1, etc. Moreover, the scriptural texts in each case, which Genette would classify as hypotexts, are ranked or hierarchical in these exegetical works, which, although it does not contradict Genette, goes beyond the scope and intent of his work. To label both Exodus 19:2 and Ps 29 as hypotexts to the Mekilta as hypertext would not be incorrect but, because of their different roles, neither would it be very helpful. In that vein, we could legitimately label both scriptures as generative texts but we risk glossing over the very important functional distinctions between them in doing so. It is more useful, in this context, to regard these as (1) a primary generative text, (2) an intermediary or exegetical text (or texts) and then (3) the resulting new text.⁹³ To make the most of Genette's terminology, we would need a third term for these active intermediary or exegetical texts, “mesotext” perhaps, but we will not engage that any further here.

There can be more than one generative text involved in the exegetical process, and the practical utility of the term comes down to matters of degree and purpose. For synagogue homilies, the principal generative text is the Torah reading, yet the *haftarah*

⁹² Which, interestingly enough, Genette calls “contamination,” *Palimpsests*, 46-47, 207-08. See also Gil Rosenberg’s very helpful discussion of Genette: Gil Rosenberg, “Hypertextuality,” in *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts*, ed. B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2016), 16-28.

⁹³ Genette’s “hypertext”

could *also* be considered generative. It is in that sense that Boyarin writes, “When the rabbis of the midrash quote verses from [the Prophets or Writings], the quoted verses are the generating force behind the midrashic elaboration and filling in of the gaps in the “historical record.”⁹⁴ Such is the case with Isa 61 in 11QMelch, in that Isa 61 is part of the creative process that produces exegetical activity that connects additional texts to form an exegetical matrix. There is a difference, however, between the latter type of generativity and the generative role of the Torah reading. To designate the Torah reading as the primary generative text recognizes the role of the Pentateuch as authoritative and the fact that it represents the conceptual starting point of the homiletical and liturgical processes. Homilies on Genesis 1-6 have surely been developed in conjunction with other *haftarot* than Isaiah 42, for instance.⁹⁵

Therefore, throughout the remaining chapters of this study, the term “generative” is normally used with reference to texts or themes from the Pentateuch which serve as the primary and authoritative basis for expositions, like a Torah reading for a synagogue homily or Exodus for the *Mekilta*. The term “exegetical text” typically refers to texts like Isa 42 (*haftarah*), Psalm 29 (*Mek. Bah.* 1) and Prov 8 (John 1, Wis 10-12) in the above illustrations, even though they may also be somehow generative in their own right. Sometimes, as we will see, texts from the Pentateuch also function as exegetical texts. All of the exegetical texts explain, illuminate or supplement the Pentateuch in some way.

⁹⁴ Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the reading of Midrash*, 18.

⁹⁵ On the development and diversity of the haftarot, see Fishbane, *Haftarot*, xxiii-xxv

The basic approach of this study is to assume that—more often than not—an exegete of the Jewish scriptures would begin with a passage or theme from the Pentateuch in mind. The generative text from the Pentateuch often is not the first text cited (ancient and rabbinic homilies were sometimes known to begin with a “proem” text from the Writings or Prophets for instance);⁹⁶ indeed, it may not be *cited* at all. In certain cases, a predominant theme or figure comes from the P&W, as with *Sophia* in Wisdom 10-12 for example, and portions of the Pentateuch are interpreted through that lens. Nevertheless, Exodus is clear and indispensable to the exposition in Wis 10-12 and the authority of that narrative is derived from the fact that *Sophia* is seen to have been deeply involved in the authoritative narrative of the Pentateuch; as if *Sophia* is legitimized by (the Books of) Moses.

The respective functions of generative texts and exegetical texts in ancient Jewish exegesis, then, can be summarized briefly. The major generative texts, from the Pentateuch, may provide a narrative base,⁹⁷ a legal or theological paradigm⁹⁸ and, of course a lexical reservoir. Exegetical texts, often from the P&W but sometimes from the Pentateuch, also have a broad range of functions, including filling gaps and resolving exegetical conundrums in generative texts, contemporizing *halakhah*, identifying or

⁹⁶ A classic study in this regard is Joseph Heinemann, "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim: A Form-Critical Study," in *Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971). See also Mann, *Bible*. and Gelardini, "Hebrews," 113-15.

⁹⁷ e.g. Gen in John 1, Exod in Wis 10-12, portions of the Mek.

⁹⁸ Jubilee in 11Q13, logos in John 1, divine voice in *Mek*.

specifying elements in the text,⁹⁹ drawing paraenetic significance from narratives,¹⁰⁰ transforming paradigms theologically or eschatologically¹⁰¹ and, in many cases imparting hope—a common expectation of a synagogue *haftarah*.¹⁰²

Scriptural Allusions

The work of Richard B. Hays on allusions and echoes of scripture has also shaped ways the NT interpreters approach the incorporation of texts by NT authors, particularly with regard his criteria for determining the likelihood that a given text alludes to an earlier text. Since Hays' seven criteria for discerning allusions and echoes¹⁰³ are widely referenced, some comments here related to Hebrew's use of Exodus should be helpful in anticipation of the exegesis in subsequent chapters, particularly since Hebrews only includes a few citations or close paraphrases of Exodus texts.

Hays' seven criteria, or tests, for discerning echoes and allusions in Paul are often referred to and have been applied across the NT. Those criteria are: availability,¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Melchizedek the deliverer, Jesus the Logos

¹⁰⁰ Wis 10-12

¹⁰¹ Jubilee, *logos*, the giving of Torah, covenant

¹⁰² Fishbane, *Haftarat*, xxiv.

¹⁰³ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ Availability: was the scriptural source available to the author? Conv *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, 34.

volume,¹⁰⁵ recurrence,¹⁰⁶ thematic coherence,¹⁰⁷ historical plausibility,¹⁰⁸ history of interpretation,¹⁰⁹ and satisfaction.¹¹⁰ I will comment briefly here on Exodus and Hebrews from the perspective of Hays' criteria in order to offer a sense of how they apply to this study in general and to the strength of the argument for the presence of allusions to Exodus in particular. Before doing so directly, however, an overview of the most important citations and allusions to Exodus in Hebrews will allow for a more productive discussion of the seven criteria below.

There are only two citations, or quotations, of Exodus in Hebrews that scholars agree upon: Exod 25:40 in Heb 8:5¹¹¹ and of Exod 24:8 in 9:20.¹¹² In Heb 12:20 we find what I describe as a condensed paraphrase of Exod 19:12-13, where a longer portion of text is condensed with close verbal similarity preserved and, for that reason, there is no debate as to whether Heb 12:20 references Exod 19:12-13. There are many instances,

¹⁰⁵ Volume: The “degree of verbatim repetition of words and syntactical patterns,” “distinctiveness, prominence or popular familiarity of the precursor text” and the “rhetorical stress placed upon the phrase in question.” *Conversion*, 34-37.

¹⁰⁶ Recurrence or clustering: Frequency of other quotations of, or allusions to, the same source text in other places within the work and/or the presence of multiple quotations or allusions to the same scriptural text in close proximity to each other—either of these are considered to increase the likelihood that a given text is being alluded to. *Conversion*, 37-38.

¹⁰⁷ Thematic coherence: Does the precursor text seem to fit with the point being made in the present text? *Conversion*, 38-41.

¹⁰⁸ Historical plausibility: Is it reasonable to think that the author could have “intended the alleged meaning effect of any proposed allusion, and could his first-century readers have understood it?” *Conversion*, 41-42.

¹⁰⁹ History of interpretation: Have other interpreters over time also identified a given passage as allusive to a particular text? *Conversion*, 43-44.

¹¹⁰ Satisfaction: Does the identification of a given allusion illuminate the larger discourse and/or cohere with the broader argument? *Conversion*, 44-45.

¹¹¹ “‘See,’ he says, ‘that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain’ Heb 8:5

¹¹² “This is the blood of the covenant which God ordained for you” Heb 9:20

however, in which Hebrews alludes to Exodus and, in those cases, Hays' criteria are most relevant. Some of the most significant allusions I (and others) identify, for instance, include the “word spoken through angels” in 2:2 (angels at Sinai),¹¹³ the wilderness generation (thematic allusions) and the promise of rest (Exod 33:14) in Heb 3-4. The reference to God’s rest after creation in relation to the Sabbath command in 4:4 may allude to Genesis but it may also (or instead) allude to the Decalogue in Exodus and/or Exodus 31:17. Hebrews 5:1, 4 allude to the call of Aaron from among the people to be a priest (Exod 28:1) and Hebrews dialogues with the concept of Aarons’ perpetual priestly line throughout Heb 5-7,¹¹⁴ as well. A detailed description of the wilderness tabernacle in Heb 9 alludes very specifically to Exodus¹¹⁵ and references to both covenant and atoning rituals in Hebrews can easily be understood as alluding to Exodus and/or Leviticus. Hebrews 11 also includes material that clearly alludes to Exodus.¹¹⁶ Hebrews 12 unmistakably alludes to Sinai. In Heb 13 the final paraenetic section,¹¹⁷ scholars debate whether references to sacrifice allude to Exodus, Leviticus or both. Another debate involves whether Hebrews reads through “τῷ παραπικρασμῷ ... τοῦ πειρασμού” in Ps 94:8 LXX to perceive the reference to Massah and Meribah in Ps 95:8 MT (the verse the LXX translates) and its relation to Exod 17. So, there are a number of different levels of paraphrase and allusion to Exodus in Hebrews.

¹¹³ See chapter 2 for details.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Exod 28-30 and other references in chapter 4 of this study.

¹¹⁵ With at least one addition from elsewhere—Aaron’s rod (cf. Num 17)

¹¹⁶ For the most thorough recent treatment of Exodus in Heb 11, see Gheorghita, "He Spoke."

¹¹⁷ Not treated in detail in this study

With those examples in mind, a few of Hays' criteria can be readily applied across the board when considering Hebrews' relationship to Exodus. First, I can imagine no debate within the current state of scholarship as to the availability of the text of Exodus to the author of Hebrews. Whether the author had access to or familiarity with the Exodus text in *Hebrew* (in addition to the LXX) is of some interest, but there is no doubt that such a foundational text would have been available in at least one form. Second, and closely related, even if we take only undisputed references to Exodus in Hebrews, including references to Moses (11 times in 7 chs.), the tabernacle (citing Exod 25:40), Mt. Sinai, Aaron's priesthood, the exodus generation, and the ratification of the covenant (citing Exod 24:8), the criterion of recurrence is easily met on a macro scale in Hebrews. Third, since Hebrews' major arguments treat topics that are also integral to Exodus, such as the tabernacle, priesthood, Moses, the cult, and covenant; the criterion of thematic coherence is relatively easily satisfied. In fact, most of the work that *has* been done on the relationship of Exodus to Hebrews has been on a thematic level.¹¹⁸ Thematic coherence has been amply argued by other scholars, which relates to a fourth criterion: history of interpretation. Generally speaking, interpreters have not placed a great deal of emphasis on the influence of Exodus on Hebrews but, while on one hand the significance of Exodus in Hebrews is (I would suggest) underplayed, few would deny that Hebrews is conscious of Exodus, on the other hand. There will be very few cases, if any, throughout this study in which I suggest or advocate for an allusion to Exodus that has not already

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, "Comparative"; She, *Use of Exodus*; Stuart, "Exodus Tradition"; Gheorghita, "He Spoke."

been suggested by multiple interpreters in the past. What only a few interpreters have done is to look at the overall effect of Exodus on Hebrews. And, with the above themes being so prominent in both Exodus and in Hebrews, combined with the fact that Exodus was such a well-known and foundational book, a fifth criterion, historical plausibility, does not appear to be problematic regarding Hebrews' use of Exodus as a whole, even if an individual instance here or there may be debatable.

The remaining two of Hays' criteria are the more interesting when it comes to this study: volume and satisfaction. In the second major iteration of Hay's criteria, he outlines three aspects of "volume" to consider: (1) the "degree of verbatim repetition of words and syntactical patterns," (2) "distinctiveness, prominence or popular familiarity of the precursor text" and (3) the "rhetorical stress placed upon the phrase in question."¹¹⁹ We will see a variety of volume levels in allusions to Exodus throughout Hebrews. For example, in Heb 2:1-4, I suggest that both "the word spoken through angels" and "pay much closer attention" allude to Exodus. In that instance, the former phrase is a moderate-to-high volume allusion which most interpreters note. The latter is at a lower volume, but is far more easily recognized in the context of the former. The concept of "rest" associated with Exodus rather than, or in addition to, Deuteronomy broadcasts at a low volume to modern interpreters, thus it requires more exegetical justification than some of the others. In most instances, I seek to demonstrate that we find elements that are prominent (high volume) in Exodus and that are rhetorically prominent and strategic in

¹¹⁹ Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*, 34-37.

Hebrews (high volume). Those instances, then, tend to raise the volume of others that seem otherwise to be lower-volume allusions.

With regard to “satisfaction,” the final criterion on Hays’ list, this study is an effort to show that, indeed, reading the Sinai pericope of Exodus as the primary generative text for Hebrews does illuminate its exegesis and provide coherence at a level that interpreters will find satisfying. An effort is made in the conclusion to provide a synthesis and summary that will be satisfying overall. I will also note that there are a number of cases in which interpreters have proposed allusions to Exodus in Hebrews which I have determined to be either of such a low volume, otherwise incoherent insofar as Hebrews’ argument, or in some other way not satisfying and I have set those aside.¹²⁰

The central purpose of this study is to show how Hebrews uses Exodus in concert, or dialogue, with other texts exegetically. The identification of allusions to Exodus is an important part of the process and my intention is that, while Hays’ criteria may not frequently be foregrounded in the exegetical chapters, the ensuing exegesis is consistent with his criteria when it comes to identifying allusions to Exodus (and other texts).¹²¹

Hebrews and Midrash

The question as to whether Hebrews is midrash can almost as easily be a definitive “yes” as a definitive “no,” so a clarification of terms and concepts is essential. The term “midrash” is notoriously difficult to define with precision and its application to

¹²⁰ For example, K. L. She’s *Use of Exodus* contains the largest number of suggested allusions or connections to Exodus that I have seen. Although his collection of suggested allusions is extensive and helpful, I evaluate a fair number of those suggestions as either very low volume or highly unlikely to be allusions to Exodus.

¹²¹ One of the best examples may be the suggestion of a cluster of allusion to Isa 35 in Heb 12:1-14, for example.

the NT has long been contentious. The problems are well known: imprecise or unreflective uses of the term, danger of anachronism and a vast array of definitions resulting in no convenient definition.¹²² Nevertheless, a search conducted in a scholarly database or theological library catalog, or a scan of the major commentaries, will quickly reveal a plethora of articles, monographs and commentaries suggesting that Hebrews is midrash, contains midrashim, uses midrashic strategies or hermeneutical methods. Indeed, “midrash,” “midrashim,” and “midrashic” are used so frequently in ongoing conversations about Hebrews’ hermeneutics, genre and exegesis that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to avoid that group of terms and still address Hebrews’ use of Jewish scriptures. P. S. Alexander, who prefers a more restrictive definition of midrash (as primarily applicable to rabbinic literature), writes circumspectly on this point and is worth quoting at some length:

Midrash is a highly complex phenomenon which is not easily described. There has been a lively debate over terminology, especially the appropriateness of the term Midrash itself. The word Midrash was initially borrowed from rabbinic literature, where it denotes the specifically rabbinic tradition of Bible exegesis, but it is now commonly applied to the whole of the post-biblical commentary tradition from Second Temple times down to the end of the Talmudic era. This can create problems if it encourages scholars to homogenize this tradition and ignore important differences between, for example, the rabbinic and the Qumranian styles of exegesis. But the usage is probably here to stay and no great harm will be done by it, provided the differences between the various schools are clearly spelled out. It is important to note, however, that the term Midrash is fundamentally ambiguous even within its narrower rabbinic usage, since it

¹²² Alexander articulates this point well: “Through biblical studies the term ‘midrash’ entered modern academic vocabulary where it is used to denote early Jewish exegesis of the Bible as characterized by a certain hermeneutical approach. In the academic context the scope of the term varies greatly. At its broadest it may be applied to the whole range of early Jewish Bible interpretation as found e.g. in the Septuagint, Jubilees, the Qumran Pesharim, Genesis Apocryphon, Philo, the NT, Josephus, the Targumims, as well as in the classic rabbinic commentaries such as the Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Sifra, Sifrei and Genesis Rabba. Such a broad usage is problematic since it runs the risk of evacuating the term of any specific meaning and reducing it to jargon.” He also refers to midrash as both/either a hermeneutical process and artefact (resultant literature). Alexander, “Midrash.”

denotes both a hermeneutical method and a concrete text which exemplifies that method and is cast in the literary form of lemma plus comment.¹²³

A few of Alexander's points are relevant to the clarification of terms needed here.

First, although midrash is difficult to define, "it is probably here to stay" when it comes to the NT generally and Hebrews specifically (whether one prefers that it be so, or not).

When used in the context of NT studies, it usually serves as shorthand for scriptural exegesis that has certain characteristics in common with rabbinic exegesis. Alexander does well to highlight the "fundamental ambiguity" to the term, even within the narrower confines of rabbinic literature, differentiating between midrash as a hermeneutical method and a concrete literary context with the form "lemma plus comment."¹²⁴

Rather than composing a new definition of midrash to add to the innumerable definitions already in existence or simply picking a preferred definition by one of the well-known experts in the field that would conveniently rule Hebrews either in or out of the category of midrash,¹²⁵ I will take a descriptive approach to answer the question of whether, or how, classifying Hebrews as midrash is justified or useful. This will be done by enumerating several ways in which it is helpful to classify Hebrews as both midrash(ic) and not midrash(ic). A recent, comprehensive and somewhat centrist

¹²³ "The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism," ed. A. D. H. Mayes, *Text in Context: Essays by Members of the Society for Old Testament Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

¹²⁴ "The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism."

¹²⁵ For other frequently cited definitions, see Renée Bloch, "Midrash," in *Dictionnaire de la Bible Supplément*, ed. Louis Pirot, Robert A. Derrenbacker, Jr., and Henri Cazelles (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1957); Gary Porton, "Midrash, Definitions of," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan Avery-Peck, J. (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Fraade, "Midrashim"; Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the reading of Midrash*, 16-17; Goldin, "Midrash and Aggadah [First Edition]."

definition by Carol Bakhos provides a good set of orienting points from which to launch the discussion:

"The term midrash (Hebrew root *drs*, "to investigate, seek, search out, examine") is often used generically to refer to any act of interpretation, but in its strictest and most precise sense it refers to rabbinic biblical interpretation, to both the process of interpretation as well as the fruits of exegetical inquiry. The act of interpreting the Bible was an engagement not only with the written word but also with the practices and beliefs of the Jewish people. Through the midrashic process, the rabbis made the Bible relevant to their contemporaries, taught moral lessons, told fanciful stories, and developed as well as maintained theological beliefs and ethical codes of behavior."¹²⁶

Bakhos thus provides an entry into looking at whether it is useful to think of Hebrews in terms of midrash, or not. We begin with the positive—some family resemblances of midrash perceptible in Hebrews.

First, there are ways in which Hebrews is midrash(ic). The following are several commonly recognized characteristics of midrash that apply to Hebrews to varying degrees. Perhaps the most generally agreed upon characteristic of midrash is that it is essentially biblical interpretation or exegesis. Hebrews certainly meets that criterion, with its copious citations, allusions and interpretations of the Jewish scriptures. Also, while not a product of known rabbinic figures (as far as we know), Hebrews does have certain similar hermeneutics in common with them, as discussed by Boyarin¹²⁷ and Flusser,¹²⁸ and as Herbert Bateman IV and Susan Docherty have catalogued.¹²⁹ Hebrews uses forms of argumentation found in ancient lists of *middot* such as *qal wahomer* and *gezerah*

¹²⁶ Bakhos, "Midrash."

¹²⁷ Boyarin, "Prolegomena."

¹²⁸ Flusser, "Today."

¹²⁹ Bateman IV, "Second Temple."; Docherty, *Use of the Old Testament*.

shewa. Midrash has been described as making meaning by juxtaposing texts from scripture,¹³⁰ which is highly evident in Hebrews. While not primarily a legal or halakhic text, Hebrews does “make the Bible relevant to [its] contemporaries,” as Bakhos puts it,¹³¹ explaining how atonement works within a new covenant and how Christ can function as a great high priest, etc. Flusser emphasizes that midrash participated in vast networks of texts that were inherited and appropriated and that midrashim were not generated *ex nihilo*. The grouping of texts that make up the well-known catena in Heb 1 is but one example of that phenomenon.¹³²

Second, there are ways in which Hebrews is *not* midrash(ic). The following widely recognized characteristics of midrash do not apply well to Hebrews. The most common objection to classifying Hebrews as midrash is that it is not of rabbinic origin. Both Gary Porton and P. S. Alexander draw definitional boundaries around the corpus of rabbinic literature, for example.¹³³ Hebrews is clearly not a collection of rabbinic texts, nor is it simply a didactic series of midrashim like the classic midrash compilations.¹³⁴ Hebrews makes a series of exegetical arguments, but the context and

¹³⁰ Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the reading of Midrash*, 28-32.

¹³¹ See her definition above.

¹³² See chapter 2.

¹³³ Porton defines midrash as: “Rabbinic midrash is an oral or written literature composed by the rabbis that has its starting point in a fixed, canonical biblical text. In midrash, this original text, considered the revealed word of God by the midrashist and his audience, is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to. In the scholarly literature, as in Judaism itself, the term midrash is used in three different ways: 1) to refer to individual exegetical pericopae (hence, a midrash on Gen. 1:1), 2) to describe the Rabbinic method of biblical interpretation (hence, a statement such as, "midrash renders Scripture relevant to contemporary needs"), and 3) to designate the compilations of Rabbinic exegetical statements produced in late antiquity (hence, the midrash on the book of Genesis).” Porton, “Midrash,” 520.

¹³⁴ That is not to say that Hebrews may not be built around a series of midrashic exegeses. It is *more* than that, however, in that it is also a “word of exhortation” that puts the exegetical work at the service of its pastoral purposes.

transitions between them have a far more homiletical feel and a different purpose than do the midrash compilations. Hebrews also does not feature dialogues between named sages.¹³⁵ While Hebrews discusses sacrifice, cult, priesthood and some ethical issues, it is not generally concerned with halakhah and is not primarily engaged in contemporizing Torah in any legal sense, as halakhic midrash does.¹³⁶ Hebrews is also a sustained argument that runs longer than most in the compilations. Hebrews' argument is less atomistic than much of what is found in the midrash compilations,¹³⁷ not following the abrupt "lemma plus comment" format typical of exegetical midrash, as Alexander put it.¹³⁸ It does comment on words, verses and parts of verses, so that sort of exegesis is not entirely foreign to Hebrews, but Hebrews' comments are more embedded in a rhetorical flow than we find in the Mekilta, for example. Hebrews tends not to fall into the "fanciful" category by most measures.¹³⁹ Midrash is at times concerned with minute textual details such as the shapes of letters or with numbers (gematria, etc.)¹⁴⁰ in ways that Hebrews never is. While Hebrews does focus on particular words as catchwords or engages in word play, definition and redefinition (like midrash), rabbinic midrash often

¹³⁵ Porton, "Midrash," 532.

¹³⁶ Within midrashic categories, Hebrews is more aggadic than halakhic. That does not preclude it from being considered as midrash or midrashic, but it does suggest caution when it comes to applying halakhic rules or strategies to the interpretation of Hebrews.

¹³⁷ See the interesting perspective of Folker Siegert, "Hellenistic Jewish Midrash," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash*, ed. Jacob Neusner and J. Avery-Peck Alan (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

¹³⁸ Alexander, "The Bible in Qumran and Early Judaism." Hebrews does not usually do curt commentary on words or segments of verses as transparently as one finds in the midrashim, but it does launch its expositions from words and phrases from its key texts, sometimes segmenting and commenting.

¹³⁹ See Bakhos' description, above. One possible exception to that is Hebrew's assertion that Levi tithed to Melchizedek while yet in the loins of Abraham (7:9-10). See chapter 4.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander, "Midrash."

interprets or reinterprets Hebrew words by substituting different vowels, etc. Hebrews does not do that, if for no other reason, because it does exegesis in Greek and mainly from Greek, not Hebrew.

Based on the above, it does seem that a qualified “yes” can be given to the question of whether Hebrews is midrashic. Boyarin’s words again come to mind: “On my first reading of Hebrews, my immediate and powerful impression was that this is midrash, midrash in style, midrashic even in the structure of its content.”¹⁴¹ Among the most important interpretive benefits gained from that perspective are insights into how Hebrews reads scripture and how texts work together, as we shall see. However, there are also very significant differences between much of what is found in the classic midrash collections, as mentioned above, and especially between Hebrews and halakhah. For those reasons, my preference is to describe Hebrews—more generically—as “ancient Jewish exegesis” in an effort to steer clear of misleading connotations of “midrash” for the present purposes. At the same time, I acknowledge that the insights offered and comparisons made by Boyarin, Flusser, and others are helpful and, indeed, have been formative for this study.

One of the main problems I will address is the idea that Hebrews would be a midrash on a psalm or a series of midrashim on texts from the P&W. For the purposes of this study, my intent not make a statement as to whether Hebrews is or is not midrash generally. I do however, wish to suggest that viewing Hebrews as midrash on texts from

¹⁴¹ Boyarin, “Prolegomena,” 1.

the P&W is problematic for several reasons; for some of the reasons above, and even more so because such proposals misperceive Hebrews' scriptural center of gravity.

As far as the genre of Hebrews in relation to midrash as a genre, it is clear that Hebrews contains exegetical arguments consistent with some midrashic hermeneutics and that it interprets scripture. But, it also has a more homiletical tone and purpose (as a self-described “word of exhortation”) than we would find in the more academic context of a *beit midrash*. Hebrews is generated primarily from Exodus, but it is not a running commentary on Exodus, like the Mekilta. Further, Hebrews does not exist to explain Exodus, it intends to explain Jesus to its audience in terms of Exodus. Hebrews is, in my view, more along the lines of a theological treatise written for a more popular audience. It appears longer and more complex than we might imagine a typical homily to have been, but it is certainly the product of a homiletic habit of mind.

To conclude this chapter, we return briefly to idea of the pursuit and exploration of the habits of mind of the ancient exegetes. George Brooke offers the following analysis of the exegesis of 4QFlorilegium, thoughts which can be extended to cover a range of the texts we have seen thus far. Beginning with a consideration of ancient authors’ selection of the texts in the exegetical process and moving toward the work of exegetes more broadly, Brooke writes:

The selection of these secondary supportive intertexts is not arbitrary. On the one hand, their selection depends on their fit with an overall thematic conception concerning what the author is trying to say in general and specifically about the latter days. On the other hand, as several scholars have shown, they are linked with the primary controlling base text through an intricate use of catchwords and other exegetical techniques which display the erudition and subtlety of the interpreter and which go a long way toward demonstrating to an audience that the interpretation is indeed correct. Interpretation in these sectarian compositions does

not simply derive from some kind of divine inspiration, but comes about through the exquisite application of much learning that is demonstrable in its technical agility. Sadly, in many cases that agility lies beneath the surface and has to be dug up by the modern commentator, often with difficulty, to show how the commentary was woven together.¹⁴²

As we proceed, my goal is to reimagine the exegetical habit of mind played out in the Book of Hebrews through the conscious application of ancient Jewish concepts of scripture and exegesis. My hope is that along the way we may also appreciate the “erudition and subtlety,” the virtuosity, to which our ancient exegete treats us as we attempt to enter his profoundly scriptural world.

¹⁴² George J. Brooke and Nathalie LaCoste, *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method, Early Judaism and its Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 90.

CHAPTER TWO: BEGINNING AT SINAI (HEB 1:1-3:6)

In *The Psalm Citations in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Simon Kistemaker

describes a hermeneutical development he perceived within early Christianity:

...[D]uring the first century A.D. a radical difference between the Jewish use of the OT Scripture and that of early Christians was manifested. The distinction came to light in the shift of emphasis. No longer was the law the nucleus in Christian exegesis, but prophesy—in which the Early Church saw fulfilment in the coming of Jesus Christ. The Jews, on the contrary, used prophecy to strengthen the Torah, so that the place which the Early Church ascribed to Christ was occupied in Judaism by the Five Books of Moses. Hence, the author of Hebrews, finding his point of departure not in the Torah but in the Psalms and Prophets which speak of Christ, applies passages out of Moses to supplement prophesies about the Messiah. (1961, p. 91)

Certainly, the first chapters of Hebrews have often been read as bearing this out, with so many citations from the Psalms and Prophets applied to Christ, and Moses apparently taking a backseat to the ascendant Messiah. Still, if “the ways” of Judaism and Christianity had not yet “parted” as abruptly or dramatically as scholars once assumed, if border lines were just beginning to be sketched in pencil rather than having been etched in stone at the time this epistle was written, we might ask whether such a profound shift of the nucleus of the scriptures is likely to have occurred by the time Hebrews was composed.¹ Are “passages out of Moses” *supplemental* to the Messianic prophesies in

¹ ...Whether one dates Hebrews pre-70, early in the 2nd c. BCE or anytime in between. The earlier the date, the *more unlikely* it would have been that one could have identified “Christianity” in non-Jewish terms. See Eisenbaum, “Locating Hebrews within the Literary Landscape of Christian Origins.” On the topic of the early Jewish-Christian relations and the establishment of boundaries, borders and difference: Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 22-23; Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted*:

Hebrews? Or might it have been that the Five Books of Moses were the *basis* of the exegesis, as one would expect in midrash or a synagogue homily? Did the author of Hebrews write as if the Torah set the standards to which Jesus and his message had to measure up?

The intent of this chapter is to offer a reading of Heb 1:1-3:6 as if the hermeneutical shift described by Kistemaker had not occurred. Instead the “point of departure” for the author is taken to be the Pentateuch, rather than the Prophets and Writings (P&W). I propose that Hebrews took on the daunting task of convincing the audience that Jesus was a greater prophet than Moses with a message that was greater than what was heard at Sinai; and that, in so doing, it had inevitably to reckon with Sinai, as imposing as ever. Hebrews marshaled texts from the P&W *in order to* do exegesis of the Torah (not *instead* of doing exegesis of the Torah) in an effort to win the hearts and minds of those who read and heard it. Toward the end of this chapter, I will return to Kistemaker’s statement in order to highlight some elements that have persisted in Hebrews scholarship and to lay out an alternative view of how Hebrews viewed and used scripture. That perspective will build on the conclusions of the current chapter and inform the work of subsequent chapters.

As argued in the previous chapter, two common characteristics of ancient Jewish exegesis were (1) the primacy of the Pentateuch and (2) that the P&W are often employed as exegetical texts. The P&W were used to explain, illuminate, amplify or even

Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007); Paula Fredriksen, "What 'Parting of the Ways'? Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City," in *Ways that Never Parted* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Philip S. Alexander, "'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," in *Jews and Christians* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992).

subvert texts from the Pentateuch. We now move to apply these principles to Hebrews, starting with the first major exegetical section (1:1-3:6).

One additional goal of this chapter is to consider the habit of mind of Hebrews' author as texts from the P&W are juxtaposed with citations and allusions to Exodus at the beginning of the book. In order to do so, the focus here will be on the generative role of Exodus and the exegetical functions of the many texts that from the P&W. In the process, I will compare several other views of Hebrews' use of scripture in this section, some which view Hebrews as a series of expositions on various texts and others that see Hebrews governed by one main generative text, Ps 110² or Exodus 31-32,³ in particular.

I. OVERVIEW AND CORRESPONDENCE OF 1:1-3:6 AND 12:1-29

From the beginning of the Book of Hebrews, Mt. Sinai looms as the dominant peak on the horizon, evoking memories of the voice of God (1:1), of angels as God's messengers (1:5-2:9) and of Moses as the deliverer of the house of Israel (3:1-6). In the penultimate chapter, we see Hebrews' gaze turn from fearsome and fiery Sinai, quaking and trembling, toward an irenic Mt. Zion, the final destination toward which God's children journey (12:1-29).

While Sinai is unmistakably featured in chapter 12, with multiple references to the Sinai experience from Exodus 19-24 and allusions to the *retelling* of that great theophany in Deuteronomy 4-5 and 9, the majority of interpreters see the shadow of Sinai falling on the first section of Hebrews as well, although less overtly. The author, having

² Buchanan, *To the Hebrews. Book of Hebrews*. Jordaan and Nel, "From Priest-King." Compton, *Psalm 110*. See also Attridge, "Psalms." Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives."

³ Gelardini, *Verhärtet*; "Hebrews."

compared Jesus to angels throughout chapter 1, urges the audience not to follow in the footsteps of the wilderness generation:

On account of this, we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard so that we do not drift away. For if the word spoken through angels was firm and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Heb 2:1-3a)

Shortly thereafter, Jesus is described as having freed “those who, all their lives, were held in slavery by the fear of death (2:15)” and helping the “seed of Abraham” (2:16). This leads to a direct comparison of Jesus and Moses (3:1-6) in advance of a long exposition on the fate of the wilderness generation in relation to a promised rest (3:7-4:14; to be discussed in chapter 3).

The Sinai experience of Exodus serves as the paradigm to which Jesus “the Son” and his message are compared in the first section of Hebrews (1:1-3:6). While there are no direct citations from Exodus, there are clear allusions to Sinai, including a reference to the giving of the Law as “the word spoken through angels” in 2:1, the exodus event in 2:10-16 and references to Moses in 3:1-6. We will see that P&W are cited often and used, mainly, to compare “the Son” and his message to the agents and message of Sinai. In Hebrews 12 we will find that, again, the Pentateuch provides a set of paradigms. The P&W are used to give hope to the audience in the midst of hardship (12:1-7), and then to destabilize the Sinai covenant and provide a compelling vision of the New Covenant (NC) (12:18-29).

It is important to note that the connections to Exodus/Sinai are *thematic*⁴ in both 1:1-3:6 and 12:1-29, which is to say that Hebrews takes a more comprehensive and encompassing view of Sinai, the exodus event and the wilderness generation as paradigms and/or antitypes and develops its exegesis from that theme. This differs significantly from Hebrews' exegesis in the interior sections of the book (chs 3-11) which usually depend more directly on specific lexical connections and are generated from much narrower topics (priesthood, tabernacle, cult, etc.) or specific verses (e.g. Exod 28:40, 24:8) or phrases ("enter my rest") from Exodus.

There are three ways in which Exodus is generative in the thematic sections. First, Exodus provides a guiding narrative for Hebrews. Not unlike the use of the Genesis and Wisdom (Prov 8) narratives in the Johannine Prologue, the familiar and traditional exodus event and Sinai narratives originating in Exodus form a narrative substrate in Hebrews 1-3 and 12,⁵ providing the larger midrashic context for exegesis throughout Hebrews.⁶ Using the P&W, Hebrews composes a sort of Christ-narrative in ways that correspond to the Exodus narrative; a narrative that involves divine revelation (like Sinai) and deliverance (like the exodus), for example. Second, Exodus is the source of

⁴ Midrashic connections between texts were often made on a *lexical* or *thematic* basis (or both). As Michael Fishbane explains in the introduction to Fishbane, *Haftarot*, "the correlation between the Torah and haftarah readings could be established on the verbal or thematic level—on the basis of verbal tallies and topical relations" (p. xxiii). Both of these are found in Hebrews. See also Bateman IV, "Second Temple," 29-32. and Brooke and LaCoste, *Reading the Dead Sea Scrolls: Essays in Method*, 90.

⁵ Which is not to say that Hebrews confines the narrative only to the chapters of Exodus; certainly the entire saga of the exodus event and wilderness period are relevant. But, the narrative Hebrews seems to have in mind in this section (and chapter 12) appears to center around Sinai as the locus of revelation and the point of origin of the covenant and Moses and the angels as agents thereof.

⁶ Which is to say that any or all of the rest of the midrashic exegeses throughout the rest of the book are rooted in the Sinai narrative in one way or another.

theological paradigms of divine speech, messages and authority by which Jesus and his message are both explained and measured. Hebrews uses the P&W to show that Jesus is an authoritative messenger who meets or exceeds the standards set by the angels and Moses at Sinai. Though more extensive, this runs along the lines of the appropriation and adaptation of the jubilee concept in 11QMelchizedek (mentioned in the prior chapter). Third, although it often goes unnoticed or unmentioned, several keywords that make up much of the controlling language of these passages are derived from the Sinai section of Exodus. In some cases, the Exodus language connects directly with what we find within the abundant citations from the P&W such as angels (1:6, 7; 2:7, 9), glory (2:7, 9), or shaking (12:16); and in other cases, it is integrated into the argument apart from those citations, as with “pay attention” (2:1; cf. Exod 19:5; 23:21-22), Moses (3:2-6), covenant (12:24), or sprinkled blood (12:24; cf. Exod 24:8). Together these elements of narrative, paradigms and language point to Exodus as the textual common denominator.

II. HEBREWS 1:1-3:6: THE SON AND THE AGENTS OF SINAI

The exodus event and Sinai are perceptible throughout the first section of Hebrews (1:1-3:6)—implicitly at first, then more overtly (2:1-4, 10, 15; 3:1-6). They are evident in the themes of divine speech and angels, and in references to deliverance and to Moses. The section is unified by the theme of Jesus as the divine Son (1:2, 5, 8; 2:6, 10; 3:6), which is the major contribution of the P&W here.

Figure 2.1. Basic units of Heb 1:1-3:6

	Jesus vs. Angels			Jesus vs. Moses	
1:1-4 Prologue	1:5-14 Jesus vs. Angels	2:1-4 Response to word from Jesus vs. response to word via Angels (Sinai)	2:5-9 Jesus vs. Angels, continued	2:10-18 Jesus as deliverer, brother & high priest	3:1-6 Jesus <i>over</i> God's oīkoç vs. Moses <i>in</i> God's oīkoç

As the divine Son, Jesus is compared first to angels (1:5-2:9) and then to Moses (2:10-3:6). The comparisons involve relative authority or rank, Jesus' eternal nature and his faithfulness, and the portrayal of Jesus as God's ultimate messenger and prophet. The first subsection (1:5-2:9) juxtaposes several texts from the Psalms⁷ and 2 Samuel 7:14 with allusions to Exod 19-23. The dense catena of scripture quotations in 1:5-13 is frequently compared to 4QFlorilegium, which uses several of the same texts.⁸ All of the cited texts in the series are used in Hebrews with reference either to Jesus as a divine Son or to angels. The second subsection (2:10-3:6) uses Psalm 22(21 LXX) and Isa 8:17-18 to place Jesus as brother among Abraham's descendants and to compare his leadership of God's oīkoç (household/family) with Moses' leadership of the exodus. Jesus the divine Son is also compared with Moses and as God's faithful servant (Exod 14:31; 33:11; Num 12:6-8) in his oīkoç.

⁷ Pss 110:1; 2:7; 97:7; 104:4; 102:26-28; 8:5-7

⁸ While the scope of the study does not permit the development of the argument here, it can be argued that 4QFlor also involves or is rooted in Exodus, the promise of an eternal temple made by the hands of the LORD (Exod 15:17-18; cf. 4QFlor line 3), in particular. That predicted temple is connected with "God's house" in 2 Sam 7, and Isa 8 also comes into play (4QFlor line 15, cf. Heb 2). This is another case which aligns with Flusser's mycelium analogy referenced in the introduction to this study. Still the most comprehensive comparative study comparing the catena of Hebrews 1 and 4QFlor is that of Bateman IV, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics*

The “Son vs. …” mode of comparison is the main unifying element for the entirety of 1:1-3:6. Most commentators see the first major section ending at 2:18, after the discussion of Jesus as deliverer (2:10), brother to Abraham’s descendants (2:11-16) and merciful high priest (2:17-18).⁹ Although the beginning of Hebrews 3 discusses the faithfulness of Jesus and Moses and their roles with respect to God’s οἶκος continuing the focus on Jesus as son, leader and member of God’s household, scholars frequently link 3:1-6 instead to the subsequent exposition on the wilderness generation featuring Ps 95:7-11 (3:7-4:14). While they understandably see a thematic connection between Moses (3:1-6) to the wilderness generation section, that structural view overlooks the dynamic of the extended comparison of Jesus to Moses which begins (implicitly) in 2:10 and continues through 3:6. Some suggest that the short section on Jesus and Moses (3:1-6) is transitional, linking the “Son vs. …” section (chs 1-2) to the section on Ps 95 and “rest,”¹⁰ which is certainly true to an extent.¹¹

⁹ For a recent and thorough survey of Hebrews’ structure, see B. C. Joslin, "Can Hebrews Be Structured? An Assessment of Eight Approaches," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6, no. 1 (2007). Among the many who place a first- or second-level break at 2:18 are: Léon Vaganay, "Le plan de l'Épître aux Hébreux" in *Memorial LaGrange*, ed. Hugues Vincent, Cinquantenaire de L'Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Francaise de Jerusalem (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1940); Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed., vol. I (Paris: Gabalda, 1952); Albert Vanhooye, *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963); *The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary*, trans. Leo Arnold (New York: Paulist Press, 2015); Attridge, *Hebrews*; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*, vol. 73 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 65-66; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews*, vol. 13, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007); Witherington, *Letters*; Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, PNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010); Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 79, 85-86, 124-25.

¹⁰ E.g. Gelardini, *Verhartet* 250-54; Cockerill, *Epistle*, 157.

¹¹ See further explanation below.

The Prologue (1:1-4) and Son vs. Angels (1:5-2:9)

We begin the analysis with a closer look at Hebrews' exegesis which juxtaposes Jesus and angels in 1:1-2:9, followed by an analysis of the juxtaposition of Jesus and Moses beginning in 2:10. The prologue (1:1-4) serves as an introduction to the entire book. As such, it introduces divine speech or revelation, the key topic of the first section. The book begins with the statement "God, having spoken¹² in many and various ways long ago to the fathers via the prophets, in these last days spoke¹³ to us through a son..." (1:1-2). The first subsection, 1:5-14, cites or paraphrases¹⁴ several texts from the Psalms, 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 97:7(≈Deut 32:43≈Odes 2:43)¹⁵ to explain that the "son" was begotten of God (1:1, 5), participated in creation (1:2, 10), is worshipped by angels (1:6) and will rule forever (1:8-12), compared to angels who are subordinate and transitory (1:6, 14). The second subsection, 2:1-4, is an exhortation to pay much closer attention to what the audience has heard than those who heard "the word spoken through angels." The third

¹² λαλήσας (1:1) Aorist participle

¹³ ἐλάλησεν (1:2) Aorist indicative (main verb).

¹⁴ Points of clarification and definition:

Citations & quotations: I classify uses of scripture that are identical or nearly identical to an extant LXX recension as citations or quotations, allowing for minor changes such as omission of a few words that condenses the cited text, the adjustment of a verb tense or pronoun to fit the context, or very minor changes in word order. An introductory phrase is *not* required (such as "as it is written...", etc.).

Paraphrase: The use of scripture that (a) editorially rearranges words, (b) adds, subtracts or substitutes words (often synonyms), and/or (c) adapts verbs or pronouns to fit a context in the present text yet (d) retains enough of the markers of a verse so as to leave little or no doubt as to the specific text to which it refers as a paraphrase.

Allusion: For purposes of this study, allusion is defined in pragmatic and limited terms as an intentional and indirect reference to another text that is sufficiently marked that a reader familiar with the referent text could be expected to recognize it, but which does not replicate the language of the referent text precisely or extensively.

¹⁵ See discussion below on the likely derivation of that citation.

subsection is an exegetical section featuring Ps 8:4-6 dealing with “the Son of Man”¹⁶ being “lower than the angels” for a time. The key connection to Exodus in this “Son vs. Angels” argument is apparent in Hebrews’ immediate concern with divine speech (1:1-2), especially the “word spoken through angels” (2:2) at Sinai, and the response to that word (2:1-3). The concept carries over into the next subsection—the “Son vs. Moses” in 3:1-6—with its focus on Moses’ role as a prophet.

Figure 2.2. Units within Heb. 1:1-2:9

Jesus vs. Angels		
1:1-14 Jesus vs. Angels (Exodus: God spoke long ago...)	2:1-4 Response to word from Jesus vs. response to word via Angels (Exodus: word spoken through angels [Sinai])	2:5-9 Jesus vs. Angels, continued

Interpretive Views: 1:1-2:9

Before offering a reading of this passage from a Torah-centric perspective, it will be worthwhile to begin with a brief survey of five interpretive views of the comparison of Jesus to angels in chapters 1 and 2. The first suggests Hebrews is concerned with problematic views of angels. The second sees Heb 1-2 mainly as a messianic apologetic. The third sees the main thrust to be exaltation of Jesus. The fourth highlights the role of angels as agents of judgment (not just messengers) and the fifth takes “the word spoken by angels” in 2:1-4 as the exegetical center of the passage. Most of these place greater emphasis on the texts from the Psalms and Prophets than the Pentateuch.

¹⁶ Some commentators prefer the more universal “son of man,” νιὸς ἀνθρώπου, 2:6. See arguments for the messianic/supernatural “Son of Man” below.

First, owing to Hebrews' interest in demonstrating Jesus' superiority over angels in 1:5-14 and 2:5-9,¹⁷ some scholars have viewed these arguments as motivated by a problem such as angel veneration among the recipients of Hebrews, or an aberrant angel christology.¹⁸ However, since the proposed concern over angel worship or angel christology is not sustained throughout the remainder of Hebrews (among other reasons), that view has not enjoyed as much currency in recent scholarship as it once did.¹⁹

A second, more common, approach has been reading 1:1-3:6 as a christological exposition that identifies Jesus as the messiah. Richard Longenecker, for instance, sees the whole letter as “structured according to an ‘anticipation-consummation’ motif” in which Jesus was the fulfillment of messianic expectations in the last days.²⁰ While questions remain with regard to the origin of the catena of texts in 1:5-14, Longenecker considers the purpose behind the use of those texts to be evident:

...from a christocentric perspective, the author of Hebrews was asking concerning what the Scriptures mean when they speak of God's son (Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14), of one whom all the angels of God are to worship (Deut 32:43 LXX), and of one who is addressed as God by God, yet distinguished from God (Pss 45:6-7; 102:25-27; 110:1)... from a christocentric perspective and in line with the apostolic tradition, there was for our author only one possible answer: Jesus of Nazareth.²¹

¹⁷ Although, in the case of 2:5-9, some see the future exaltation of humankind in view—see below.

¹⁸ For example: T. W. Manson, *The Problem of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949); Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Hebrews."; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 51; Robert Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981), 5-12, 24-35.; although a concern with angel veneration is considered less likely in recent scholarship. On an angel Christology: Attridge, *Hebrews*, 51.

¹⁹ *Hebrews*, 51. and Kenneth L. Schenck, "A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 3 (2001): 470-71.

²⁰ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 161.

²¹ *Biblical Exegesis*, 161.

F.F. Bruce writes that the scriptures cited in Hebrews 1 “were already well established in the church as messianic testimonies, and were acknowledged as having met their fulfillment in Jesus.”²² He adds to that an emphasis, echoed by many other scholars, on the revelation given through Jesus being God’s *final* revelation (in the epoch of the last days).²³ The messianic apologetic view is common among those who see Heb 1-2 in terms of expositions on the texts Hebrews cites from the P&W (e.g. Ps 110, or the catena of 1:5-13, and/or Ps 8:4-6²⁴).

A third perspective on the argument of 1:1-2:9 focuses on the exaltation of Jesus. George Guthrie’s comments on Heb 1:5 reflect his view of the passage as a whole; that the author’s “primary point in 1:5 is that Jesus has been shown to be the Son of God by his exaltation to the right hand, his enthronement over all creation demonstrating his unique relationship to the Father.”²⁵ Following George Caird and L. D. Hurst, Kenneth Schenck sees the catena in Heb 1 as leading up to the Ps 8 exposition in Heb 2. As he describes it, “the catena is a hymnic celebration of the now enthroned Christ, a poetic announcement of the accomplishment of salvation by way of Christ's exaltation to God's right hand. The rhetoric of the catena itself, when it is read correctly, is focused on the exalted Christ.”²⁶ Harold Attridge has a slightly different view, such that “the first two

²² F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 65.

²³ *Epistle*, 65. And, for example, Cockerill, *Epistle*, 45.

²⁴ For example, Caird, "Exegetical Method."; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*.

²⁵ George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Gregory K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 297.

²⁶ Schenck, "Celebration," 484.

chapters of Hebrews offer a reflection on Christology,” initially focused on “the exalted or heavenly character of the Son,” with a shift to “his very human suffering and death” after the warning of 2:1-4.²⁷

Placing an emphasis on Ps 110 as the principal generative text in Hebrews, Jared Compton’s analysis combines elements of the messianic apologetic and exaltation perspectives, with an emphasis on Jesus’ exaltation. Compton sees the concept of “the enthroned messiah” as foundational to 1:5-14. That passage explains why the son’s resurrection makes him greater than the angels, the resurrection having enabled Jesus to attain the status of the true heir of David.²⁸ The logic behind the argument in chapter 2, involving Psalm 8, is involves reading Psalm 8 as a promise of the restoration of humankind, a promise that Jesus secures for humanity as he is resurrected and exalted.²⁹ Psalm 110:1, as cited or alluded to in 1:3 and 1:13, is the key text behind the claim for Jesus as the enthroned messiah.

A fourth perspective is that of Gabriella Gelardini, who takes a very different tack by considering Hebrews as a synagogue homily on the occasion of the 9th of Av, a time of fasting to mourn the sins of Israel and the destruction of both Solomon’s Temple and the Second Temple.³⁰ As one would expect from a synagogue homily, a combination of a Torah reading and a text from the Prophets drives the exegesis. Exodus 32-34 (the breaking and restoration of the covenant) is seen as the Torah reading and Jer 31:31-34

²⁷ Attridge, "Psalms," 203.

²⁸ Compton, *Psalm 110*, 22-23.

²⁹ *Psalm 110*, 37-38.

³⁰ Gelardini, "Hebrews," 121.

(covenant renewal) as the *haftarah* text.³¹ She describes the breaking and renewal of the covenant at Sinai as a guiding motif for this section. A distinct contribution brought by Gelardini's perspective is that, in addition to the aspect of angels as divine messengers, the angel comparison also has the element of *judgment* prominently connected to it, as associated with the angel often referred to as the "Angel of the Presence," drawn from the Sinai narrative:

Yet the motive of the angel's presence as a punitive measure by God is an important *topos* in the account of the idolatry with the golden calf (Exod 32:34; 33:2-30)... The angel's presence signifies God's absence; it is the reminder of God's wrath in the aftermath of Israel's construction of the golden calf. Like Moses in the Exodus account, Jesus in Hebrews is able to change God's wrathful intentions, which are based on the covenant and carried out through punishing angels. The author seems to want to appease the audience regarding the deadly threat that could endanger them (Heb 2:2-3), by assuring them that the Messiah sent at the end of times is superior to the angels.

In the larger context of the breaking and renewal of the Sinai Covenant (SC) in Hebrews, according to Gelardini's proposal then, sin and salvation are more essential theological themes in the first section than the exaltation of Jesus. From this perspective, the initial argument is intended to assure the audience that Jesus could provide the necessary solution for sin through his incarnation and death, a rather different sort of apologetic, associated with the repentance and atonement themes of *Tisha b'Av*.³² Angels were not just exalted beings to whom Jesus was superior, they represented the threat of judgment, from which Jesus provided the escape.

³¹ "Hebrews," 119. Gelardini suggests two possibilities for the Torah reading of different lengths: either Exod 31:18-32:35 or Exod 31:18 to 34:35, based on Jacob Mann's work with the Palestinian triennial lectionary cycle: Mann, *Bible*.

³² Gelardini, *Verhärtet* 206-10.

A fifth and final interpretive stream to mention here sees the angel arguments of 1:5-14 and 2:5-9 as supporting the exhortation of 2:1-4,³³ one that sees the contrast of the *logos* spoken by Jesus to that spoken by angels (2:1-2) as central to the Son vs. Angels argument. In 2:1-4, Hebrews urges the audience to “pay much closer attention to what we have heard...for if the word spoken through angels was valid³⁴ and every transgression and disobedience received just retribution, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?...”

This view has its detractors. To be sure, rather than the exegetical center, some have called the exhortation in 2:1-4 a pause or interruption within the passage.³⁵ Buchanan—who sees Ps 110 as the key to Hebrews—speculates, for instance, that the exhortation was secondary to the exegesis, a reflexive product of the homilist’s habit of mind:

The theological argument of this section was interrupted by the ethical exhortation (Heb 2:1-4) that was not necessary to the discussion, but it was evidently important to the author to relate his doctrine to the needs of the listeners, because he followed his doctrine with exhortation throughout the document.³⁶

F. C. Synge went so far as to suggest that the exhortation (along with other such hortatory material in Hebrews) was a later addition to the text.³⁷

³³ Steve Moyise, *The Later New Testament Writings and Scripture: The Old Testament in Acts, Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 85-86.

³⁴ On translating βέβαιος (2:2) as “valid” see BDAG and Attridge, *Hebrews*, 65.

³⁵ William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, WBC (Dallas, TX: Word, 1991), 40.

³⁶ Buchanan, *Book of Hebrews*, 81.

³⁷ F. C. Synge, *Hebrews and the Scriptures* (London: S.P.C.K., 1959), 45.

Graham Hughes, however, identifies 2:1-4 as the key to the argument:

The whole comparison of the Son with the angels is that the Word, already identified in the prologue as having reached definitive form in the Son, may be compared and contrasted with the form of the [*logos*] mediated by angels. ... That the [*logos*] mediated through the angels means the Torah of the old covenant can hardly be doubted.³⁸

While Steve Stanley sees Psalm 110 as having major structural significance, he sees a similar motivation on the part of Hebrews' author when it comes to angels and 2:1-4:

Much speculation has gone into explaining the author's reason for emphasizing the lower place of angels in chapter one, since it is difficult at first glance to relate the importance attached to angels in this section to the argument of the rest of the book. Some have suggested the readers' religious background as an explanation for the prominence of angels here, for example, proto-Gnosticism, a connection with Qumran or throne mysticism. It may be that a simpler solution is to be preferred, that the angelic role in the establishment of the Mosaic covenant drew our author's attention to the angels (2:2), which would reflect the same train of thought as his comparisons with the exodus leaders and the Aaronic priests in the following chapters.³⁹

Steve Moyise also agrees with Hughes, suggesting that the purpose of the argument of Heb 1-2 was "to show that the *revelation* that comes through Jesus is superior to that which came through the prophets (Moses is regarded as a prophet)".⁴⁰ Like Gelardini, those who emphasize the importance of 2:1-4 tend to acknowledge Exodus as a backdrop to the argument of Heb 1-2 at some level.⁴¹ Different from Gelardini, the roles of

³⁸ Graham Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics: The Epistle to the Hebrews as a New Testament Example of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 36 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 7-8.

³⁹ Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives," 264.

⁴⁰ Moyise, *Later New Testament Writings*, 86.

⁴¹ See also Gheorghita, "He Spoke," 171.

revelation or divine speech—the *logos* of God at Sinai⁴²—are highlighted in this view, rather than covenant, sin and redemption.

These five interpretive views of the purpose and meaning of 1:1-2:9 just discussed—a polemic against angel worship or angel christology, an apologetic for Jesus as messiah, a celebration of the exalted Christ, a homiletical treatment of covenant breach and renewal, or an argument to show that the revelation coming through Jesus was greater than what the angels brought at Sinai—cover the majority of views within Hebrews scholarship. We now turn to an analysis of 1:1-2:9 in which to consider which of those options, if any, would be most compatible with a Torah-centric or Exodus-generated reading of the passage.

Analysis 1:1-2:9

Consistent with the direction of this study as described above, there are two elements which guide the following analysis of 1:1-2:9, the Son vs. Angels section of Hebrews. The first is the assumption that, consistent with the “habit of mind” previously discussed, the author would likely have begun with a text or theme from the Pentateuch. Second, the numerous texts Hebrews cites from the P&W would tend to be interpretive texts in a direct exegetical relationship with the Pentateuchal theme or text. I suggest that the Sinai account from Exodus—including the theophany, covenant and giving of Torah—is generative for 1:1-2:9 in that it serves as the supreme paradigm of divine revelation, and also of liberation. The texts from the P&W which Hebrews cites are

⁴² For example, *λόγος* in Exod 19:7-8, 20:1; 24:3, 8; *ῥήματα* in Exod 19:6, 9; 23:7, 22 [LXX]; 24:3-4; not to mention numerous uses of *λαλέω* and *λέγω* throughout Exod 19-40 which, along with Gen 1, recount the most famous instances of divine speech in the scriptures.

selected on the basis of thematic and lexical connections to the Sinai experience—especially, but not limited to, divine speech. These texts then position Jesus as a spokesperson for God with an urgent message for the last days, the importance of which is enhanced by its comparison to the characters and events of the exodus event and Sinai. The primary rhetorical goal of Heb 1:1-2:9 is to persuade the audience to continue to heed Jesus' authoritative message. We begin by identifying operative texts cited and/or alluded to, apparent themes, controlling language and thematic content.

Passage Outline 1:1-2:9

Prologue (1:1-4)

God, having spoken in the past through the prophets, has spoken in these last days through a Son—an heir and participant in creation.

The Son and the Angels (1:5-2:9)

1:5-14 The Son and the Angels, part 1:

Jesus is a greater messenger as the divine Son than the angels are, since they are merely servants and ministers.

Pentateuch/Exodus paradigm: Angels at Sinai

P&W: Jesus is a divine heir (1:2; allusion to Ps 2:8)
who participated in creation (1:2; cf. Ps 8:3)
who made atonement for sins (1:3; allusion to Ps 110:4)
is seated at God's right hand (1:3; Ps 110:1a)
is divine Son (Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14)
is eternal in nature and will rule forever (Ps 45:6-7; 102:25-27; Ps 110:1b).

P&W: Angels worship God's firstborn [son] (Ps 97:7≈Deut 32:43),
are servants or ministers (*λειτουργός*) whose nature is ephemeral
(Ps 104:4).

2:1-4 Exhortation:

Therefore, the word of the Son is a more important word than was spoken through angels at Sinai.

Wilderness generation response to Sinai as antitype
Pentateuch/Exodus theme: Sinai covenant and consequences of
disobedience

2:5-9 The Son and the Angels, part 2:

The Son was lower than the angels for a little while but regained glory [so his authority is again greater than the angels].

P&W: Problem and solution

Problem #1: "Son of Man" "lower than angels" (Ps 8)

Solution #1: Lower for a short time, then glorified, authority restored

Problem #2: Son of Man does not appear to rule presently

Solution #2: Authority will be restored

In seeking to investigate the exegetical habit of mind of Hebrews' author, identifying influences from the Pentateuch is the ideal starting point. In terms of *citations* from the Pentateuch, there is at most one possible citation—Deut 32:43—and that one is both (a) debatable and (b) not prominent enough to exercise much influence over the

passage.⁴³ A few clear instances of the thematic influence of the Pentateuch are apparent, however, as noted above. First, in 1:1 we find “God, having spoken in many and various ways long ago to the fathers via the prophets...” It is safe to assume that Sinai was one such instance, all the more when we recall that Moses was considered the greatest prophet (1:1, cf. 3:5; Deut 34:10, cf. Deut 18:15-16). Second, as most commentators recognize, Sinai—the event or covenant or both—is alluded to in 2:1-4 as “the word spoken through angels” that entailed consequences for disobedience. Third, the theme of “glory” or “glory and honor” ($\delta\omega\xi\alpha$, $\tau\mu\eta$; 1:3; 2:7, 9) may well be reminiscent of the glory associated with the divine presence in Exodus (Exod 16:7; 24:16-17; 29:43; 40:34-35) or, perhaps even more likely, with the “glorified” ($\delta\epsilon\delta\omega\xi\alpha\sigma\tau\alpha\iota$; Exod 34:35) face of Moses associated with his encounters with YHWH.

The chart in the following page shows the frequency and distribution of keywords throughout the pericope, including those related to Exodus/Sinai and those that are related to—and often included *within*—the exegetical texts from the P&W.

⁴³ (a) Debatable in that the citation could just as well be to Ps 97(96):7 and/or Odes 32:43, both of which would fit better in a catena dominated by other Psalms, but those two and Deut 32:43 were all likely used liturgically, so they all fall into similar categories.

As far as (b), that text is not especially prominent in Heb 1, being in the middle of a series of texts. It is important to the argument, but is just one among several texts. So, whether or not Hebrews had Deut 32:43 or the Ps 97:7 or Odes 2:43 in mind, it does not appear at all likely to have served as a Pentateuchal base text in this section for those reasons. None of the three texts named here (nor Deut 32:43d or 4QDt 32:43b, as Ellingworth also mentions) have found their way into Hebrews unaltered, and scholars debate whether the significance of their original contexts might tilt the scales toward one or the other as the source text. Motyer’s argument that Ps 97 fits the Davidic sense of the catena is somewhat persuasive but, ultimately, the author may just as well have had any or all three texts in mind and been focused on the verbiage that supports his argument. Nevertheless, for contrasting arguments as to which text Hebrews draws upon which run the gamut, see Motyer, “Psalm Quotations,” 18-19; David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 52-58; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 118-20; Guthrie, “*Hebrews*,” 932.

There are several words or clusters of words that unify the passage, some of which can be considered controlling language rooted in Exodus, while other terms or clusters emerge from the cited texts from the P&W. The most obvious examples of controlling language are “son” and “angels,” which combine to unify 1:5-2:9. “Son” functions as a guiding term in the pericope from the first sentence in 1:2 onward. From the Pentateuch—specifically the Sinai portion of Exodus—we find language pertaining to “angels” (*ἄγγελος*), terms for speech and word(s) (*λαλέω, λόγος, ρῆμα*), “glory” (*δόξα*) and “honor” (*τιμή*) and terms for listening (*ἀκούω*) and paying attention (*προσέχω*). From the P&W, in addition to terms that overlap with the Pentateuch, such as *ἄγγελος, δόξα, τιμή*; “son” (*υἱός*) is the most significant, which is then surrounded by abundant family language, including “father” (*πατήρ*), references to heir and inheritance (*κληρονόμος, κληρονομέω*), and firstborn (*πρωτότοκος*). References to God’s right hand (*δεξιός*) and the footstool (*ὑποπόδιον*) of Ps 110:1 are also prominent. We will see that, for the most part, the language of the P&W is associated with Jesus and the language from Exodus with the angels, Sinai covenant or wilderness generation. An important exception to that, however, is that the language of words and speech—the central theme of the passage—applies to both Jesus and the Sinai allusions.

Table 2.1 Distribution of keywords in 1:1-2:9

		Citations ^C Allusions ^A & Paraphrases ^P	Speak/ Spoken/ Word	Glory & honor	Angel(s)	Son	Additional family language ⁱ	Minister/ servant	Other select catchwords & link words
Prologue	1:1		λαλέω						
	1:2	Pss 2:8 ^A 8:3 ^A &	λαλέω			νιός	κληρονόμος		αιών
	1:3	110:1 ^A	ρῆμα	δόξα					δεξιός
	1:4				ἄγγελος		κληρονομέω		
	1:5	Ps 2:7 ^C 1 Sam 7:14 ^C			ἄγγελος	νιός	πατήρ		
	1:6	Ps 97:7 ^C ≈ Deut 32:43 ^C			ἄγγελος		πρωτότοκος		
	1:7	Ps 104:4 ^C			ἄγγελος			λειτουργός	
	1:8	Ps 45:6 ^C				νιός			αιών, θρόνος
	1:9	Ps 45:7 ^C							
	1:10	Ps 102:25 ^C							
	1:11	Ps 102:26 ^C							
	1:12	Ps 102:27 ^C							
	1:13	Ps 110:1 ^C			ἄγγελος				δεξιός ὑποπόδιον, πούς/ ποδῶν
	1:14						κληρονομέω	λειτουργικός	
AI: Messages—Son vs. Angels	2:1	Exod 23:21 ⁱⁱ Exod 19:5; 23:22 LXX ⁱⁱⁱ							προσέχω ἀκούω
	2:2		λόγος, λαλέω		ἄγγελος				
	2:3		λαλέω						ἀκούω
	2:4								
	2:5		λαλέω		ἄγγελος				ὑποτάσσω
	2:6	Ps 8:5 ^C				νιός ^{iv}			
	2:7	Ps 8:6 ^C		δόξα τιμή	ἄγγελος				βραχύ τι
	2:8	Ps 8:7 ^C							ὑποτάσσω (x3) πούς/ ποδῶν
	2:9	Ps 8:5-7 ^A		δόξα τιμή	ἄγγελος				βραχύ τι
		<i>Occ.</i>	5	3/2	9	4	5	2	n/a

Keywords that appear within scripture citations or paraphrases are in *italics*. **Bold** keywords have strongest connections to the Sinai theme and/or specific passages in Exodus.

Notes:

- i. Heir (κληρονόμος), inherit (κληρονομέω), father (πατήρ), firstborn (πρωτότοκος). In the next section (2:10-3:6) add: children (παιδίον), seed/descendants (σπέρματος)
- ii. While not a catchword repeated within this passage, προσέχω is a crucial link word to Exod 23:21 (and the Sinai retelling in Deut 4 (vv. 9, 23), see discussion below).
- iii. Hearing and listening, inextricably connected with obedience to divine commands, are very significant within the Sinai pericope of Exodus, especially at 19:5; 23:22 LXX; and 24:3, 7.
- iv. ἦ νιός ἀνθρώπου: “son of man” [Son of Man] (Ps 8:4/Heb 2:6)

While Hebrews' allusion to Sinai with its reference to the "word spoken by angels" in 2:2 is affirmed nearly universally by commentators, there is one likely allusion to Exodus in 2:1 that tends to be overlooked. Hebrews tells the audience that it is necessary "to pay attention" (*προσέχειν*) more closely to that which they have heard (*τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν*), lest they drift away from it. Verse 2 recalls that every transgression and disobedience (*παράβασις καὶ παρακοή*) against the word that was spoken through angels would receive just retribution. In Exodus 19:5, Moses is instructed to tell the people that "if by paying attention (*ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε*) you listen to my voice and keep my covenant you will be for me a special people above all nations."⁴⁴ Even closer to the language in Hebrews is Exodus 23:20-21.

Upon the conclusion of the section of commandments beginning at Exod 20:22, the LORD tells Moses:

Behold, I am sending my angel before you in order to keep you in the way, so that you enter into the land which I prepared for you. Pay attention to him and listen to him and do not disobey him for he will not shrink back from you, for My name is on him.⁴⁵

Cf.: MT:...for he will not take away your transgression...

καὶ ἴδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου ἵνα φυλάξῃ σὲ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ὅπως εἰσαγάγῃ σε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἣν ἡτοίμασά σοι πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ εἰσάκουε αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ ἀπείθει αὐτῷ οὐ γὰρ μὴ ὑποστείληται σε τὸ γὰρ ὄνομά μου ἔστιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ
Exod 23:20-21 LXX

כִּי לֹא יָשַׁא לְפָשָׁעֲךָ

⁴⁴ καὶ νῦν ἐὰν ἀκοῇ ἀκούσητε τῆς ἐμῆς φωνῆς καὶ φυλάξητε τὴν διαθήκην μου, ἔσεσθέ μοι λαὸς περιούσιος ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἐθνῶν· Exod 19:5

⁴⁵ My translation.

In Exodus, this commissioning of the angel as both the guard of the people and enforcer of the covenant comes immediately prior to the inauguration of the covenant (Exod 24).

As mentioned above, Gelardini notes that the angel's dual role is reiterated after the golden calf incident as Moses seeks to make atonement for the sin of the people:⁴⁶ “But now go and lead this people to the place which I told you. Behold, my angel will go before you. But, on the day I shall visit, I will bring upon them their sin” (Exodus 32:24 LXX).⁴⁷

In the first two subsections of the Son vs. Angels section (1:5-14; 2:1-4), the argument is built on Exodus in several ways. First, the language of speech and angels alludes to the giving of Torah at Sinai. Second, Sinai functions as a paradigm of divine speech or revelation, to which the *λόγος* or revelation from Jesus is compared and by which it is evaluated. Third, the narrative of the eventual rejection of the word given at Sinai is the basis of the exhortation in 2:1-4. And, finally, the theme of glory and honor begins to emerge in this first subsection and is further developed in the next subsection.

The “Son vs. Angels” argument is completed with a short exposition on Ps 8:4-6(5-7 LXX). The psalm presents what must have been a nearly irresistible opportunity to raise and then resolve a pair of exegetical problems that feature the most important keywords, “son” and “angels.”⁴⁸ The exegetical power of the controlling language in the passage is on display as Hebrews advances its argument by using the connection between

⁴⁶ Gelardini, "Hebrews," 119.

⁴⁷ ιδοὺ ὁ ἄγγελός μου προπορεύσεται πρὸ προσώπου σου· ἢ δ' ἂν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπισκέπτωμαι, ἐπάξω ἐπ' αὐτοὺς τὴν ἀμαρτίαν αὐτῶν. Exod 32:24b. My translation.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 71 and Moyise, *Later New Testament Writings*, 89.

“angels” and “son” to exploit what appears to be a problematic passage. It also contains language of “glory and honor” which, as mentioned above, resonates well with instances in Exodus of the glory of the divine presence, the glorified face of Moses, and Aaron and sons, who were who were “crowned with glory and honor” in their priestly garb.⁴⁹

The first apparent problem drawn from Ps 8 is that, according to the psalm, the Lord made “the Son of Man”⁵⁰ “a little lower than the angels”⁵¹ (2:6), which seems to contradict the claim that the Son is superior to angels. Hebrews resolves the problem by taking the adverbial LXX expression βραχύ τι in a temporal sense (“in a little while”) rather than the spatial or qualitative sense (“a little lower” or “a little less”) of the MT (ψυχή).⁵²

The second exegetical problem from Ps 8 that Hebrews tackles is the psalm’s assertion that “you have put all things under his feet” (referring to authority over creation) which does not seem to have been the case in actuality. Hebrews provides a temporal solution to this problem, as well. While we do not see everything under his feet *yet* (Νῦν δὲ οὐπώ όρῶμεν...; 2:8), Jesus has been crowned already,⁵³ with glory and honor due to his sufferings, so it will just be a matter of time (2:9).

⁴⁹ Exod 28:2, 40, esp. LXX: καὶ ποιήσεις στολὴν ἀγίαν Ααρων τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν (Exod 28:2) and καὶ τοῖς νιοῖς Ααρων ποιήσεις χιτῶνας καὶ ζώνας καὶ κιδάρεις ποιήσεις αὐτοῖς εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν (Exo 28:40). Although I have not yet seen a connection made in any secondary literature between the priestly references in Exodus and the phrase from Ps. 8:6 δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτὸν, it seems a rather obvious possibility—in the mind of exegetes if not indeed in the mind of the psalmist—one worthy of further investigation.

⁵⁰ ἦ νιός ἀνθρώπου; Some commentators prefer “the son of man,” which is more appropriate to the original sense of the psalm. See further comments to follow.

⁵¹ ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους Psa 8:6 LXX=Heb 2:6

⁵² Attridge, *Hebrews*, 75-76; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 154. Attridge, *Hebrews*.

⁵³ ἐστεφανωμένον; perfect passive participle

The Psalm 8:4-6 exposition is the perfect way to conclude the Son vs. Angels argument in that it brings together those two major lexical strands and can be cleverly interpreted in such a way as to reinforce the whole argument with a text that would otherwise threaten to undermine it. Given the context of Hebrews 1-2, with several Davidic texts implicitly referring to Jesus, it is very reasonable to see Hebrews reading ἡνὶς ἀνθρώπου here as messianic, reminiscent of the Danielic Son of Man⁵⁴ (as in the Gospels), rather than the generic or universal sense (i.e., humanity) of the psalm's original context.⁵⁵ If we read the passage as part of the larger comparison of the authority of Jesus and the angels as divine messengers, the messianic/Danielic Son of Man makes far more sense here than humankind generally, as it brings a climactic conclusion to the comparison, cementing Jesus' positional authority vis-à-vis the angels.

Taking the above into account, themes of God's speech—through angels and later through Jesus—and the Sinai covenant are the most apparent generative elements from the Pentateuch in this passage. This is even more evident if we note the parallels with the Sinai imagery in 12:18-29, as mentioned above. The prologue sets out God's speech as a major theme from the first verse⁵⁶ and angels, often considered to have been present and

⁵⁴ See Craig Blomberg, "'But We See Jesus': The Relationship between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2.6 and 2.9 and the Implications for English Translations," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham (London: T & T Clark International, 2008), 89. Also, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 72; France, "Writer," 262; Guthrie, "Hebrews," 946-47; Cockerill, *Epistle*, 127-33; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, 1st ed. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 90; Witherington, *Letters*, 141-42.

⁵⁵ In contrast to those who take Son of Man in the Danielic/Christological are those who see "son of man" in 2:5-8 as referring more generically to humankind in a way that aligns more closely with the original sense of the Psalm. Among recent commentators holding such a position are O'Brien, *Letter*, 95-96; Compton, *Psalm 110*, 40-51.

⁵⁶ For a thorough treatment of the significance of divine speech in the prologue, see Jonathan Griffiths, *Hebrews and Divine Speech*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 36-48.

active as messengers at Sinai, are featured throughout the section. Themes of (a) obedience to what was revealed and (b) glory and honor also reflect the influence of Exodus. Controlling language stemming from the theme of Sinai includes vocabulary related to divine speech and words (*λαλέω*, *ρῆμα*, *λόγος*), angels (*ἄγγελος*, *ἄγγελοι*), paying attention, hearing and listening (*προσέχω*, *ἀκούω* word group) and possibly, glory and honor (*δόξα*, *τιμή*).

Although I have argued for the primacy of the Pentateuch in the composition of 1:1-2:9, it should be noted that many commentators have emphasized the importance of Psalm 110 in this section and beyond. Psalm 110(109):1 LXX reads:

τῷ Δανιὴλ ψαλμός εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου
κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἔχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου

And, Ps 110(109):4 reads:

ῶμοσεν κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται
σὺ εἰς ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισεδεκ

Hebrews 1:3b clearly alludes to 110:1, apparently with the priestly aspects of 110:4 in mind, as well:

καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος
ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς

And most of Ps 110:1 is cited in Hebrews 1:13:

πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἴρηκέν ποτε·
κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἔχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου;

Most consider the combination of the allusion (1:3) and citation (1:13) to form an *inclusio*, which suggests that Ps 110 governs the first chapter in some way, to some degree. Ps 110 does not mention angels, so its connection to the other texts in the catena of Hebrews 1 seems to lie more in the fact that it is a Zion text—as are several of the others⁵⁷—and in its references to the triumphant reign of the mysterious, ambiguous “Lord” of Ps 110:1.

In *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews*, the most comprehensive treatment of Ps 110 in Hebrews, Jared Compton argues that Ps 110 is central to the argument of 1:5-14, and that the influence of the psalm extends through 2:9. According to Compton, 1:5-14 explains why the son’s resurrection makes him greater than the angels.⁵⁸ Through resurrection, Jesus has received the status of the true heir of David. This develops in three stages: First, if the son is the messiah, he shares in God’s rule (1:5, 6a, 13). Second, the angelic community should worship him (1:6). Third, his royal inheritance is permanent and unrivaled (1:8-12). The son’s exaltation fulfills promises made to David and his heirs. So, “with Jesus’ exaltation as messiah, there is a fundamental continuity between the past and present revelation, precisely because both come from the same God (1:1-2).”⁵⁹ Psalm 110:1 according to Compton, then, is (1) foundational for argument that Jesus is the enthroned messiah. (2) It establishes the framework of that argument on a promise-fulfillment axis, underscoring continuity between past and present “words” and

⁵⁷ See Kiwoong Son, *Zion Symbolism in Hebrews: Hebrews 12:18-24 as a Hermeneutical Key to the Epistle*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Milton Keynes: Waynesboro, GA, 2005).

⁵⁸ Although, as he acknowledges, the resurrection is not mentioned. It is implied, according to Compton, by the enthronement.

⁵⁹ Compton, *Psalm 110*, 37.

the superiority of the new “word.” Psalm 110:1b (“until I make your enemies...”) is read in light of the perception of a delayed messianic victory. (3) The promise of priesthood in 110:4 also allows Hebrews “to argue that the Levitical cult was self-confessedly provisional”⁶⁰ and (4) the use of Psalm 110:1 explains the “curious case for superiority of Jesus over angels” in that, by his exaltation above the angelic host, Jesus secured the intended destiny for all humanity (Ps 8). Very important to Compton is the thought that Hebrews 1 emphasizes continuity of revelation.⁶¹

While there is some merit to Compton’s recognition and articulation of the importance of Ps 110 in this section, there are some important differences between that and the perspective of this study. One of the most fundamental differences is that Compton suggests that one revelation—the new revelation through Jesus—could only be understood as more authoritative than another (prior) revelation—the Sinai covenant—if the new revelation is the fulfillment of the promise of the previous, as-yet-unfulfilled, revelation. Otherwise, for two words from the same God to carry different levels of authority would not seem to make sense (if I understand Compton correctly).⁶²

I agree that Psalm 110 is significant to the composition of Hebrews 1 (and beyond), but for different reasons. Returning for a moment to one of the illustrations of generative uses of the Pentateuch in the prior chapter, there is value in comparing Hebrews’ use of Psalm 110 to the use of Proverbs 8 in the Johannine Prologue. The Johannine Prologue composes a christological narrative by bringing two scriptural

⁶⁰ Cf. Caird, "Exegetical Method," 47.

⁶¹ Compton, *Psalm 110*, 37-38.

⁶² *Psalm 110*, 26-27.

paradigms together—creation (Gen 1) and Wisdom personified (Prov 8). The brief, poetic narrative of John 1 is grounded in midrashic *logos* traditions on Genesis 1, interpreting the life and ministry of Jesus through the lens of *Sophia/logos* traditions in which *Sophia* is involved in creation (Prov 8:12-36). By identifying Jesus within both the *Logos* and *Sophia* streams, the Johannine Prologue imparts the eternality and authority of the creation *logos* to Jesus from the Pentateuch and infuses the narrative with the life and death tension drawn from the rejection of *Sophia* from the Hagiographa (Prov 8:35-36). In comparison, Hebrews takes a figure from the Psalms, the ambiguous figure seated at the right hand of God in Psalm 110, and identifies Jesus as that figure. It then compares Jesus to angels and to Moses as the Son who is seated at God’s right hand. Like the Johannine Prologue, this strategy *also* imparts authority and eternality to Jesus, as he is favorably compared with the agents of Sinai via texts of the Psalms. Psalm 110, then, presents an exegetical opportunity in the form of a mysterious or ambiguous figure in a Davidic/Zion context, ready to be interpreted as Christ. It is only through the argument related to the Sinai paradigm, however, that Christ is shown to be the most authoritative of messengers and (later) priests.

In summary, while some commentators have viewed the Son vs. Angels section (1:5-2:9) primarily as a christological exposition—often seeing it as a sort of apologetic for Jesus’ divinity or messianic identity—the reading above places the emphasis elsewhere. Based on the assumption that we could expect the Pentateuch to be foundational, the elements of angels, divine speech and paying attention can be readily associated with Sinai as a paradigmatic instance of divine revelation. Texts from the

Prophets and Writings, rather than simply comprising a christological pastiche, are used to compare Jesus to angels in order to persuade the audience to continue to heed the message of Jesus since it is a greater message even than that of the SC. While proofs of Jesus' divine sonship and role as messiah are offered, they are supporting assertions/arguments, subservient to the greater purpose of convincing the audience that they can trust in the efficacy of NC proclaimed by Jesus, even where it diverges from or succeeds aspects of the SC. Thus, rather than taking the passage to be a defense against misguided angelology or an elegant christological encomium, this reading suggests that the main intent of the passage is to assure (or reassure) the audience of the significance and trustworthiness of Jesus' *message* by positioning him as the greatest and most current *messenger* of God with an urgent word for the last days.

The Son vs. Moses 2:10-3:6

The next section (2:10-3:6) continues to speak of Jesus as Son, but the comparison shifts from the paradigm of angels and divine speech to the paradigm of Moses. Leaving angels behind (for the most part), family and household language saturates this pericope as the thematic basis of Sinai and the wilderness generation from the Pentateuch continues. Even before directly comparing and contrasting Jesus to Moses in 3:1-6, Hebrews describes Jesus in terms that allude to Moses in 2:10-18, including the

much-debated term ἀρχηγός.⁶³ As Craig Koester aptly states, “In this passage, the story of Israel’s exodus from Egypt provides the contours of the story.”⁶⁴

Figure 2.3 Basic units of Heb 1:1-3:6

	Jesus vs. Angels			Jesus vs. Moses	
1:1-4 Prologue	1:5-14 Jesus vs. Angels	2:1-4 Response to word from Jesus vs. word via Angels (Sinai)	2:5-9 Jesus vs. Angels, cont’d.	2:10-18 Jesus as ἀρχηγός, deliverer, brother & high priest Ps 22:22(21:23 LXX) Isa 8:17-18	3:1-6 Jesus <i>over</i> God’s οἶκος, vs. Moses <i>in</i> God’s οἶκος Num 12:7 (paraphrased)

The Son vs. Moses section begins by depicting Jesus as the ἀρχηγός of salvation leading “many sons”⁶⁵ to glory as he delivers his human brothers and sisters (ἀδελφοί), who are descendants of Abraham, from their slavery to the fear of death. He also acts as their high priest. Hebrews has Jesus speaking the words of Ps 22:22 (21:23 LXX): “I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters in the midst of the assembly.” A pair of citations from Isa 8:17-18 follow: “And again, ‘I will trust in [God]’ (Isa 8:17c LXX), and again, ‘Behold, I and the children (τὰ παιδία) whom God gave to me’” (Isa 8:18a). This portrait of Jesus as leader and deliverer of “Abraham’s seed” anticipates the direct comparison to Moses developed in 3:1-6,⁶⁶ where a paraphrase of Numbers 12:7

⁶³ Perhaps the most debated term in Hebrews, ἀρχηγός is translated to a broad range of English terms including, “leader,” “author,” “captain,” “originator,” “founder,” and more. More below.

⁶⁴ In the context of 2:14-16. Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 240.

⁶⁵ πολλοὺς νιοὺς

⁶⁶ Koester, *Hebrews*, 240.

describes Moses as “faithful in all God’s house⁶⁷ as a servant.”⁶⁸ Building on its description of Jesus as the leader and high priest of the children God had given him, Hebrews declares Jesus to be “faithful as a son *over (ἐπί)* [God’s] house (*οἶκος*),” and the audience to be members of that *οἶκος*, so long as they remain faithful.

The scriptural texts cited in this section are from the Psalms and Isaiah, followed by a reference to Numbers 12. In the first subsection (2:10-18), citations from Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17-18⁶⁹ are the key exegetical texts employed. This has two purposes: first, to situate Jesus within the family of God and, second, to begin to show Jesus as a model of trust and faithfulness. Situating Jesus within the family prepares the audience for the direct comparison to Moses in 3:1-6 which turns on an allusion to, or paraphrase of, Numbers 12:7 related to God’s “house.”⁷⁰

Passage Outline 2:10-3:6

2:10-2:18 Jesus as leader-brother-deliverer-priest of God’s children

Exodus theme & keywords: Αρχηγός (2:10) delivers Abraham’s descendants from slavery.

2:12 *P&W: Jesus is a brother to Abraham’s descendants (Ps 22:22)*

⁶⁷ οἶκος

⁶⁸ θεράπων

⁶⁹ There is some debate as to whether the citation in 2:13a is based on Isa 8:17 or one of two other verses with identical language (Isa 12:2b; 2Sa 22:3). The position taken here (further addressed below) is that the author cites Isa. 8:17c and 8:18a in 2:13, inserting καὶ πάλιν between the two phrases as a minor separation because each phrase has a distinct function in the exegesis.

⁷⁰ Most see this as an allusion or paraphrase of Num 12:7 (although some imprecisely characterize it as a citation), while others—notably Mary Rose D’Angelo—have proposed that 1 Chr. 17:14 (the Chronicler’s version of Nathan’s oracle) is the main text referred to. D’Angelo, *Moses*, 69-93. D’Angelo’s argument is carefully made but does not compel the rejection of the simpler solution of seeing a reference to Num 12:7 here.

For the one sanctifying and those being sanctified are from one [Father]. For this reason he is not ashamed to call them ἀδελφοί, saying, “I will proclaim your name to my ἀδελφοί, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you.” (Heb 2:11-12)

2:13 P&W: *Trust in God's deliverance* (*Isa 8:17c*)

And again, "I will put my trust in him." (Heb 2:13)

2:13 P&W: *Jesus delivers "the children God has given" him* (*Isa 8:18a*)

And again, "Behold, I and the children whom God has given me."
(Heb 2:13)

3:1-3:6 Jesus has greater authority than Moses

Exodus themes: Moses as faithful servant (θεράπων), God's οἶκος

3:2, 5 Numbers 12:7: *Moses was faithful in all God's οἶκος.*

Jesus was faithful to the one appointing him, just as Moses also
“was faithful in all God's οἶκος.” (Heb 3:2)

Now Moses was faithful in all God's οἶκος as a servant (θεράπων)

P&W: Jesus as builder of house (cf. 2 Sam 7)

P&W: Jesus as Son over God's house (based on Ps 22:22; Isa 8:18)

P&W: allusion to Isa 8:17 (confidence/trust)

The principal goal of the following explication is to demonstrate influence of the paradigm of Moses from the Pentateuch and the exegetical role of the texts from the P&W in Hebrews' argument. Before providing an analysis of the Moses comparison,

however, some preliminary consideration must be given to the unity of 2:10-3:6 since many scholars consider 2:18 to mark the end of the first section of the book and 3:1 as the beginning of a substantially new one. Later, I take up the question of whether Numbers 12:7 serves as the principal generative text from the Pentateuch for this section or as an exegetical text, and how that fits into the larger concept of Pentateuchal priority.

The unity of 2:10-3:6

The majority of scholars place a structural or rhetorical break between 2:18 and 3:1,⁷¹ but here 2:10-3:6 is taken together as the second of the “Son vs.” arguments. Two of the main reasons scholars make a separation at the beginning of chapter 3 are (a) that the rhetorical advent of Moses at 3:2 tends to be linked with the section that follows (3:7-4:13) regarding Ps 95 and the wilderness generation;⁷² and/or (b) due to the shift from discussing Jesus exegetically (2:10-19) to addressing the audience directly at 3:1.⁷³ Albert Vanhoye sees 3:1 as the beginning of the first discourse on the priesthood.⁷⁴ Others, including Lawrence Wills and Cynthia Westfall, see 3:1-6 as *transitional* between the

⁷¹ Among the best recent and thorough reviews of structural schemes for Hebrews are those by Barry Joslin, "Can Hebrews?"; Cynthia Long Westfall, *Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (London: T&T Clark, 2005). And earlier that of Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives." Those placing a first or second level break between 2:18 and 3:1 include, but are by no means limited to: Spicq, *L'Epître*, I; Vaganay, "Le plan de l'Épître aux Hébreux"; Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*; Letter; Allen, *Hebrews*; Attridge, *Hebrews*; F. F. Bruce, "To the Hebrews: A Document of Roman Christianity?", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt* 25 (1987); Caird, "Exegetical Method."; Cockerill, *Epistle*; Johnson, *Hebrews*; Simon Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, NTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984); Koester, *Hebrews*; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 13; Hugh Montefiore, "To the Hebrews: Translation, Comment and Conclusions," *Theology* 77, no. 649 (1974); O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*; Ceslaus Spicq, "To the Hebrews," *Revue de Qumran* 8, no. 3 (1974); Witherington, *Letters*.

⁷² For example, *Letters*, 162.

⁷³ Guthrie, *Structure*, 73, 65-66, 144.

⁷⁴ Vanhoye, *Letter*, 15-20; *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, 39, 86-92.

first major section (1:1 to 2:18) and the discourse that follows (beginning at 3:7);⁷⁵ an option with much to commend it. Westfall sees a “smooth transition” to the next argument at 3:1; thus, no major break at 3:1.⁷⁶ Erich Grässer’s *An die Hebräer* may be the only major contemporary commentary that marks out 1:1-3:6 as a larger unit, which he entitles ‘Der Sohn und die Söhne.’⁷⁷ While 3:1-6 does play a transitional role, I agree with Grässer that the aspect of Jesus’ sonship is the primary organizing element that makes 1:1-3:6 a cohesive unit.

The three best indicators that 2:10-3:6 forms a continuous unit of thought are (1) the consistent concern with Jesus as son, (2) the dominant vocabulary in the passage and (3) the Moses and exodus themes which run throughout the passage. As we examine 2:10-18 and 3:1-6 together, the description of Jesus as the divine son remains central (as it was in 1:1-2:9) and an abundance of family and household language ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta\gamma\circ\varsigma$,⁷⁸

⁷⁵ See a full development of 3:1 and 3:1-6 as transitional in Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 111-15. See also Lawrence Wills, “The Form of the Sermon in Hellenistic Judaism and Early Christianity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 77 (1984): 181. And Johnson, *Hebrews*, 106.

⁷⁶ Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 111.

⁷⁷ Erich Gräßer, *An die Hebräer, Hebr 1-6*, EKKNT (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1990), 46.

⁷⁸ Among the many senses attributed to $\alpha\rho\chi\eta\gamma\circ\varsigma$, the term will be taken here as mainly allusive to a leader, tribal leader, or head of a clan/house as in the cases of Moses and Aaron being included in the list of “the heads of the father’s households ($\alpha\rho\chi\eta\gamma\circ\varsigma\ oik\ovn\ p\atrho\tau\ovn\ \alpha\nt\ovn$; Exod 6:14), the rulers or princes of the people (Num 10:4), the heads of the tribes (Num 13:2-3), and other places in the LXX (e.g., Neh 2:9; 7:70-71). See Amy L. B. Peeler, *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, LNTS (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), 83; Koester, *Hebrews*, 288-89; Gerhard Delling, “ $\ddot{\alpha}\rho\chi\omega$, $\ddot{\alpha}\rho\chi\jmath$, $\ddot{\alpha}\pi\alpha\rho\chi\jmath$, $\ddot{\alpha}\rho\chi\alpha\iota\varsigma$, $\ddot{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\gamma\circ\varsigma$, $\ddot{\alpha}\rho\chi\omega\varsigma$,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 487. Also, the first definition in BDAG, which includes “leader” or “prince.” More below. Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

ἀδελφός, σπέρμα, οἶκος, θεράπων⁷⁹) emerges. In fact, the passage is saturated with filial language, with the terms “son,” “brothers/sisters,” “children,” “descendants,” “house,” and “servant” found in thirteen of the fifteen verses. The character of Moses and allusions to the exodus are also pervasive, including leading the descendants of Abraham and deliverance. The family language used in 2:10-3:6 is evocative of Moses and the “house of Jacob...the sons of Israel (e.g. Exod 19:3; also 19:33; 33:1). This vocabulary links seamlessly to the Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8 citations and the paraphrase of Numbers 12:7, as is evident in Table 2.4:

⁷⁹ While θεράπων refers to Moses as an honored servant or attendant to YHWH and may be primarily cultic, the term undoubtedly has domestic or court connotations, which Hebrews exploits. See brief discussions by Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 207. and Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 78.

Table 2.3 Keywords in 2:10-3:6

	Citations ^C Allusions ^A & Paraphrases ^P	Jesus/ Christ	Moses	Son	Add'l family language	house/ household	faithful	glory & honor	high priest	Select catchwords & link words
2:10	Exod 6:14 ^A , etc.			νιός	ἀρχηγός			δόξα		
2:11					ἀδελφός					
2:12	Ps 22:22 (21:23 LXX) ^C				ἀδελφός					
2:13	Isa 8:17, 18 ^C				παιδίον					πεποιθώς*
2:14					παιδίον					θάνατος (2)
2:15										θάνατος ἀπαλλάσσω δουλεία
2:16					σπέρμα					ἄγγελος
2:17					ἀδελφός		πιστός		ἀρχιερεύς	
2:18										
3:1	Ἰησοῦς				ἀδελφός				ἀρχιερεύς	
3:2	Num 12:7 ^A		Μωϋσῆς			οἶκος	πιστός			
3:3			Μωϋσῆς			οἶκος		δόξα τιμή		κατασκευάζω
3:4						οἶκος				κατασκευάζω (2)
3:5	Num 12:7 ^P		Μωϋσῆς		θεράπων	οἶκος	πιστός			
3:6		Χριστός		νιός		οἶκος				παρρησίαν, ἐλπίδος κατάσχομεν*

The exodus narrative is doubtless behind Hebrews' depiction of Jesus as a liberator like Moses (2:10, 15-16), a connection strengthened with the keywords ἀρχηγός and δόξα. Glory (δόξα) is a broad and dominant theme from the Pentateuchal narrative, representative of the glory associated with the divine presence (Exod 16:7, 10; 24:16-17; 29:43; 40:34-35), of the high priest (28:2, 40), and that recalls both Moses' request to see the glory of YHWH (33:18-22) and his "glorified" face (34:29-35) resulting from his unique communion with the Almighty. "Ἄρχηγός," as applied to Moses and Aaron, will be discussed below in terms of its family and/or tribal connotations.

Table 2.4 Key language from Pentateuch in 2:10-3:6

ἀρχηγός	e.g. Exod 6:14-20	Heb 2:10
Μωϋσῆς	<i>Passim</i>	3:2, 3, 5
δόξα	Exod (e.g. 24:16-17; 33:5, 18, 19, 22); <i>passim</i>)	2:10; 3:3
πιστός	Num 12:7	2:17; 3:2, 5
θεράπων	Num 12:7; 28 times in Exod, (cf. 4:10, 14:31)	3:5
οἶκος	Num 12:7	3:2, 3, 4, 5, 6

Exodus and Moses as Paradigmatic in 2:10-3:6

The overt comparison of Jesus to Moses in 3:1-6 is a clear instance of Hebrews describing the Son according to the paradigm of Moses, the culmination of the “Son vs.” section. The representation of Jesus as a Moses-like deliverer of Abraham’s descendants from slavery in 2:10-18, while not given universal attention, has been discussed by some scholars. In his comments over a century ago on the use of the term ἀρχηγός in 2:10 and its connotations of leadership, A. B. Bruce articulated the resonance of this subsection with the exodus narrative well:

And as the Israelites had their leader under whose guidance they marched from Egypt to Canaan, so the subjects of the greater salvation have their leader who conducts them to their inheritance. This parallelism, there can be little doubt, was present in the writer’s thoughts. He speaks of Moses and Joshua, in different senses leaders of Israel, further on, and it is not a violent supposition that he has them in view even in this early stage.⁸⁰

Recently, Gareth Cockerill wrote, “This description of Jesus [in 2:10] anticipates the coming comparison with Moses (3:1-6), who led God’s people toward the earthly Promised Land.”⁸¹ Peter O’Brien shares their perspective, as well:

⁸⁰ Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, The First Apology for Christianity: An Exegetical Study* (New York: Scribner's, 1899), 93.

⁸¹ Cockerill, *Epistle*, 138.

For the author of Hebrews the typological significance of God leading his people out of Egypt is obvious. Language that describes that event is deliberately employed by our author to describe God's action of leading many contemporary sons and daughters to glory. It is cast in terms of a new exodus with believers as 'the new Exodus generation.' This suggestion is strengthened by the usage of the related term 'pioneer' (*archegos*)...⁸²

There are several ways in which Hebrews introduces the Moses paradigm in 2:10-18 before it surfaces fully in 3:1-6. P.C.B. Andreissen⁸³ suggested more than half a dozen points of comparison between Jesus and Moses in 2:14-3:1, including the typological symbol of the exodus as deliverance (cf. 2:14), the mention of slavery (2:15), those delivered being the "seed of Abraham" (2:16), Moses' identification with his Hebrew brothers and sisters after having been raised in Pharaoh's household (2:17a, cf. 11:24-25), Moses' status as a priestly mediator (2:17b), and Moses as a suffering servant (2:18, based on the work of Descamps⁸⁴). Koester lists four similarities between Jesus and Moses found in 2:14-16:

Like Jesus, Moses was not ashamed to consider enslaved people his brethren, but identified with them in order to deliver them (Exod 2:11; 4:18; cf. Heb 11:24-26). Like Jesus, Moses declared God's name to others (Exod 3:13-15; cf. Heb 2:12) and trusted God (Exod 14:21-31; cf. Heb 2:14b-15). When Jesus died and rose, he destroyed the devil's ability to wield death as a weapon, thereby delivering the "descendants of Abraham" from fear of death.⁸⁵

Beyond those lists we could add the recognition, as William Lane does, that Moses was the one sent by YHWH, an "apostle" (*τὸν ἀπόστολον*) in that sense (Exod 3:10; cf. Heb

⁸² O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 104-05.

⁸³ P. C. B. Andreissen, "Teneur Judéo-Chrétienne de He 1:6 et 2:14b-3:2," *Novum Testamentum* 18, no. 4 (1976).

⁸⁴ "Moïse devient un type du Messie souffrant." "Teneur," 311., citing Albert Descamps, "Moïse dans les Évangiles et la Tradition Apostolique," in *Moïse, l'Homme de l'Alliance* (Paris: Tournai, 1955).

⁸⁵ Koester, *Hebrews*, 240.

3:1).⁸⁶ Some of the similarities suggested by Andreissen, Koester and Lane are stronger than others, but together they are good evidence that even in 2:10-18 Hebrews depicts Jesus in light of Moses, even before Moses is named (3:2).

For our purposes, the importance of the Moses paradigm is found in its generative role; in the way it shapes the discourse and, then, how the passages from the P&W relate Jesus to that paradigm. Eight points of comparison of Jesus to the Moses paradigm merit brief examination. The first of these is Moses' role as **leader within the family** of God, the οἶκος. The second is his role as a brother or fellow member of God's family. Third is his role as **deliverer**. Fourth, and more complicated, are the **priestly** aspects of Moses. Fifth, elements of his role as **prophet** are detectable as part of the paradigm. Sixth, Moses was famously the **builder of God's tabernacle** (σκηνή) or "house" (οἶκος, Exod 23:19; 34:26) in Exodus 25-40. Seventh, as the **faithfulness** of Moses is a key characteristic that is attached to the paradigm. Eighth, Hebrews directly mentions the **glory** of Moses. These will be surveyed here prior to assessing Hebrews' exegesis in relation to the paradigm. The following chart summarizes the various ways that Jesus is linked to Moses (as mentioned above) throughout the passage.

⁸⁶ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 76.

Figure 2.4 Jesus and the Moses paradigm

Roles	Characteristics				
	<i>Leader, authority ἀδελφὸς in God's οἰκος</i>				
2:10	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
2:11	◆		◆		
2:12		◆			
2:13	◆	◆			
2:14		◆			
2:15		◆			
2:16		◆			
2:17	◆	◆	◆		
2:18		◆			
3:1		◆	◆		
3:2	◆	◆			
3:3	◆		◆	◆	
3:4			◆	◆	
3:5			◆		
3:6	◆	◆		◆	

Moses as leader and brother within God's oikos. The first part of the “Son vs. Moses” argument (2:10-18) clearly works to show that Jesus is a brother and leader among Abraham’s descendants, while the second part (3:1-6) describes Jesus in his role as the Son with authority over the household. One element that evokes, or at least supports, a connection to Moses—already mentioned—is the use of the term ἀρχηγός, which has familial or tribal dimensions. The meaning and derivation of ἀρχηγός in this context, Jesus as “the ἀρχηγός of their salvation”⁸⁷ is widely debated. In 2:10, ἀρχηγός is

⁸⁷ τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν; 2:10; cf. 12:2

variously rendered as “pioneer” (NRSV, NIV, CEB, NET), “captain” (KJV), “author” (NASB, NJB), “leader” (NAB, EDNT), “founder” (ESV), “originator” (BDAG), “prince” (Johnston),⁸⁸ or “champion” (Lane),⁸⁹ among others. While Koester, for example, prefers “pioneer” in 2:10 because it captures both the sense of “leader” and “founder,” he also notes the background of the term as it applied to leaders in Exodus and beyond, notably “those who led the tribes in the wilderness.”⁹⁰ Early in Exodus, Moses and Aaron were listed among the tribal leaders or heads of their fathers’ households.⁹¹ In Numbers 13:2-3, leaders ($\alphaρχηγοί$) were called from each tribe by Moses to scout the land of Canaan, among whom were Joshua and Caleb (13:6, 8, 16). Taking the reference as “leader of their salvation” in the context of the deliverance and family language of Hebrews 2, it is reasonable to think that $\alphaρχηγός$ carried connotations of a leader of a tribe, family or household, as in the cases of Moses, Aaron and Joshua.⁹² Perceiving the potential familial connotation of $\alphaρχηγός$ also makes sense in conjunction with the citations from Ps 22 and Isa 8 that depict Jesus as scion, the eldest brother and leader among his human siblings.

⁸⁸ George Johnston, "Christ as Archegos," *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 3 (1981).

⁸⁹ Lane, *Hebrews I-8*, 51, 57.

⁹⁰ Koester, *Hebrews*, 228. "...Exod 6:14 uses [$\alphaρχηγός$] for the heads of Israel's tribes. In Hebrews, Jesus is both the *arch-ēgos* ("chief") and *arch-iereus* ("chief priest," Heb 2:17), giving him unique and superior status. The second part of *archēgos* is based on the verb "to lead" (*agein*). By combining it with the participial form of the verb (*agagonta*) the author draws out the sense of leadership. The term was used for those who led the tribes in the wilderness (Num 10:4; 13:2-3) and in battle..."

⁹¹ οὗτοι ἀρχηγοὶ οἴκων πατριῶν αὐτῶν; Exod 6:14

⁹² See also, e.g., Deut 33:21; Judges 11:6,11; 1 Chr 5:24; Isa 3:6-7; 30:4.

As Andreissen⁹³ and Koester⁹⁴ have rightly noted, Hebrews appears to draw a parallel between Jesus *becoming like* his ἀδελφοὶ (2:17) and Moses' choice to reject the privilege of being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter in order to identify with "the people of God" (τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ), his fellow Hebrews in 11:24-26. Moses, like Jesus, had needed to become one of them to succeed as their liberator.

Moses as deliverer. Moses is, without question, the prototypical deliverer in the scriptures and the history of Israel. For that reason, the description of Jesus as a deliverer (2:10, 15) is the point of comparison to Moses most readily noticed in 2:10-18. Moses delivered "the house of Jacob, the sons of Israel" (Exod 19:3), the descendants (or "seed") of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from Egypt (Exod 33:1; cf. Heb 2:16).

Moses as priest. In four verses throughout the Son vs. Moses section, priestly aspects of Jesus' work are brought out as he sanctifies his ἀδελφοὶ (2:10-11), became the high priest of his ἀδελφοὶ to make atonement for the people (2:17), and is called "the...high priest (ἀρχιερεὺς) whom we confess" (3:1). This raises a question as to whether Hebrews is making a comparison only to Moses here, or perhaps a composite comparison, looking forward to the discourse on Aaron, as well. Although we know Hebrews will make the case for Jesus' priesthood in chapters 5-7 largely based on a comparison to Aaron as the paradigmatic high priest, an argument for seeing a priestly dimension to the Moses paradigm can easily be made. Moses was the ultimate mediator between humanity and God in the Jewish scriptures, from Egypt to Sinai to Mt. Nebo.⁹⁵

⁹³ Andriessen, "Teneur," 309.

⁹⁴ Koester, *Hebrews*, 240.

⁹⁵ Andriessen, "Teneur," 309-10.

Examples of priestly activity by Moses include sanctifying the people (Exod 19), presiding over the ratification of the covenant (Exod 24), appointing Aaron and the priests (Exod 28), ordained them to inaugurate the priesthood (Exod 29), interceding for the people before YHWH (e.g. Exod 33), and supervising the building and dedication of the cultic center, the tabernacle (Exod 25-30, 35-40). Moses is described as a priest in Ps 99:6 along with Aaron and Samuel. Within a century or so of the writing of Hebrews, Philo describes Moses as priest or high priest nearly a dozen times.⁹⁶ So, while we know Hebrews will move on to Aaron's priesthood shortly, it is certainly not unreasonable to suspect that Jesus' priesthood is also related to the Mosaic paradigm. At any rate, we need not see the priestly content of 2:10-18 as running counter to the idea of Moses as an exemplar.

Moses as prophet. Moses was the greatest of prophets, a prophet like no other, "whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut 34:10; cf. Deut 18:15). Hebrews alludes to the prophetic aspect of Moses in that he was faithful "in testimony of the [things] that would be spoken."⁹⁷ Numbers 12:6-8, in describing Moses as "faithful in all my house" (cf. Heb 3:2-5), has mainly to do with validating Moses as the most authoritative of all prophets in the midst of a conflict with Aaron and Miriam.

⁹⁶ Philo's references to Moses as priest come in terms of sacramental activity (*Her.* 1:182), as the priest of sacred things (*Somn.* 2:109), of his virtue as high priest (*Mos.* 2:66), and his selection and appointment of Aaron and sons to the priesthood (*Mos.* 2:142), among others. Moses' priestly role was central to his identity for Philo, as is evident in the epitaph offered in *De vita Mosis* 2:292, "Such was the life and such was the death of the king, and lawgiver, and high priest (ἀρχιερέως), and prophet, Moses, as it is recorded in the sacred scriptures."

⁹⁷ τῶν λαληθησομένων, 3:5; future passive participle

Moses as builder. Roughly one quarter⁹⁸ of the book of Exodus deals with the design (Exod 25-27), construction (Exod 35-40) and dedication (Exod 40) of the sanctuary referred to as the tent or tabernacle (σκηνή), and in rare instances as “the *house* of the Lord your God.”⁹⁹ Within the NT, Hebrews is far more interested in the tabernacle than any other book (chs. 8-10, in particular). While crediting Moses with building the tabernacle later on (8:5), Hebrews puts an ironic twist on the building of God’s οἶκος in 3:1-6 (see below).

The glory and faithfulness of Moses. While much of the Moses paradigm pertains to a variety of roles or functions (leader, brother, deliverer, prophet, priest, builder), two characteristics associated with Moses are significant to Hebrews, as well. As mentioned above, “glory” (δόξα) is certainly one of the keywords throughout this section that would readily evoke memories of Moses and the exodus, not least of which would be the glory emanating from his face after being in the presence of YHWH (Exod 34:29-35). Hebrews makes the concept of glory a point of direct comparison between Jesus and Moses (3:3), as it does with the aspect of Moses’ faithfulness (πιστός; 3:2, 5). While 11:23-29 presents narrative evidence of Moses’ faithfulness, the language of faithfulness (πιστός) in 3:1-6 stems directly from God’s words of approval in Numbers 12:7, that “...in all my house [Moses] is faithful.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ If we include priests and priestly activity directly related to the tabernacle, the relevant material in Exodus slightly exceeds one third. See chapter 5.

⁹⁹ τὸν οἶκον κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου; Exod 23:19; 34:26

¹⁰⁰ ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστός ἐστιν, Num 12:7

That Hebrews would compare Jesus to a robust and multi-faceted Moses should come as no surprise. The Moses paradigm shapes the portrait of Jesus that is developed throughout this passage. Against the implicit narrative backdrop of Exodus, the move to the Moses comparison builds on the Sinai allusion of 2:1-4 as it subtly forms a bridge from the revelation associated with the angels at Sinai to the experience of the wilderness generation, beginning at 3:7. The next key issue is to determine how the *exegetical texts* are employed to present Jesus in relation to the paradigm of Moses.

Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17, 18 as exegetical texts in 2:10-3:6

Hebrews uses Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:17, 18 as exegetical texts to place Jesus within the human family of Abraham's descendants (2:16) in anticipation of describing him as the trustworthy leader of God's "house" (3:6). Regarding Hebrews' exegetical method, it is interesting to note that there are two parallel "rails" on which the argument runs from one text to the next in this section: family language and the theme of suffering. Going back to Psalm 8 (which was treated in the preceding section), family language was present and Hebrews connected Jesus being made lower for a little while with his suffering. There is remarkable thematic continuity as Hebrews then cites Ps 22:22 (2:12), a psalm that famously begins with suffering.¹⁰¹ Isaiah 8:17-18 refers to "the children God has given me" in a context of intense threat, tension and suffering.¹⁰² Our concern here is

¹⁰¹ Ps 22 begins: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest...."

¹⁰² Isa 8:5-10 "Again the LORD spoke to me further, saying, 'Inasmuch as these people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah ...the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, Even the king of Assyria and all his glory; And it will rise up over all its channels and go over all its banks. Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach even to the neck... Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered... Gird yourselves, yet be shattered; Gird yourselves, yet be shattered. Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted...' and 8:14-15 "Then He shall become a

more on the filial aspects of the argument as it leads into the Moses comparison, although Hebrews appears to have seen both sets of connections as important.

Table 2.4 Key language from exegetical texts in 2:10-18

Brother/ἀδελφός	Ps 22:22 NB Exod 28:1-2, 41	Heb 2:11, 12, 17; 3:1
Trust/πείθω (corresponds to confidence & hope in 3:6)	Isa 8:17	Heb 2:13
Children/παιδία	Isa 8:18	Heb 2:13, 14

The first of the exegetical texts cited in this section is Ps 22:22 (21:23 LXX): “I will tell of your name to my ἀδελφοῖς, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”¹⁰³ The thematic continuity with suffering from the discourse on Psalm 8 does connect to the suffering of Christ as represented by Ps 22.¹⁰⁴ Of greater significance, however, is the shift of the macro argument here to the comparison with Moses. The citation of Ps 22:22 shows the exalted Jesus to be a brother to the people. Hebrews’ principal purpose in citing Ps 22:22 is to demonstrate that Jesus can be considered an ἀδελφός to his ἀδελφοὶ. Hebrews begins to establish two sets of Jesus’ credentials as it applies the psalm to Jesus (as Davidic messiah) as. First, as ἀδελφός, Jesus is shown to be part of the family or household of Abraham’s descendants, God’s οἶκος, which sets up

sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, And a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken; They will even be snared and caught...”

¹⁰³ ...ἀπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου, ἐν μέσῳ ἐκκλησίας ὑμνήσω σε (Heb 2:12). This seems to be a verbatim citation with the exception of one word that varies from available LXX manuscripts; δηγγήσομαι (Ps 21:23 LXX) is replaced with ἀπαγγελῶ by Hebrews, virtual synonyms for “to tell” or “to relate.” Various proposals have been made regarding the reason for what is mostly likely an editorial substitution, among the most helpful of which are those by Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 167-68; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 90; Guthrie, “*Hebrews*,” 948.

¹⁰⁴ Ps 22 associated with Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion in the gospels, of course (e.g. Matt 27:35, 43, 46; John 18:23-24) “Hebrews’ Use of the Old Testament: Recent Trends in Research,” *CBR* 1, no. 2 (2003): 949.

the claim of his authority—that Jesus is the Son over God’s οἶκος—in 3:1-6. Second, Hebrews seeks to convince the audience of his priestly credentials, which requires his being counted as a family member at some level, that he be among the ἀδελφοὶ.¹⁰⁵ Hebrews develops the latter further in 5:1, where it initiates the priesthood argument by asserting that “...every high priest is taken from among people (ἀνθρώπων) on behalf of people (ἀνθρώπων)....” It is clear that Hebrews expects a priest to be from among the people whom he serves.

After Psalm 22:22 situates Jesus among his ἀδελφοὶ to begin to establish his family connection and priestly credentials,¹⁰⁶ Isa 8:18a (“...the παιδία God has given me...”) reinforces and continues the process. Two connections between Ps 22 and Isa 8 are likely to have caused our exegete to read the two passages together. Guthrie points out that in the near context of Psalm 22:22 the Psalmist finds hope in the fact that God had “not turned his face” from him¹⁰⁷ in the midst of tribulation (Ps 22:24/21:25 LXX), very similar to a phrase found in Isaiah 8:17a, the uncited original context of the two

¹⁰⁵ Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 948.

¹⁰⁶ If demonstrating Jesus’ place among the ἀδελφοὶ is the main point of the Ps 22 citation, I would place less weight than others have on the reference to being unashamed, the significance of the act of telling or proclaiming (ἀπαγγελῶ) or the idea that the “ἐκκλησίας” suggests the context of the church. I also tend to think the message here has much more to do with Jesus’ qualifications as leader and priest than it does with his condescension and “solidarity” with the people, as is regularly mentioned by commentators. The idea of solidarity does fit with the description of Jesus as empathetic high priest in 2:17-3:1 but, if anything, solidarity appears to be more of a secondary benefit that comes with the ἀδελφός argument than the motivation for it. In favor of this reading is Johnson, *Hebrews*, 99; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 166. Cf. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Witherington’s suggestion seems unlikely to have been in mind: “We should maybe deduce that the reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them his brothers and sisters is precisely because he has sanctified them, not merely because they are his fellow human beings.” Witherington, *Letters*, 155.

¹⁰⁷ οὐδὲ ἀπέστρεψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ

phrases Hebrews cites (Isa 8:17c and 8:18a).¹⁰⁸ Isaiah 8:17a reads, “...I will wait for God, *who has turned his face from* the house of Jacob.”¹⁰⁹ Hebrews then cites 8:17c (Heb 2:13), “and I will trust in him,”¹¹⁰ which is similar to Ps 22:8, “He hoped in the Lord, let [the Lord] rescue him...,”¹¹¹ although vocabulary is slightly different, showing another connection between Ps 22 and Isa 8:17. Hebrews is intentional about using verses in its exegesis that belong together.¹¹²

There is some debate as to whether Heb 2:13a—“and again, ‘I will trust in him’”—cites (or paraphrases¹¹³) Isa 8:17c or has in mind Isaiah 12:2 or 2 Sam 22:3. The debate is fueled partially, or perhaps mainly, by the fact that the introductory phrase “And again” (*καὶ πάλιν*) separates the consecutive text of Isa 8:17c and 8:18a.

καὶ πάλιν· ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθώς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (Heb 2:13)
 καὶ πεποιθώς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (Isa 8:17c)
 πεποιθώς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (Isa 12:2b)
 πεποιθώς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτῷ (2Sa 22:3)

καὶ πάλιν· ιδοὺ ἐγὼ καὶ τὰ παιδία ἡ μοι ἔδωκεν ὁ Θεός. (Heb 2:13=Isa 8:18a)

But, as a number of scholars have concluded,¹¹⁴ evidence suggesting that an option other than Isa 8:17 would be paired with Isa 8:18 is less than compelling—especially given the

¹⁰⁸ Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 947-948.

¹⁰⁹ ἀποστρέψαντα τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου Ιακώβ

¹¹⁰ καὶ πεποιθώς ἔσομαι ἐπ’ αὐτῷ

¹¹¹ Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 949. Again, cf. Matt 27:43-46.

¹¹² These passages may well have been connected in existing textual networks, as discussed in Flusser’s treatment of Heb 3-4 in the introduction. See Flusser, “Today.”

¹¹³ Hebrews reverses the order of πεποιθώς ἔσομαι in Isa 8:17 found in available LXX mss, and adds the pronoun ἐγὼ. There are no variants cited in Ziegler’s Göttingen apparatus that might suggest the order reflected a different recension. This is best considered to be either an intentional alteration to the cited text, perhaps a paraphrase or something just short of that.

¹¹⁴E.g., Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 168-70; Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 950.

fact that Ps 22 shares the traits just mentioned with Isa 8. A more likely reason for the insertion of “καὶ πάλιν” is to mark a separation which alerts us to the dynamic that the two parts of the cited text—“I will trust in him” (Isa 8:17c) and “Behold, I and the children God gave to me...” (Isa 8:18a)—each have distinct purposes in Hebrews’ discourse.¹¹⁵

The statement “I will trust in him” (2:13), if it relates to the Moses paradigm, is meant, more than likely, to begin to show that Jesus’ trust or faithfulness corresponds to Moses’ faithfulness (3:2-6). Jesus trusted God even while under duress (cf. 2:5-9), as did faithful Moses many times. Hebrews holds out Jesus’ trust as a model for the audience to emulate (see 3:6).

With the citation of Isa 8:18a in 2:13, the family language has gone from son(s) (υἱός) to leader (ἀρχηγός) to siblings (ἀδελφός) to children (τὰ παιδία). In the context of Isaiah 8, the prophet speaks of his own children (τὰ παιδία) as they brace for the invasion of the Assyrians. Together with the prophet, his children are to be “signs and wonders” in Israel (cf. Heb 2:4). With παιδίον denoting a young child, we sense that Jesus has a level of authority and leadership over these younger siblings “whom God gave to him.” He is the elder brother, charged with leadership of the family or household. The dual effect of the citation is to place Jesus both *among* and *over* his ἀδελφοί.

The Use and Interpretation of Num 12:7 in 3:1-6

The concluding pericope of the “Son vs.” section (1:1-3:6) is the direct comparison of Jesus and Moses based on a paraphrase of Numbers 12:7. In Numbers 12,

¹¹⁵ See, for example, Johnson, *Hebrews*, 99; Guthrie, "Hebrews."

YHWH defends Moses in the famous rebuke of Aaron and Miriam, declaring Moses to be a prophet with unique authority. The evidence of this (12:8) is the fact that YHWH speaks with Moses face to face (a direct reference to Exod 33:11), as opposed to other prophets who (merely) received visions. The Lord declares to them that such was not the case with “My servant Moses, in all my house he is faithful” (*πιστός*), the term *πιστός* connoting trustworthiness and dependability. Baruch Levine translates the Hebrew (MT) as “Of all my household, he is the most trusted,”¹¹⁶ which applies nearly as well to the rendering in the Septuagint.¹¹⁷

As in the cases of Ps 22:22 and Isa 8:17, Hebrews alters the word order of Numbers 12:7 LXX¹¹⁸—“Not so with my servant Moses; in all my house he is faithful....”—rearranging it for emphasis and logical flow (see below). Moses’ name moves to the emphatic first position to facilitate the comparison to Jesus and Hebrews maintains an emphasis on “servant” (*θεράπων*) by placing it in the final position, as the main point of contrast: Moses the servant vs. Jesus the Son. Crucial to the paraphrase, we may suspect, is the removal of *μου* which highlighted Moses’ *unique* status as the servant of YHWH (*ὁ θεράπων μου*).

¹¹⁶ Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993). 331.

¹¹⁷ οὐχ οὗτος ὁ θεράπων μου Μωυσῆς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστός ἔστιν (Num 12:7)

¹¹⁸ This is a paraphrase or allusion rather than a citation and, as with Isa 8:17 above, other proposals have been made which suggest Hebrews had a different text in mind. Most conclude that Num 12:7 is the text alluded to, although there may be resonances with other texts (e.g. from 1 Sam 2; 2 Sam 7; 1 Chr 17). For a concise treatment of the issues see Guthrie, "Hebrews," 952.; for a detailed discussion see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 200-03. and for an extensive treatment that emphasizes texts other than Num 12:7, see D'Angelo, *Moses*, 65-149.. Ellingworth's suggestion that there may be “secondary allusions” to 1 Chr 17:14 and 1 Sam 2:35 is a good one, as is Guthrie's suggestion of an “echo” of 2 Sam 7:14 (cf. Heb 1:5). My translation.

Numbers 12:7 LXX		Hebrews 3:5
οὐχ οὔτως		καὶ
<u>ὁ θεράπων</u> μου	[1]	[2] <u>Μωϋσῆς</u>
<u>Μωυσῆς</u>	[2]	[4] μὲν <u>πιστὸς</u>
<u>ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ</u> μου	[3]	[3] <u>ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ</u> αὐτοῦ
<u>πιστός</u> ἐστιν	[4]	[1] <u>ώς θεράπων</u> εἰς μαρτύριον τῶν λαληθησομένων

The various family terms which are so dominant in 2:10-18 are absorbed into the polyvalent *oīkos* of 3:2-6. *Oīkos* here denotes mainly the household of God; referring to family in a sense equivalent to the “House of Israel” or “House of Jacob” (cf. Isa 8:17; Exod 19:3); although Hebrews plays with the connotations of the tabernacle (Exod 23:19; 43:26) as house of the Lord, as well. It is here (3:3-4) that Hebrews puts an ironic twist on the building of God’s “house,” shifting the recognition from Moses as the builder of the tabernacle in Exodus (chs. 25-40) to Jesus as builder of God’s *oīkos* in a much broader sense. As some have suggested, it may be that *oīkos* here also circles back literally to evoke resonances with Nathan’s oracle (2 Sam 7) that were behind 1:5,¹¹⁹ a reasonable suggestion of polyvalence or a complex allusion in this context.

In much the same way that Hebrews exploits the polyvalence of *oīkos* exegetically, it draws out an alternative connotation from the designation of Moses as *θεράπων* in 3:5. Hebrews assigns *θεράπων*—typically translated “servant”—to the category of family and household language which, while consistent with common meanings such as “servant” or “attendant,”¹²⁰ at least partially undermines the sense in

¹¹⁹ Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 952; D’Angelo, *Moses*, 76-93.

¹²⁰ BDAG & LS: “servant” or “attendant”; TDNT, EDNT: “servant”

which θεράπων applied to Moses in the scriptures. For Moses, θεράπων was an honorific title referring to his status as the special servant of YHWH, as in Exod 4:10; 14:31. Twice in Num 12:7-8 the Lord refers to him as “my servant Moses”¹²¹ who was “faithful in all [God’s] house” (*πιστὸς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ*). In the Pentateuch generally, the title θεράπων imparts to Moses a status well above all his contemporaries as the personal attendant or spokesperson for YHWH.¹²² There can also be priestly connotations to θεράπων.¹²³ The distinctiveness of Moses as the Lord’s servant is evident in Joshua 1:2, as the Lord begins the instructions to Joshua as Moses’ successor: “Moses my servant has died.”¹²⁴ Hebrews’ use of θεράπων in conjunction with the *οἶκος* of God (3:5), on one hand, does seem to preserve his status as superior to his peers, at least in the minds of those who understand the context of Num 12:7. On the other hand, the way in which Hebrews uses θεράπων also runs counter to scripture and tradition generally as it reduces Moses’ status instead of exalting him, albeit solely with respect to Jesus. It is this last dynamic that best illuminates the role of Num 12:7 within the textual and hermeneutical matrix Hebrews has developed (see discussion to follow).

Interpretive effects of the juxtaposition of texts in 2:10-3:6

In 2:10-3:6, the “Son vs. Moses” section, Psalm 22:22, Isaiah 8:17-18 and Numbers 12:7 all play overt and important roles in the exegesis Hebrews develops. The tight series of citations from the Psalms and Prophets in 2:12-13 functions (1) to show

¹²¹ ὁ θεράπων μου Μωυσῆς, Num 12:7; τοῦ θεράποντός μου Μωυσῆς, Num 12:8

¹²² See esp. Exod 4:10; 14:31; Num 11:11; Deut 3:24; cf. Josh 1:2; Wis 10:16

¹²³ See TDNT III, 128-132 and Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 207.

¹²⁴ Μωυσῆς ὁ θεράπων μου τετελεύτηκεν.

Jesus to be a brother to the descendants of Abraham (Ps 22:22), (2) to show him to be one who trusts in God (Isa 8:17c), and (3) to show him to have a level of authority or responsibility for the young children ($\pi\alpha\iota\delta\iota\alpha$) whom God had entrusted to him, who are (figuratively speaking) his younger siblings (Isa 8:18a). These references situate Jesus in relation to the Moses paradigm as they continue to reinforce his authority and begin to build his priestly credentials.

The function of the paraphrase of the lone text from the Pentateuch in this section, Num 12:7, is slightly different. One of the key assertions of this study is that the priority of the Pentateuch was standard in ancient Jewish exegesis, coupled with the claim that the Prophets and Writings generally functioned as exegetical texts. The question naturally arises, therefore, as to whether Num 12:7 (or Num 12:6-8 or Num 12, etc.) serves as the Pentateuchal anchor for this section exegetically. Is Num 12:7 a base text or an exegetical text? Is it the text from which the exegesis is generated or a text participating in that exegesis?

The strongest case can be made for seeing Num 12:7 as an exegetical text, rather than the main generative text, for the following reasons. First, the Moses paradigm operative from 2:10-3:6 is far broader than Num 12:7 alone would support, focused as that verse is on Moses' prophetic ministry and faithfulness (rather than as leader or deliverer, where 2:10 begins). Second, and more significant, is that Numbers 12:7 is not used to *construct* the Moses paradigm as much as to *subvert* it, allowing it to be adjusted in Jesus' favor. Numbers 12:7 is not completely subversive; it does bring in the positive element of Moses' faithfulness and alludes to a level of authority. But, the Num 12:7

paraphrase is the crucial verse used to situate Jesus against the Moses paradigm in such a way that it both bends that paradigm (through its use of θεράπων and οἶκος) and connects Jesus to the paradigm. The Davidic texts in Hebrews 1, notably 2 Sam 7:14, support connecting Jesus with the building of God's house (in 3:1-6), if only implicitly. Jesus' trust in God asserted by Isa 8:17c (2:13) is confirmed here in his faithfulness. His connection to the household of God, initiated by Ps 22:22 and Isa 8:18a is solidified and clarified by Num 12:7. So, while Num 12:7 is a Pentateuchal text, it functions as an exegetical text here. Θεράπων and οἶκος, two of the three main elements of Num 12:7 (servant, house, faithful), are used ironically, or even subversively, as Hebrews exploits the polyvalence of the terms. We will see that the exegetical use of Pentateuchal texts occurs elsewhere in Hebrews, as well.¹²⁵

One benefit of seeing the Pentateuch as the foundation of the exegesis is that, by perceiving Hebrews' Moses-as-paradigm mindset, we then have the opportunity to acknowledge that Jesus is portrayed in ways that *both* honor *and* (to a lesser extent) subvert the traditional views of Moses, rather than having to choose between those two options. Hebrews works hard to show that Jesus is like Moses in several respects, that Jesus lives up to the otherwise incomparable stature of Moses as a deliverer, brother to and champion of the seed of Abraham, as prophet and as a priestly mediator, and that he was faithful like Moses. Yet, at the same time, Hebrews contends that Jesus the Son holds a higher rank within God's οἶκος than does Moses the θεράπων, and that he is the true

¹²⁵ The next instance being the use of Genesis 2:2 in the argument of Heb 4. Later we find Gen 22 in Heb 6 and Gen 14 in Heb 7 used as exegetical texts.

builder of God’s οἶκος, compared to Moses who constructed the tent sanctuary (Exod 25-40). While Hebrews compares Jesus to Moses as the paradigmatic leader and deliverer of God’s house in several ways, the culmination of the argument is to compare their roles with respect to God’s οἶκος. If the Pentateuchal theme of Moses as paradigmatic leader and deliverer is the foundation, the exegetical use of Ps 22, Isa 8 and Num 12 can be viewed as anticipating and facilitating that comparison.

III. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY

In the quotation that opened this chapter, Kistemaker proposed that a major shift had occurred as the Law, the “nucleus” of Jewish exegesis, was displaced in early Christian exegesis by “prophecy,” which would include both the Prophets and texts like the Psalms in Hebrews, which were deemed prophetic. According to Kistemaker, Jesus took the place of the Five Books of Moses, which then became supplemental scripture, useful mainly for supporting arguments made from the Psalms and Prophets using a christological hermeneutic. The contention that guides this study is effectively the opposite—that the Pentateuch remained at the textual, scriptural center, with the many texts from the P&W in orbit around it. Occasionally, Pentateuchal texts serve as exegetical texts, too, but that is not the primary function of texts from the Torah.

While more recent scholarship may not often describe a shift in the locus of scriptural authority as dramatically as Kistemaker did, most secondary literature dealing with Hebrews’ use of scripture focuses on the *cited* texts, thereby emphasizing the Psalms and Prophets. The approaches mentioned above—whether those of Manson, Yadin, Jewett, Caird, Longenecker, Schenck, Buchanan, Compton, Guthrie or Gelardini—all

produce different results than this approach, to varying degrees. Manson, Yadin, Jewett and others proposed that aberrant angelology or veneration of angels was a problem that motivated the arguments of 1:1-2:9, for example. The present approach, on the other hand, sees Hebrews' concern with angels pertaining to their roles as agents and messengers at Sinai, which sets the paradigm and forms the Pentateuchal basis for that series of arguments and texts. Authority and revelation are the key concerns, not angels themselves.

Others, including Caird and Longenecker, have perceived christological and/or apologetic motivations for the first section, with the primary function of the cited texts being the identification of Jesus as messiah. Those who have focused on Psalm 110, along with others in a somewhat similar vein, see much of the first section and its use of texts as an exaltation of Christ, with a variety of theological implications. While I do not deny that one of the effects of the first section is to exalt Jesus and that a certain amount of christological development is evident, I have suggested that any and all christological development in this section is done with the paradigms of the angels and Moses in mind, for the purpose of establishing the legitimacy of Jesus as a divine spokesperson (prophet) with the authority and credentials to proclaim and implement a new covenant. This is also not to deny that the texts from the P&W reflect an understanding of Jesus as the Son of David and the Danielic/messianic Son of Man, as many who highlight the importance of Ps 110 or Ps 8 have claimed. In view of the present study, however, the christological development is done in order to situate Jesus in relation to Moses and the Sinai Covenant

as the opening phase of the long series of arguments that will all explain Jesus and his message in relation to Moses and his message, in one way or another.

In contrast to the other approaches just mentioned, Gelardini sees Exodus 31:18-32:35 as the primary generative text—a Torah reading that recounts the golden calf incident and the breaking of the Sinai Covenant (with the Jer 31 *haftarah* speaking to covenant renewal). The present approach is much closer to hers, but the results differ, nevertheless. Gelardini, reading Hebrews through the lens of *Tisha b'Av* places greater emphasis on sin, salvation and atonement. While I agree wholeheartedly with Gelardini that Exodus is foundational to Hebrews, I view Heb 1:1-3:6 as most concerned with establishing Jesus as the authoritative messenger with a message for the last days, and with beginning to make the more radical claim that Jesus is a legitimate high priest rather than its main concern being sin, propitiation, etc. Although the approaches of Hughes, Stanley and Moyise differ from each other and from the present study, they have in common the recognition that the allusion to Sinai and “the word spoken through angels” is an interpretive key to the passage, with which I agree.

To summarize how the present proposal is worked out in Hebrews 1:1-3:6, then: We can say that Hebrews draws upon the memory of the most spectacular theophany recorded in the scriptures, the zenith of divine revelation, in order to do something astonishing. It seeks to convince its audience that, not only does Jesus measure up to the paradigm of Moses and the angels as an agent of God on the basis of his status as the divine Son; Jesus actually exceeds both the angels and Moses in his authority. Hebrews adds to that the equally radical claim that the message spoken through Jesus surpasses the

words spoken by YHWH at Sinai in their urgency insofar as they have begun the inauguration of a New Covenant for the last days. Hebrews looks to establish Jesus' credibility as a *bona fide* messenger of God, first through the demonstration via Pss 110, 2, 45, 102, 97, 104, as well as 2 Sam 7 and Ps 97:7/Deut 32:43/Odes 2:43. Later, Psalm 8 concludes the argument for the superiority of Jesus' authority over that of angels by raising and then dispatching a pair of possible objections. Moving from the angels at Sinai to Moses as the operative Pentateuchal paradigm, Hebrews then argues that Jesus is the ἀρχηγός, the leader-deliver of Abraham's descendants, the scion who has been placed over the οἶκος of God, the one who is able to make propitiation for their sins. In all of these respects, and more, he is like Moses. Jesus' authority—from Hebrews' point of view—is most clearly understood with respect to Moses and Sinai because Jesus' message, mission and covenant are just as momentous in Hebrews' present as Moses was and had been for much of history. Far from being merely a christological encomium or a rebuke to those who would worship angels, this is the first stage of Hebrews' effort to explain Jesus and the significance of his message in relation to Sinai, the pinnacle of divine revelation, deliverance and covenant. From the opening argument, with its panoramic view of the exodus event and Sinai experience to Hebrews' final exegetical argument (Hebrews 12), Sinai plays a central role. Although the significance of Sinai will be viewed from a different angle in Hebrews 12, it is obvious that the passages are closely related in language and thought and that they bookend Hebrews for a reason. That Hebrews begins and ends with Sinai is no accident; rather, it reflects a certain theology of scripture and exegetical habit of mind.

CHAPTER THREE: EXODUS, REST AND PROMISE (HEB 3:7-4:14)

In the context of this study the role of Exodus and Hebrews' view of Scripture, the substantial section discussing the wilderness generation and rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:13 might seem to be the exegetical elephant in the room because it seems to focus directly on Ps 95. Many scholars have referred to this section as a "midrash on Ps 95" (or in similar terms)¹²⁶ since it begins with a lengthy quotation of Ps 95(94):7-11 and proceeds to use key words and concepts from the Psalm—"today," "wilderness," "rebellion," "anger," "swore," "rest,"—in the ensuing exposition. At first blush, this passage appears to challenge the two major claims of this study with respect to Jewish concepts of scripture.

The first claim is that Hebrews reflects a Jewish view of the scriptures in which the Pentateuch is the primary and most authoritative part of the scriptures, with the corollary that the Prophets and Writings (P&W) tend to function as exegetical texts in the interpretation of the Five Books of Moses, not base texts. Since this section expounds on several points from the Psalm quotation, many (or most) scholars have taken Ps 95 to be foundation of the exegesis. Buchanan, for instance, with radically different view of Hebrews' perspective on scripture than the one for which I argue, speculates that "One

¹²⁶ Including David Flusser, Daniel Boyarin, Otto Michel, Wolfgang Kraus, Simon Kistemaker, Harold Attridge, Jon Laansma and many others. Details below.

reason why [the author] used Ps 95 as his principal text rather than Num 14 or Deut 1¹²⁷ may have been his conviction that the law had been superseded...”¹²⁸ Rather than seeing Ps 95 as interpreting the Pentateuch in Hebrews, Buchanan suggests that the Psalm supplants the Pentateuch in its authority.

The second major claim of this study is that the Sinai pericope of Exodus (Exod 19-40) is the primary generative text for Hebrews as a whole. So, if Hebrews 3-4 is indeed a midrash on Psalm 95:7-11, that could potentially weaken both of these claims, insofar as it would be the exegesis of a Psalm—not the Pentateuch and not Exodus. Even if Psalm 95:7-11 is an exegetical text that interprets the Pentateuch, many—including Vanhoye, for example¹²⁹—have suggested that Numbers 14, which relates the fateful incident at Kadesh-Barnea, is the key text behind Psalm 95:7-11. Gareth Cockerill writes, “Psalm 95:7-11 facilitated the pastor’s desire to use the rebellion of the wilderness generation at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 13:1-14:45) as a warning against unfaithfulness.”¹³⁰ Does the possibility that Hebrews’ exegesis here has Psalm 95 interpreting Numbers 14 conflict with the proposal that the Sinai pericope of Exodus is Hebrews’ principal generative text?

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that Hebrews’ exposition in 3:7-4:11 uses Psalm Ps 95:7-11as an exegetical text and that Exodus does play a generative role, although it is a somewhat different one than in many of the other sections of

¹²⁷ Many scholars consider Num 14 or Deut 1 to be among the main texts to which the Psalmist was alluding.

¹²⁸ Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 79.

¹²⁹ Vanhoye, "Longue marche."

¹³⁰ Cockerill, *Epistle*, 174. See also Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 13, 91.

Hebrews. The essential elements of this argument are as follows: (1) While this passage is distinct from the paradigmatic “Jesus vs. Angels” and “Jesus vs. Moses” arguments of 1:1-3:6, it serves as the paraenetic extension of that first section.¹³¹ The first section showed that Jesus and his message measured up to the paradigm of Sinai, and this section calls the people not to harden their hearts (like the exodus generation) but to respond in faith as they hear his voice “today.” We will see that, while 3:7-4:11 goes beyond Sinai as it takes a panoramic view of the saga of the exodus generation, it is a continuation of that Sinai-based section. (2) While it is inevitable that this passage will be referred to as “a midrash on Psalm 95” and the like, I suggest that is more helpful to consider it a midrash or exposition on the exodus generation that uses Psalm 95 exegetically. (3) If this is an exposition on the exodus generation, then we have both thematic and verbal elements to consider. On a thematic level, Hebrews incorporates material from Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (along with Ps 95) into its presentation of the wilderness generation as those who did not listen to God’s voice.¹³² Verbally (or lexically), Hebrews develops portions of its exegesis around certain words from the psalm. Similar to the reading together of Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8 in the Johannine Prologue,¹³³ some of the

¹³¹ In a sense, it is a “conclusion” to the first argument, but its place within Hebrews makes that an awkward assertion, and the “rest” argument and focus on the wilderness generation do extend the first argument substantially, more than we might expect from a simple “conclusion.”

¹³² And Genesis as a supporting citation/proof text in the argument, but not as part of the exodus generation portrait.

¹³³ See analysis in ch. 1 above. In that case, “in the beginning” and “*logos*” are obviously drawn Genesis and combined with the concepts of Wisdom personified, the presence and participation of the Word/Wisdom at creation and the theme of the rejection of Wisdom come from Proverbs, marked by vocabulary like “life” and “children” reflecting the influence of Prov 8.

keywords here are drawn from Psalm, some from the Pentateuchal texts that Psalm itself absorbed, and some from the Pentateuch and not the psalm.

In this chapter then, Hebrews 3:7-4:13 will be viewed as a paraenetic extension of the first, Sinai-based section, and as an exposition on the exodus generation that uses Ps 95:7-11 as its principal exegetical text. Although the connection between 3:7-4:11 and 1:1-3:6 is critical and essential to keep in mind, the two sections are distinct enough to justify treating them separately.¹³⁴

This chapter includes four parts. The first part offers a modest overview and summary of 3:7-4:13 along with a discussion of its place within the context of Hebrews. It also contrasts this passage, which is more concerned with paraenesis, to other passages that are concerned with paradigms. Second, three different perspectives on this passage that emphasize midrash or synagogue homily are presented in order to show how the intersection of Ps 95 and the Pentateuch has been understood. The third part is an analysis of the chapter showing that Hebrews uses Ps 95 as its main exegetical text in 3:7-4:13. The final section discusses the scriptural “center of gravity” in 3:7-4:13, and the implications thereof.

I. PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Passage summary

This passage (3:7-4:13) sits within a hortatory frame (3:6 and 4:14) that opens by declaring to the audience, “...we are of [Jesus’] house if only we hold fast to the

¹³⁴ Not to mention the fact that combining Heb 1:1-3:6 and 3:7-4:13 into one chapter of this study would have been completely unwieldy.

confidence and boast of hope..." (3:6) and closes with the statement, "let us hold firmly to our confession" (4:14). It undoubtedly presents a contrast to the faithfulness of Moses and Jesus in 3:1-6 as it turns to the faithlessness, or infidelity, of Moses' followers, the exodus generation.¹³⁵

One way to view the exposition is to divide it into four main parts:

- I. 3:7-11 – Quotation of Ps 95:7b-11
- II. 3:12-4:2 – The failure to enter God's rest due to lack of faith¹³⁶
(4:1-2 – Hinge)
- III. 4:1-11 – The promise of rest for those with faith.¹³⁷
- IV. 4:12-13 – Warning about the penetrating nature of the word of God.

Hebrews cites the psalm, which issues a call to its audience not to harden their hearts as the wilderness generation had upon hearing voice of the LORD. It recounts the fact that, as a result of their provocations and testing of YHWH in the wilderness, the LORD swore that "they will not enter my rest." Hebrews then goes on, first, to expound on how it was that the exodus generation failed to enter "his rest," followed by an exegesis of what was meant by "my rest" (as spoken by God). Hebrews also leverages the word "Today" from the psalm, as spoken "through David" long after Joshua and the generation of the conquest had passed from the scene. The closing warning in this section (4:12-13) can just as easily be seen as a fitting conclusion to all of Hebrews up to that point, as it warns

¹³⁵ Well-articulated by Koester, *Hebrews*, 262.

¹³⁶ References to ἀπίστια in 3:12, 19; hearing not connected to faith (πίστις) in 4:2.

¹³⁷ References to πίστις (4:2) and the ones who believe (οἱ πιστεύσαντες, 4:3) begin the section.

of the penetrating nature of the word of God and the judgment associated with it, vigorously reinforcing the exhortation to an appropriate response to divine revelation.¹³⁸

Alternatively, the passage can be viewed in terms of several lexically-based subsections initiated by keywords from the psalm quotation:

3:7-11 *Quotation*

3:7 (Ps 95:7)	“Today”
3:8 (Ps 95:8)	“harden your hearts” “provocation”
3:9 (Ps 95:9)	“works,”
3:10 (Ps 95:10)	“provoked” “angry” “hearts”
3:11 (Ps 95:11)	“swore,” “wrath” “my rest”
3:12-15	“hardened hearts” & “today”
3:15-19	“provocation”/“provoked”/“angry”; “swore,” “rest”
4:1-6	“my rest,” “works”
4:7-8	“today”
4:9-11	“my rest,” “works”
4:12-13	“heart”

Hebrews develops its exhortation in short units centered on keywords from the citation.

Some of the subsections are embedded within longer ones. For example, in the middle of the 13-verse section on “my rest” (4:1-13), two verses focus on the word “today” (4:7-8).

3:7-4:13 in Context

This exposition on the exodus generation, the need to listen to God’s voice and the “promise of rest” has important and illuminating contextual relationships with the previous “Son vs.” section (1:1-3:6) and important parallels with the great discourse on faith (10:32-12:3). This section (3:7-4:14) complements both of those. The thematic background of the exodus-wilderness experience continues from the “Son vs.” section,

¹³⁸ Since 4:12-13 are transitional and fall outside the main exegetical flow of the passage (except for the use of “heart”), they are not treated in detail in the analysis to follow.

although the intent and emphasis differ. And, we find here the initiation of discussions about lack of faith, faith, promise and looking toward a future state of existence that are picked up and developed in the discourse on faith in chapter 11. Context is especially relevant to understanding Hebrews' textual approach it is moves from the first section to 3:7-4:14.

The nature of 3:7-4:14 is quite different from 1:1-3:6, yet there are notable similarities when it comes to Hebrews' exegesis and hermeneutics. This section that features Ps 95 and the concept of "rest" is the complement to the first section in several respects. The "Son vs." section focuses on comparing Jesus and his message to the angels and Moses and the message of Sinai, with brief mention made to the response of the people to that message. In the second section, the majority of the attention is on the people of the exodus generation (rather than the angels or Moses) and their hard-hearted response to the one who spoke to them. Their negative example is used to exhort the audience to *listen* to the one who speaks "today," so both sections use the exodus experience as a starting point. Thus, whereas the first section was built on the Son vs. Angels and Son vs. Moses juxtapositions—the *agents* of revelation—the second section is concerned with the *response* to revelation, that of wilderness generation in the past versus the response of the audience now. Whereas the first section developed paradigms based on the Sinai experience to explain Jesus and his ministry, the second section uses the tragic failures of the exodus generation in the past to shine a light on the dangerous choices faced by the audience in the present. Whereas the "Son vs." section is mostly exegetical with some brief exhortations included (2:1-4; 3:1, 6), the Psalm 95 section is

mainly an exhortation, supported by short exegetical segments. Both passages are generated from broad swaths of the exodus-wilderness narrative, although the first is more concerned with Sinai and the second more with subsequent events. Both passages use texts from the P&W as exegetical texts in their expositions of themes from the Pentateuch although, as we will see, the second section is more of a sustained discourse using one main exegetical text, Ps 95:7-11.

In the larger context of Hebrews, 3:7-4:13 focuses on the negative example of the faithless exodus generation, as they are described in 3:12, 19, and the promise of rest that was unrealized for them, but in which the audience should hope. In Hebrews 11 (more specifically 10:32-12:2), we find a complementary discourse in its list of Jewish heroes who were models of faith, in spite of the fact that the full realization of the promises they received is yet to come. The two passages engage an exegetical approach that is similar, to the extent that they both use one passage from to P&W (Ps 95 in 3:7-4:13; Hab 2:4 in 10:32-12:3) which serves as the main exegetical text as Hebrews interprets vast portions of the Pentateuch.

II. PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN 3:7-4:14

With roughly two dozen verses of Hebrews 3-4 dedicated to the exposition that begins with a quotation from Psalm 95, this section features one of the most concentrated and extensive examples of scriptural exegesis in Hebrews, and the NT for that matter. Combined with the fact that many scholars describe this passage in terms characteristic of ancient Jewish exegesis (midrash, synagogue homily, *gezerah shewa*, etc.), this discourse

on the wilderness generation and rest also often piques the interest of scholars engaged in studies of the use of the Jewish scriptures in the NT or biblical intertextuality.

While it is very common for articles and commentaries to refer to this passage as a “midrash” or “midrashic” as a way of acknowledging that it uses exegetical techniques associated with ancient Jewish exegesis (generally) or midrashic literature (specifically), a few scholars have gone well beyond that in their analysis of Hebrews 3-4. David Flusser and Daniel Boyarin are among those who have offered some of the more thorough treatments of the passage as midrash. Gabriella Gelardini, as previously mentioned, has developed the most comprehensive proposal to date of Hebrews as a synagogue homily, so her perspective on this passage is considered here as well. While there is much of interest that could be discussed—form, genre, parallels, etc.—I will limit the scope here to several scholars’ analyses of Hebrews’ use of the scriptures and hermeneutics in ways most relevant to this study.

David Flusser

In his essay “‘Today if You Will Listen to his Voice’: Creative Jewish Exegesis in Hebrews 3-4,”¹³⁹ Flusser stresses the notion that “midrashic homilies are collective enterprises,” meaning that Jewish and early Christian homilies were all part of an extensive, interconnected scriptural/textual system.¹⁴⁰ Exegesis and homilies were not generally original or independent products, but rather were (inter)dependent, based on traditions that the homilists had heard and absorbed. In support of that thesis, Flusser

¹³⁹ Flusser, "Today."

¹⁴⁰ "Today," 55-56.

argues that intertextual relationships evident in Heb 3-4 are known from a range of Jewish sources, from the DSS to rabbinic Midrashim. Exegetical connections between texts that he perceives include: (1) Hebrews' exhortation to encourage one another to avoid becoming hard-hearted in light of the command of Lev 19:17 to correct one's neighbor, and (2) that Hebrews relates the "today" of Ps 95:7 with the injunction to rebuke one's neighbor and not to prolong "quarrels" (cf. Ps 95:8 and the etymology of Meribah). The latter textual connection can be found in the DSS, notably the *Manual of Discipline* 5.25-6.1. There each person is told to "reprove his fellow in truth and humility...on the same day he will reprove him...".¹⁴¹ Flusser goes on to mention a rabbinic debate about the fate of the wilderness generation related to Ps 95:11 pertaining to whether they would inherit the life to come. He notes that "There is an eschatological aspect in the biblical 'today' both according to [Hebrews] and in the rabbinic sources," and that we also find the Sabbath connected to a "today" of repentance, obedience or observance in ancient sources, not unlike the exhortation Hebrews makes.¹⁴² As Flusser points out the typological and eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath found in the literature, he notes that Hebrews preserves the eschatological dimension in this passage while it omits the obligation to observe the Sabbath. Among other valuable observations, he reminds us that Hebrews participates in a larger world of texts and interpretation such that understanding Hebrews' exegesis may be as much or more about *options* than it is about *innovation*—Hebrews' exegesis can be seen to be (to one degree or another) pulling

¹⁴¹ "Today," 57. (I have condensed the quotation more than Flusser did.)

¹⁴² "Today," 58-59.

together existing exegetical threads that suit its purposes rather than creating entirely new interpretations from whole cloth. I also note Flusser's tendency to ground his own exegesis in the Pentateuch (Lev 19:17 and Exod 16:25 and Gen 2:2 related to the Sabbath) even as he supplements that with other texts.

Daniel Boyarin

In his paper “Prolegomena to a Jewish Christology in Hebrews: The Jewish Soundscape of the Midrash on Psalm 95,”¹⁴³ Boyarin’s focus is on demonstrating “the midrashic nature” of this particular passage. Some of his comments about Hebrews as midrash (generally) have been already been mentioned in the introduction. Here I wish to mention a few of his more specific interpretive observations on this passage.

Boyarin’s most important observation, for our purposes, may be that this section of Hebrews is a homily *on* a homily. “Psalm 95 is itself a homily,” he notes, going on to assert that Hebrews “follows the logic of the psalm” as it exhorts its audience in the spirit of the psalm.¹⁴⁴ One implication of Boyarin’s observation is that the psalm is, by nature, an interpretive text. Hebrews expounds upon the psalm’s own interpretation of the wilderness generation, and of rest: “the psalmist himself, already a homilist, is drawing an analogy from the generation of the desert to the present generation of all time.”¹⁴⁵ Hebrews urges the congregation to understand that “...you... may yet achieve the rest promised you, if it is ‘today,’ the forever day in which you hear my voice.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Boyarin, "Prolegomena."

¹⁴⁴ "Prolegomena," 7.

¹⁴⁵ "Prolegomena," 8.

¹⁴⁶ "Prolegomena," 8.

Hebrews also uses the strategy of posing and resolving a question that the psalm inspires, namely “What is this rest that the psalmist warns about and promises, since it is palpably not the rest achieved by Joshua...”¹⁴⁷ In the course of resolving the question of the meaning of “my rest” (Ps 95:11), Hebrews “simply cites a verse in which it is claimed that God has a Sabbath, a day of rest. That verse is Exodus 20:11...” which connects Gods’ rest after creation with the Sabbath commandment. Boyarin does not weigh in on questions of the relative roles or rank of the different passages of scripture (Pentateuch vs. P&W, etc.) in the passage.

Gabriella Gelardini

While both Flusser and Boyarin treat Heb 3-4 as midrash and/or homily, the scope of both treatments is brief and they are limited to just this pericope with minimal attention dedicated to the place of the passage in the larger context of Hebrews. In her far more comprehensive study, Gelardini treats the entirety of Hebrews as a synagogue homily on the occasion of *Tisha b’Av*. She argues that the Torah reading, or *sidrah*, for Hebrews (read as a homily) would have been Exodus 31:17b- or 31:18-32:35,¹⁴⁸ where the giving of the Law on the mountain concludes (Exod 31:18) and the incident of the golden calf is narrated. The *haftarah* associated with that passage of Exodus in the synagogue lectionary for *Tisha b’Av*—and in Hebrews, argues Gelardini—was Jeremiah 31:31-34, which describes a “new covenant,” *not* like the one made with the ancestors

¹⁴⁷ "Prolegomena," 9.

¹⁴⁸ As in Mann’s Palestinian Triennial Lectionary Cycle (PTC). Gelardini, "Hebrews."

when God “took them by the hand to bring them out of Egypt.” Jeremiah 31:31-34 is cited at length in Hebrews 8-9.¹⁴⁹

In order to understand the significance of the combination of texts in Heb 3-4 in Gelardini’s scheme, it is necessary to take the larger context into account. She divides the homily (Hebrews) into three major parts. First, Heb 1-6 focuses mostly on the breaking of the covenant, first at Sinai (Heb 1-2), then at Kadesh-Barnea (Heb 3-6). The second (or middle) section (Heb 7-10) is focused on the New Covenant, cult and covenant renewal, with Jeremiah 31:31-34, the *haftarah*, as the main text. That is a more hopeful section, the covenant renewal of Exod 34 (after the golden calf) being of particular relevance. The third and final major section (Heb 10-13) is comprised of two perorations that have eschatological and messianic overtones, “Faith in the Son and the Father” (10:19-12:3) and “The humiliation and exaltation of the Son,” (12:4-13:25), which is read against the backdrop of the covenant breach and renewal at Sinai again.¹⁵⁰

According to Gelardini, the present section (Heb 3-4) is part of a two-part proem section, each of which concern a different breaking of the Sinai covenant. The first proem (Heb 1-2) cites multiple Psalms with the covenant breach and renewal at Sinai forming a backdrop (Exod 32-34).¹⁵¹ The section under discussion falls within the second proem (Heb 3-6), which discusses a lack of faith against the backdrop of Numbers 13-14 and the breaking of the covenant at Kadesh-Barnea. It is also important to note, however, that in the course of the proem section, the homilist’s exegesis based on Psalm 95 and Numbers

¹⁴⁹ "Hebrews," 118-25; *Verhartet*, 144-47.

¹⁵⁰ For Gelardini’s complete outline, see *Verhartet*, 353-357.

¹⁵¹ *Verhartet*, 249-87; "Hebrews," 120.

13-14 leads to a reference or citation of the introductory verse to the homily's Torah text (*Sidra-Eingangvers*), Exodus 31:17b (Heb 4:4).¹⁵² The NA28 and the majority of commentaries take Heb 4:4 as citing Gen 2:2,

εῖρηκεν γάρ που περὶ τῆς ἐβδόμης οὕτως:
καὶ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ
Heb 4:4

καὶ κατέπαυσεν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐποίησεν
Gen 2:2

Boyarin reads 4:4 as citing Exod 20:11, the Sabbath commandment, as an example of a rest that is God's:

καὶ κατέπαυσεν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ
διὰ τοῦτο εὐλόγησεν κύριος τὴν ἡμέραν τὴν ἐβδόμην καὶ ἡγίασεν αὐτήν
Exod 20:11

Gelardini, however, sees a direct connection to the Torah reading for the 9th of Av, which begins at Exod 31:18: "When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." That is the final verse of the chapter before the golden calf narration commences in Exod 32:1. Immediately before comes Exod 31:17, which reads:

ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ τοῖς νιοῖς Ισραὴλ σημεῖόν ἐστιν αἰώνιον
ὅτι ἐν ἐξ ἡμέραις ἐποίησεν κύριος τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν
καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἐπαύσατο καὶ κατέπαυσεν.

Keys to Gelardini's perspective are the ideas (a) that Hebrews is very concerned about covenant breach and renewal overall, (b) that in the case of Exod 31:17b, God's rest and

¹⁵² Verhärtet, 250, 55, 73-75.

the Sabbath are directly linked to *covenant* (more so than in Gen 2:2 and more explicitly than in Exod 20:11), and (c) that there would be an obvious connection to Exod 31:17b if it were the incipit of the Torah reading (or at least the phrase immediately prior to it). Since one of the characteristics of proem homilies was to begin from a scriptural point at some distance from the lectionary text and deftly reveal a connection to that text through exegesis,¹⁵³ Gelardini makes a reasonable case.

These three different views of Hebrews' exposition that commences with Ps 95:7-11 as midrash or synagogue homily (Flusser, Boyarin, Gelardini) all suggest that Hebrews uses recognizable exegetical techniques associated with midrash or ancient Jewish exegesis, although they come to somewhat different conclusions regarding the texts to which Hebrews alludes and exegetes. All three suggest connections between the Hebrews passage and verses from the Pentateuch (Lev 19:17; Exod 20:11; 31:17b).

III. READING 3:7-4:14 AS EXEGESIS

Having looked at a few proposals related to Hebrews' use of text and hermeneutics in this passage, we now turn to an exegetical reading of the passage based on the key concepts of (1) Pentateuchal priority, (2) the P&W as exegetical texts and (3) the idea that Exodus tends to be the predominant generative text in Hebrews. First, the foundational role of the Pentateuch in this passage will be examined, especially that of Exodus. Then, Hebrews' use of Psalm 95:7-11 as an exegetical text will be demonstrated.

¹⁵³ "Hebrews," 113-15; Joseph Heinemann, "Profile of a Midrash: The Art of Composition in Leviticus Rabba," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 39, no. 2 (1971): 143-46; "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim: A Form-Critical Study." See also Gelardini, "Hebrews," 113-15.

The Pentateuch in 3:7-4:14

The Pentateuch is foundational to this paraenetic section both thematically and verbally (or lexically). Thematically, the narrative of the exodus generation, which spans Exodus to Numbers, then is recounted in Deuteronomy, lies behind Ps 95:7-11. Verbally, the pivotal term “rest” is drawn from the Pentateuch, as are other key terms. The Pentateuch also serves as the authoritative text to resolve the exegetical conundrum raised by Ps 95:11: the meaning of “My rest.” We will look first at several aspects of Exodus that come into play in this passage, followed by a few notes related to Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Exodus

There are several ways that texts or themes from Exodus come into play in 3:7-4:13, ranging from more general thematic content to more specific allusions and citations. Possible connections will be listed here in those three categories (thematic, allusions, citations).

Exodus themes. Psalm 95 clearly has the exodus generation in mind, which fits perfectly with Hebrews’ argument so far. The verses Hebrews quotes from Ps 95 refer to hearing God’s voice, which recalls Sinai (Ps 95:7), and rebellion and testing in the wilderness (Ps 95:8). Hebrews also mentions “all those who were led out of Egypt by Moses, at whom he was angry for forty years” (3:16-17) and “those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness” (3:17). While the latter description may allude to Numbers 14:29 (see below), it is also clear that there was more than one occasion when people died in the course of the wilderness narrative as a result of judgment (cf. Exod. 32; Lev 10; Num 11,

14, 16). Hebrews' use of Ps 95's treatment of the exodus generation continues the themes of Jesus as ἀρχηγός and deliverer in chapter two and the direct Jesus vs. Moses comparison in 3:1-6.

A number of scholars have discussed the significance of the exodus generation in this passage. Ernst Käsemann famously referred to both the Israelites and Hebrews' audience as "*das wandernde Gottesvolk*," a concept which commences with and encompasses Exodus—and *the exodus*—even if it extends beyond it.¹⁵⁴ Matthew Thiessen describes Hebrews' perspective as that of the people of God experiencing one long, continuous exodus—from the Israelites to Hebrews' audience (and beyond)—such that the exodus has not yet ended.¹⁵⁵

Allusions to Exodus. There are a few noteworthy allusions to Exodus in 3:7-4:13, one of which is seldom attributed to Exodus. The fact that the MT version of Ps 95:8 adjures the people not to harden their hearts “as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness”¹⁵⁶ is frequently noted. Exodus 17:1-7 narrates the water crisis which is resolved as Moses struck the rock at Horeb (Exod 17:6), and which resulted in that place being named “Massah” (“testing”) and “Meribah” (“quarreling”). The Septuagint translators rendered the Hebrew terms according to their meanings—as “testing” (πειρασμὸς) and “railing” or “reproach” or “abuse” (λοιδόρησις)—rather than as place

¹⁵⁴ Ernst Käsemann, *Das wandernde Gottesvolk: eine Untersuchung zum Hebraerbrief*, 3. Aufl. ed., *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Neue Folge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959); *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews* (Augsburg, 1984).

¹⁵⁵ Thiessen, "Hebrews and the End of the Exodus."

¹⁵⁶ Ps 95:8 : אָמַר יְהוָה כִּי־יּוֹם מֵרֶב בְּאָמֶרֶת...

names. So, while Ps 95 MT has Exod 17:7 (and perhaps also a parallel narrative in Num 14—see below) in view, Ps 94 LXX does not transliterate Massah and Meribah, but translates them to “the rebellion during the day of testing.” Hebrews quotes the LXX without signaling whether or not it makes the connection to Exodus 17. Numbers 20:1-13 is a close parallel in which Moses strikes the rock (twice) in order to obtain water for the grumbling crowd, but does so instead of having Aaron *speak* to the rock as instructed, leading to Moses being prevented from entering the land. The word *meribah* (מְרִיבָה), translated “revile” or “dispute” (ἐλοιδορήθησαν) in the LXX, is used again in this circumstance. There is debate as to whether Hebrews has either Exodus or Numbers (or both) in mind, as discussed below.

A second allusion to Exodus is Hebrews’ reference to the “*promise* of rest” (4:1; implicit in 4:2, 6, 9), although the connection to Exodus is frequently overlooked by commentators. The idea of rest debuts in Hebrews within the quotation of Ps. 95(94):7-11, where it recalls God having sworn that the wilderness generation would not “enter into my rest.”¹⁵⁷ In 4:1, Hebrews goes on to warn that while “a promise of entering into his rest remains,”¹⁵⁸ none of them should come up short of it. In Heb 3:11-4:11, the language of rest dominates the pericope, with eight uses of the noun κατάπαυσίς and three uses of the cognate verb καταπαύω in 4:4, 8, 10. As dense as the language of “rest” is in 3:11-4:11, it is limited to this passage alone in Hebrews. The associated concept of a “promise” (ἐπαγγελία) begins here and is recurrent, however.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου; Heb 3:11; 4:3=Ps 95(94):11.

¹⁵⁸ κατολειπομένης ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ

¹⁵⁹ Forms of ἐπαγγελία: 4:1; 6:12, 15, 17; 7:6; 8:6; 9:15; 10:36; 11:9, 13, 17, 33, 39

Hebrews' exegesis here is multi-layered. It quotes the latter half of Ps. 95(94) which alludes to two or three events from the Pentateuch: First, to the people testing the LORD at Massah and Meribah, or "Test and Contention"¹⁶⁰ (Exodus 17:7); second, to the LORD swearing that the generation that did not listen to Joshua and Caleb would not enter the land (Num 14:21-24); and third, perhaps, to the incident of Moses striking the rock at Kadesh-Barnea in Numbers 20 resulting in the prohibition against both Moses and Aaron entering the land (20:12). Parallel to Exodus 17:7, the waters there were also called "Strife" or "Quarrelling" (Meribah; Num 20:13).¹⁶¹ The language of *rest* is not present at all in Exod 17, Num 14 or Num 20. For the promise of rest, we must look elsewhere.

The first instance of "rest" related to the promised land in the Pentateuch is Exodus 33:14 where the LORD assures Moses, "I will go before you and will give you rest."¹⁶² The "rest" of Ps 94:11 LXX, taken in its liturgical context, has been sometimes been suggested to evoke thoughts of the temple, and is often associated with so-called "Deuteronomic rest," involving land, cessation of conflict and divine presence.¹⁶³ From a narrative or diachronic point of view, however, Exodus is the point of origination both for

¹⁶⁰ Dozeman renders the phrase "Test" and "Lawsuit;" Meribah based on the Hebrew root בִּרְבָּה, and Massah on בַּסָּה. *Commentary on Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 390.

¹⁶¹ In the LXX, ὀντιλογίας; rendered "dispute" by the NETS.

¹⁶² Heb: נִיאָמֶר פָּנֵי יְלֻכֹּו וְנִגְתַּתִּי לְךָ. LXX: καὶ λέγει αὐτὸς προπορεύσομά σου καὶ καταπαύσω σε.

¹⁶³ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, ed. Erich Zenger, Linda M. Maloney, and Klaus Baltzer, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 461. The most common parallels noted are Deut 3:20 (καταπαύω) and/or Deut 12:9-10 (κατάπαυσις, καταπαύω). See more on Deuteronomic rest in the section on Deuteronomy below. On "rest" in Ps 95 referring to Deut, see John Goldingay, *Psalms, Vol. 3: Psalms 90-150*, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 96-97; Samuel L. Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2003), 672.

Sabbath commandments to rest and the promise of rest. Typical nouns and verbs for rest, coming to rest, causing to rest, etc. (κατάπαυσις, καταπαύω, ἀνάπαυσις, ἀναπαύω) are found sixteen times throughout the LXX of Exodus with a variety of meanings.¹⁶⁴ Half of those refer to rest directly related to the Sabbath, a major theme in Exodus.¹⁶⁵ Importantly, the use of the verb καταπαύω in Exod 33:14 is unique in that it promises rest connected to divine presence and movement toward the Promised Land. Exodus 33:14(LXX) reads:

And he says: I myself will go before you and give you rest.

καὶ λέγει αὐτὸς προπορεύσομαι σου καὶ καταπαύσω σε.

The LORD made this promise to Moses in anticipation of the movement of the people toward the land which had been promised to the Patriarchs. God promised to send an angel to drive out the hostile inhabitants (33:2) but God's presence would not accompany the people. This is shortly after the disastrous golden calf episode (Exod 32) and the people mourn the loss of the divine presence. Exodus 33 relates Moses' intercession which bridges the narrative from that low point to the renewal of the covenant in Exod 34.¹⁶⁶ In view of the sizeable list of peoples to be driven out of the land at the beginning of Exodus 33, it is safe to say that rest from enemies is in view in

¹⁶⁴ Seven are mundane uses, e.g., ceasing a particular activity (5:5; 31:18) or coming to rest someplace (10:14). Interestingly enough, the total of 16 occurrences in Exodus is twice the number in Deut and more than any of the other books in the Pentateuch.

¹⁶⁵ Eight occurrences: four forms of ἀνάπαυσις, ἀναπαύω; and four of κατάπαυσις, καταπαύω. Exod 16:23; 20:11; 23:12; 31:15, 17; 34:21; 35:2)

¹⁶⁶ Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, 717.

33:14.¹⁶⁷ But, the divine presence is integral, as well. Jon Laansma¹⁶⁸ describes the lasting significance of Exod 33, esp. 33:14-16, to subsequent theological understandings of rest: “What this passage expresses in seminal form is the connection between YHWH’s presence and rest. This basic connection is portrayed on a grand scale in the rest tradition as a whole, which joins inseparably YHWH’s rest to Israel’s.”¹⁶⁹

In Exodus, then, we see the beginnings of the complex sense of rest related to presence, peace and security, and the journey to and occupation of the land intended to be a permanent place of rest for the people of God. Using identical terminology, we also find the institution of the Sabbath rest, something which had been anticipated in Genesis by God’s own rest. With regard to Exodus as a generative text, the promise of rest in Exodus 33:14 is a memorable use of the κατάπαυσίς word group which could reasonably have been associated with the promised rest in Ps 95(94).

According to some scholars, Hebrews’ reference to God’s Sabbath rest in 4:4 also alludes to Exodus. As mentioned above, Boyarin and Gelardini both attribute Hebrews’ statement “and God rested on the seventh day from all his works” to the Sabbath commandment(s) found in Exodus, albeit to different passages in Exodus. Boyarin considers Hebrews to have Exodus 20:11 and the Decalogue in mind,¹⁷⁰ whereas Gelardini believes that Hebrews cites Exodus 31:17b, effectively the incipit of the Torah

¹⁶⁷ As it is later in Deut 3:20, 12:10 and Nathan’s oracle, 2 Sam 7; 1 Chron 17.

¹⁶⁸ Jon Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest: The 'Rest' Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Mt 11 and Heb 3-4*, vol. 98, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 33.

¹⁶⁹ *Rest*, 98, 33.

¹⁷⁰ Boyarin, "Prolegomena," 10-11.

reading that was base text for the homily on the 9th of Av (Exod 31:18-32:35).¹⁷¹

Boyarin's logic is that Hebrews uses Exod 20:11 in a straightforward exegetical move to explain what the phrase "my rest" entails since it is a verse that claims God has a day of rest.¹⁷² Gelardini, with the Torah reading already identified due to other factors¹⁷³ has the expectation that, typical of proem homily form, the proem serves to artfully lead from a distant verse or verses (Ps 95:7-11) to the Torah text.¹⁷⁴ And, because Exod 31:17b evokes the Sabbath commandment directly in the context of fidelity to the covenant, the original context of Exodus enhances its significance in Hebrews' exegesis.¹⁷⁵

Numbers

There are a few allusions to Numbers in Heb 3:7-4:13, two of which flow out of the capsulized narrative of Ps 95:7-11. The incident of the Lord's oath that the people would not enter the land, or "rest" as the psalm tells it, is found in Num 14 and recounted in Num 32 (and Ps 95:11). One example of "bodies falling in the wilderness," not a phrase from Ps 95 but mentioned in Hebrews, would be Num 14:29-33. The mention of a "rebellion" in Ps 95:8 LXX is a translation of "Meribah" in Ps 95:8 MT, a possible allusion to Exodus and/or Numbers, so it treated as a possible dual allusion below.

Psalm 95(94):11 is quoted and repeated in Hebrews 3:11; 4:3, 5: "As I swore in my wrath: 'They will not enter into my rest'." The clearest antecedent to that phrase in

¹⁷¹ Gelardini, *Verhärtet*.

¹⁷² Boyarin, "Prolegomena," 11.

¹⁷³ Rationale based mainly on Mann's PTC: Gelardini, "Hebrews," 118-25; *Verhärtet*, 144-47.

¹⁷⁴ "Hebrews," 113-15; *Verhärtet*, 137-47.

¹⁷⁵ "Hebrews," 120; *Verhärtet*, 273.

the psalm is LORD's declaration that the exodus generation would not enter the land as a result of the failure at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 13-14), specifically in 14:30, which reads: “Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you.”¹⁷⁶ While Numbers 14:30 effectively removes the exodus generation’s claim on the land in which God “swore to settle” them, Numbers 32:10-11 recounts the same event from the perspective of a contrary oath: “The LORD's anger was kindled on that day and he swore, saying, ‘Surely none of the people who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not unreservedly followed me...’”

Another allusion to Numbers—perhaps better classified as a paraphrase—is Hebrews’ reference to those at whom God was angry for forty years: those who sinned and “whose bodies fell in the wilderness” (Num 14:29-33; Heb 3:17). Hebrews 3:17b blends two similar phrases from Num 14:29 and 32:

Heb 3:17 οὐχὶ τοῖς ἀμαρτήσασιν, ὃν τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἑρήμῳ;

Num 14:29 ἐν τῇ ἑρήμῳ ταύτῃ πεσεῖται τὰ κῶλα ύμῶν καὶ πᾶσα ἡ ἐπισκοπὴ ύμῶν καὶ οἱ κατηριθμημένοι ύμῶν ἀπὸ εἰκοσαετοῦς καὶ ἐπάνω ὅσοι ἐγόγγυσαν ἐπ’ ἐμοί

Num 14:32 καὶ τὰ κῶλα ύμῶν πεσεῖται ἐν τῇ ἑρήμῳ ταύτῃ

¹⁷⁶ MT **לֹא תָשִׁב בְּמִצְבַּת יְהוָה אֶלָּא בְּקֹרֶב מִזְבֵּחַ** ... The LXX is similar—woodenly literal, in fact—rendering the idiomatic **בְּמִצְבַּת** conditional (*εἰ ύμεῖς εἰσελεύσεσθε*), although it is normally translated as a negative: *εἰ ύμεῖς εἰσελεύσεσθε εἰς τὴν γῆν ἐφ' ἣν ἐξέτεινα τὴν χεῖρά μου κατασκηνώσαι ύμᾶς ἐπ' αὐτῆς ...*

“If you shall enter into the land upon which I stretched out my hand to make you encamp upon it...” (NETS), or “You shall not enter...”

Hebrews adjusts the tense of $\pi\acute{\iota}\pi\tau\omega$, “to fall,” changing it from future to aorist, but otherwise retains the sense of both verses and the word order of Num 14:32 (which rearranges the order of Num 14:29).

Rebellion and Meribah—a dual allusion. Psalm 95:8 exhorts its readers not to harden their hearts “as in the provocation” or “...rebellion” ($\tau\tilde{\omega}$ παραπικρασμῷ; Ps 94:8 LXX), where the MT reads “as at Meribah” ($כִּמְרֵיבָה$), which could be considered a dual allusion on the part of the psalm. The term Meribah was used both in Exod 17:7 and Num 20:13 to memorialize those moments of strife and conflict associated with drawing water from a rock in the desert. Psalm 95 MT directly mentions “Massah” and “Meribah,” two names affixed to the place after the people grumbled against the LORD in their thirst, Moses struck a rock and water poured forth in Exodus 17. There both names are used, and of course Ps 94 LXX translates the terms as “rebellion” and “testing.”

In a different event with multiple parallels, Numbers 20 tells of Moses striking a rock to produce water at Kadesh-Barnea, but this time he does so in anger and with disregard for the LORD’s instruction that Aaron *speak* to the rock (not strike the rock). The latter event is unlike the context of Ps 95 in that it is Moses who is at fault (not the people), but it is similar to Ps 95 in that the result is a prohibition from entering the land (although affecting only Moses and Aaron).¹⁷⁷ It is possible that Hebrews’ subsequent reference to “the ones who heard that rebelled”¹⁷⁸ (3:16) refers to those of Exodus 17, to Moses in Numbers 20, or to both, if Hebrews perceived “Meribah” in the underlying

¹⁷⁷ Enns, “Creation,” 265. See also Vanhoye, “Longue marche.”

¹⁷⁸ ἀκούσαντες παρεπίκραναν

(MT) text of the Psalm. It is also possible that Hebrews considered only the Greek and took the “rebellion” in broader terms, perhaps applying to the wilderness generation generally. So, while Ps 95 MT includes both Massah and Meribah, a definite reference to Exodus 17 and very possibly Numbers 20 (with references to the event in 20:24 and 27:14), it is less clear that the LXX meant to refer to those places and events specifically, and the degree to which Hebrews made the connection is uncertain. Vanhoye argues for Numbers 14 as the textual antecedent, against Exodus 17, in his disagreement with Käsemann’s “wandering people of God” proposal.¹⁷⁹ The best course in my view is proposed by Peter Enns, who sees no reason to deny that both Exodus and Numbers might be in view, suggesting that “The rebellion at Meribah/Massah forms a frame around virtually the entire wilderness rebellion period. The mention of Meribah and Massah may be shorthand not just for Exodus 17 or Numbers 20 but both—and everything in between.”¹⁸⁰

Deuteronomy

Scholars have suggested two ways that Deuteronomy is related to 3:7-4:13 which are relevant to this study. First, it may be that Ps 95, as an interpretive text, also alludes to passages in Deuteronomy. Second, the concept of rest in this passage is often traced to Deuteronomy.¹⁸¹ Just as Deuteronomy is a “Second Law,” it is also a second narrative—a “re-presentation” of much of the narrative material from Exodus through Numbers, as

¹⁷⁹ Vanhoye, "Longue marche."

¹⁸⁰ Enns, "Creation," 266.

¹⁸¹ Often overlooking the importance of Exodus 33:14 and the *promise* of rest.

David M. Allen suggests.¹⁸² Therefore, one of the challenges attendant with proposing allusions to Deuteronomy in this section of Hebrews—particularly in direct connection with Ps 95:7-11—is that most of them are what we might call *redundant allusions*; that is, allusions made to a text which itself refers to a prior text. When a text alludes to Deuteronomy where Deuteronomy is alluding to a prior text or event (often Exodus), there is some value in recognizing the redundancy of the allusion. In this case, Ps 95 alludes to what may be Exodus or Numbers, or to Deuteronomy's retellings of those same events.¹⁸³

A possible allusion to Deuteronomy by the psalm, often connected to Vanhoye's work,¹⁸⁴ is Deut 1:34-35, which recounts the divine oath at Kadesh-Barnea (in Numbers) that the exodus generation would not enter the land. It reads in part "...and, being provoked, he swore, saying, "If one of these men shall see this good land which I swore to your fathers!" (Deut 1:34-35). This is a redundant allusion; the phrasing here is similar to Numbers 14 and 32:10, but it also appears to be the most concise rendering of that oath in the Pentateuch, and perhaps is behind the phrasing of Ps 95:11.

Vanhoye suggests another allusion to Deuteronomy in Ps 95:7-11. Deuteronomy 9:23 gives a one-sentence *summary* of the Kadesh-Barnea incident that concludes with the statement “and you did not believe him and you did not listen to his voice.”¹⁸⁵ This, in

¹⁸² Allen, *Deuteronomy* 199-223.

¹⁸³ Perhaps for that reason, the NA28 suggests only one allusion to Deuteronomy in this passage, which is itself is a redundant allusion, the injunction in Deut 6:16 not to put the Lord to the test, “at at Massah” (MT) or “as in the (T)eesting” (τῷ Πιειρασμῷ; LXX). Deuteronomy 33:8, similarly, recalls testing God and “contending at the waters of dispute,” “...ἐλοιδόρησαν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ ὕδατος ἀντιλογίας” LXX.

¹⁸⁴ Vanhoye, “Longue marche.”

¹⁸⁵ Deut 9:23b LXX ... καὶ οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ καὶ οὐκ εἰσηκούσατε τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ.

turn, recalls a similar statement in Num 14:22, “you tested me these ten times and did not listen to my voice,”¹⁸⁶ both of which resonate with the phrase of Ps 95:7 (Heb 3:7, 15; 4:7), “Today, if you hear my voice...” This seems to be another instance of a redundant or composite allusion used by Hebrews.

The most common suggestion of Deuteronomy’s influence in this section of Hebrews, by far, pertains to the concept of rest.¹⁸⁷ As mentioned above, the promise that the LORD would give the people rest is found in Exod 33:14, but there are several instances in Deuteronomy that further develop the concept of rest.¹⁸⁸ In a section that looks back over the battles *en route* to the plains of Moab, Deut 3:20 refers to rest from enemies, for instance. In a passage that begins to offer commands directed at cultic centralization¹⁸⁹ once the land is occupied, Deut 12:9-10 discusses the “rest (*κατάπαυσιν*) and inheritance” God will give and the anticipation that God will give them rest (*καταπαύσει*) from their enemies so they will be able to worship. Deut 25:19 tells the people not to forget to blot out Amalek once they are given rest (*καταπαύση*) from their

¹⁸⁶ Num 14:22b LXX ...ἐπείρασάν με τοῦτο δέκατον καὶ οὐκ εἰσήκουσάν μου τῆς φωνῆς.

¹⁸⁷ It is very rare to find a commentary or article on this passage that does *not* reference Deuteronomy in conjunction with rest in this context, especially Deut 12:9.

¹⁸⁸ Among the most relevant and important treatments of the topic of rest, as it applies here, are: Harold W. Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter that Rest," The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *Harvard Theological Review* 73, no. 1-2 (1980); David Arthur DeSilva, "Entering God's Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews," *Trinity Journal* 21, no. 1 (2000); Laansma, *Rest*, 98; Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest*, SBLDS (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998); Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis. Die Vorstellung vom endzeitl. Ruheort im Hebräerbrief*, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970). While David M. Allen is concerned with the relation of Hebrews and Deuteronomy on a broader scale, his arguments for a Deuteronomic slant on rest in Hebrews is also very relevant Allen, *Deuteronomy; "More Than Just Numbers: Deuteronomic Influence in Hebrews 3:7-4:11,"* *Tyndale Bulletin* 58, no. 1 (2007).

¹⁸⁹ Centralization of the cult in Deuteronomy is widely discussed. For a good overview, see Richard D. Nelson, *Deuteronomy* OTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 145-61.

enemies. The converse of the promises of a place to rest and a time of peace is found in the warning that, if the people are unfaithful, they will have no rest (*ἀναπαύσει*) among the nations (Deut 28:65). Deuteronomy, then, has several instances of rest language which follows on the rest concept originating in Exodus and that are compatible with the kind of rest promised in Ps 95.

As we consider the various sorts of Pentateuchal influences in this section of Hebrews, it is clear that Hebrews and Ps 95 are referring to a broad swath of the narrative of the exodus generation. For that reason, several themes and texts from Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy come into play. Some of those refer back to Exodus directly or as redundant allusions. Of the remainder, most refer to the tragic consequences at Kadesh-Barnea.

Psalm 95 as an Exegetical Text

Hebrews 3-4 has often been called a midrash on Ps 95(94):7-11; my suggestion, however, is that it is preferable to view this as a midrash or exposition on the exodus generation that uses the psalm exegetically. From that perspective, we encounter multiple layers of exegesis in which Ps 95 is an interpretive text that transforms the exodus-wilderness narrative. Psalm 94 LXX transforms the Hebrew text of the psalm in certain ways and Hebrews then interprets and transforms the LXX text (perhaps with the Hebrew also in mind, perhaps not)¹⁹⁰ in its own exposition. Each of these exegetical layers or stages will be treated briefly here to show how they play into Hebrews' exegesis.

¹⁹⁰ As discussed, for example, in the case of Meribah/rebellion.

First exegetical layer: Interpretations and transformations in Ps 95:7-11 (MT)

Psalm 95, like many of the Psalms, interprets the history of Israel in and for a liturgical context. As Boyarin notes, the Psalm itself is a sort of homily.¹⁹¹ While there are numerous ways the Psalm interprets and transforms the Pentateuch in its eleven verses, five interpretive transformations are evident in 95:7-11 that are most relevant to Hebrews' use of the Psalm. First, the psalmist retells the exodus-wilderness narrative in order exhort the congregation to respond properly to God. Verses 1-7a form a call to worship YHWH "before his presence" (v. 2) as savior, creator, king and shepherd. Verses 7b-11 which conclude the psalm, enjoin the worshippers to maintain a proper attitude toward God, not to go the way of the generation that tested and provoked God. Second, the psalm interprets the central problem of the exodus generation as having been hard-hearted and not having listened to the voice of YHWH. Third, by mentioning "Massah" and "Meribah" as it does, Ps 95 creates a geographic narrative frame, of sorts, from the exodus event to the conquest.¹⁹² Fourth, Psalm 95 represents God as having been "angry" with that generation. That anger, due to the testing or rebellion in the wilderness, ultimately led to the oath that they would not enter "my rest."

A fifth interpretive transformation involves "my rest," or פָּנָחַת in Psalm 95:11. The psalm alludes to Num 14:30, the pronouncement by YHWH that the people of the Exodus generation would never enter the land upon their refusal to cross over based on

¹⁹¹ Boyarin, "Prolegomena," 8.

¹⁹² Enns, "Creation," 266.

the spies' reports at Kadesh-Barnea.¹⁹³ In Ps 95:11, "my rest" represents at least "the land on which I swore to establish (כִּי) you," although it also appears to connote peace (or "martial rest"¹⁹⁴). Since the psalm is, of course, a liturgical text, connotations of the Temple as the place of rest for the divine presence have also been suggested (cf. Ps. 132:8; Isa 66:1).¹⁹⁵ The psalm's reference to rest is mainly (a) spatial—"the land" and Temple—and (b) a cessation of conflict; it is not, by most accounts, eschatological.¹⁹⁶ The psalmist's substitution of "rest" for those concepts may have been done for reasons as simple as a needing a short, poetic manner to refer to the land and, perhaps, peace. But, it may also have been intended to expand on what the covenant promise entailed (i.e. land *and* rest *and* temple) in the psalm's concise retelling.

Second exegetical layer: Interpretation and transformation of Ps 95(94) by the LXX

While the Ps 94:7-11 LXX (95 MT) follows the Hebrew text fairly closely, the Greek text does make a few interpretive transformations. First, where Ps 95 MT imported the morally-freighted place names "Massah" (strife) and "Meribah" (rebellion) from Exodus and Numbers, Ps 94 LXX *translates* them, yielding the phrase in v. 8: "as in the

¹⁹³ The allusion is much clearer in the LXX than the MT, but true in both cases. MT Ps 95:11 "Therefore in my anger I swore, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" (Ps 95:11) אָמַרְתִּי בְּאֹרֶה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יְהֻדָּה לְשָׁבֵן

MT Num 14:30 "You shall not enter in to the land which I swore to establish you on it."

אָמַרְתִּי תְּבַאֲוָה אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יְהֻדָּה לְשָׁבֵן

¹⁹⁴ Leonard J. Coppes, "1323 גָּנָח," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999).

¹⁹⁵ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 461. See also Laansma's discussion: Laansma, *Rest*, 98, 124-28, 97-01, 314-16. Also, Hofius, *Katapausis. Die Vorstellung vom endzeitl. Ruheort im Hebräerbrief*, 53-54.

¹⁹⁶ Enns, "Creation," 269; Laansma, *Rest*, 98, 124-28.

rebellion¹⁹⁷ during the day of the testing¹⁹⁸ in the wilderness.” The translation leans toward making sure that the moral and covenant aspects of those events come through,¹⁹⁹ at the possible expense of literary or historical recollection; although it impossible to say to what extent the historical/literary allusion would have been diminished for a Greek-speaking audience familiar with the Pentateuch. Second, the LXX makes a subtle interpretive move in adding the adverb ἀεὶ, “always” or “continuously” in v.10: “For forty years I was angry at that generation and said, ‘they *always* go astray in their heart...’”. The addition of the adverb to the present tense *πλανῶνται* both intensifies the indictment on that generation and implicitly strengthens the exhortation to the audience. The third interpretive move is not in the text of the Psalm itself, but in the superscription. The LXX adds “αῖνος φόδης τῷ Δαυιδ.” While the attribution may seem common enough and potentially inconsequential, Hebrews uses it to make one of its key exegetical points in 4:7; i.e., that the Psalm was spoken “through David, after so long a time” (see below). While we do not know to what extent Hebrews’ author could or would have compared the LXX to the Hebrew text of the Psalm, it is apparent that Hebrews’ author treated the Psalm as a text that had already interpreted the Pentateuch in ways that he could work with for his own ends.

Third exegetical layer: Hebrews’ exegesis using Ps 95:7-11

In its exegesis of the exodus generation, Hebrews uses Ps 95:7-11 in several ways. In some cases, Hebrews adopts and adapts the exegesis the Psalm has already done

¹⁹⁷ Or “provocation” or “embittering”; τῷ παραπικρασμῷ

¹⁹⁸ Or “trial”; τοῦ πειρασμοῦ

¹⁹⁹ Hossfeld, *Psalms* 2, 462; Kraus, "Heb 3,7-4,11," 276-77.

regarding “that generation.” In other cases, Hebrews uses words or phrases from the Psalm to initiate exegetical moves. Hebrews makes only a few minor alterations to the LXX of Ps 95 (in comparison to the versions available to us). While most of these are of little consequence, one or two are significant. The following examples should suffice to demonstrate that Hebrews used the Psalm as an exegetical text in its exposition on the exodus generation rather than as a text to be exegeted for its own sake.

First, in a verbal exegetical move, Hebrews uses the psalm to continue the theme of divine speech and response first featured in 1:1-3:6. The first line of the quotation, “Today, if you hear his voice...” continues and reinforces statements like “In these last days he spoke to us in his Son,” (1:2) and “We must pay much closer attention to what we have heard...for if the word spoken by angels proved valid...” (2:1-2). The Psalm’s reference to “his voice” may, in fact, have been one of Hebrews’ main reasons for choosing that text.²⁰⁰ At the very least, “Today, if you hear his voice...” facilitates a remarkably artful transition from one section to the next as Hebrews uses the Psalm to apply the theme of divine speech from Sinai directly to its own audience, absorbing and extending the Psalms’ call to heed the voice of God.

Hebrews adopts and adapts this prophetic and hortatory section of Ps 95 for its own prophetic and hortatory purposes. Hebrews’ exhortation to its audience is entirely in line with the exhortation the Psalm makes to the congregation of worshippers. These verses that call the people to live a certain way—in contrast to the exodus generation—

²⁰⁰ Pamela M. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, SBLDS (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 90-100.

are the perfect support to what Hebrews began to do in 2:1-4 and will continue to do through chapters 11-12. Psalm 95:7-11 allows Hebrews to shift the focus from paradigmatic comparison of Jesus and Moses to more paraenetic comparison of the Israelites and the audience while maintaining the context of the Sinai and wilderness narrative. An interesting difference between the use of the Psalm text in 3:7-4:13 and the catena in Heb 1, or the exposition involving Psalm 8 and the “Son of Man” in Heb 2, is that in Heb 1-2, the psalms themselves often had little or no direct connections to the Pentateuchal paradigms or themes to which they were juxtaposed. Here, on the other hand, the exegesis is built directly on Ps 95’s own interpretation of the Pentateuchal narrative.

Hebrews signals that it is using Ps 95 exegetically as it makes its dual claims based on the statements that “Again he is setting a certain day—‘today’—speaking through David after so long a time, as has been said before” (4:7) and “For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken about another after that day” (4:8). Hebrews’ clearly diachronic analysis is based on its own understanding that the Pentateuch and Joshua were written long before the Psalm. The Psalm is valuable to Hebrews for explaining what happened to the “promise of rest” (4:1-3, 9) and, having been spoken through the Holy Spirit (3:7), it has enough authority to be able to support the assertion that, even if it *seemed* like the people had entered the “rest” based on Joshua (e.g. Josh 21:44; 22:4), such was not actually the case.

Further, Hebrews adopts and adapts the Psalm’s interpretive conclusions about the wilderness generation, using them in the formation of its own commentary. For

example, Hebrews takes the Psalm's verdict that "that generation" was hard-hearted (3:8/Ps 95:8) and that their hearts were "always wandering" as evidence of a lack of faith (*ἀπιστία*; esp. 3:12; 4:2). Psalm 95 does not discuss faith directly, but Numbers 14:11²⁰¹ and Deut 1:32²⁰² do so in connection with the Kadesh-Barnea incident.

There are two textual differences from the LXX manuscript tradition of Ps 95 that some scholars have suggested were interpretive changes made by Hebrews.²⁰³ The first is the change from "that" (*ἐκείνη*) to "this" (*ταύτη*) generation (3:10), which some commentators consider to be of possible minor significance.²⁰⁴ More important is a change that inserts διὸ and changes the sentence division. Steyn and Enns suggest that Hebrews' rearrangement casts the wilderness period in a more positive (or productive) light, since God was angry for forty years in the psalm, whereas the people saw God's works for forty years and then God was angry for an unspecified period of time in Hebrews' version.

Ps 95:9-10 LXX

οὐ ἐπείρασαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐδοκίμασαν καὶ εἶδοσαν τὰ ἔργα μου τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ἐκείνῃ...
 "...where your fathers tested [me] and tried [me] and saw my works.
Forty years I was angry..."²⁰⁵

Heb 3:9-10

οὐ ἐπείρασαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ καὶ εἶδον τὰ ἔργα μου τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη· διὸ προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ...
 "...where your fathers tested [me] in trying [me] and saw my works [for] forty years. Therefore, I was angry..."

²⁰¹ ... καὶ ἔως τίνος οὐ πιστεύουσίν μοι ἐν πᾶσιν τοῖς σημείοις οἵς ἐποίησα ἐν αὐτοῖς

²⁰² καὶ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ οὐκ ἐνεπιστεύσατε κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ ὑμῶν

²⁰³ Enns, "Interpretation."; Kraus, "Heb 3,7-4,11," 280-83; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 218-20. There are more than two changes, but these are the only two that seem to be potentially significant.

²⁰⁴ Enns, "Interpretation." See also Jobes, "Rhetorical Achievement," esp. 392.

²⁰⁵ My translations.

If that were the case, it would be consistent with Hebrews' perspective on the wilderness period as a time of parental discipline in 12:1-17 (See chapter 6).

The most dramatic exegetical move Hebrews makes based on the Psalm is, of course, its use of the Psalm's phrase "my rest." Boyarin is surely correct in his assessment that Hebrews uses the ambiguity of the phrase τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου to raise two issues that it then resolves exegetically. First, Hebrews seeks to show that there is a "rest" that the audience can hope for. Second, it explains the nature of that rest as something appealing, attainable and comprehensible.

As we have already seen, "rest" is a Pentateuchal concept; the promise of rest originating in Exodus 33:14 as YHWH committed to going with the people into the land, assuring victory and peace. The rest tradition was further developed in Deuteronomy and, by the time the Psalm was composed, it may well have borne connotations of Jerusalem and the Temple as God's place of rest. It may be that the Psalm used the phrase "my rest" simply as a concise representation of the larger complex of ideas associated with rest, i.e. land, peace, divine presence and possibly temple. Hebrews seizes the opportunity provided by the short poetic phrase to transform "rest" into something transcendent, also describing it in terms of a divine Sabbath.

IV. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY IN 3:7-4:14

In Hebrews' hands, the Pentateuch provides the base narrative, Psalm 95 an interpretive slant and Sabbath texts (from Gen or Exod) serve as proof texts for one particular point. The broad narrative of the exodus generation provides the negative example to fuel Hebrews' exhortation: They did not enter because they lacked faith, but

we can assume that someone with faith *would* be able to enter (esp. 4:2-3). Psalm 95:7-11 is an exegetical text that facilitates the transformation of the concept of rest from God's commitment to take the people into the land and be with them (and its Deuteronomic reiterations) to an eschatological mode. Hebrews' reference to Genesis 2:2 (and/or the Exodus Sabbath texts, 20:11; 31:17b), is used simply as a proof text for its transposition of rest from land and peace into the Sabbath key.

This is one of the most broadly thematic passages in Hebrews in the sense that extensive portions of the narrative of the exodus generation come into play; from leaving Egypt, to Massah and Meribah, to the tragic refusal to go into the land at Kadesh-Barnea. Some allusions to Deuteronomy's retellings of the saga of the exodus generation also come into play. The incident at Kadesh-Barnea that tragically disrupted the covenant is also a key event to Hebrews' author.

The use of terms and ideas related to "rest" is highly significant in this passage; rhetorically, textually and theologically. The word "rest" (mainly κατάπαυσις, καταπαύω) in Ps 95 provides an exegetical opportunity for Hebrews' author, but "rest" is also rhetorically significant insofar as it creates a way to relate the exodus generation in the past to the present audience. Hebrews also uses a proof text (or texts) from the Pentateuch (Gen. 2:2 and/or Exod 20:11 and/or Exod 31:17, as discussed above) with reference to the Sabbath to settle an exegetical issue and transform "rest" beyond what the Psalm had already done.

While Deuteronomy's re-presentation of the narrative may have exercised some influence, the *narrative* point-of-view in this passage is not primarily Deuteronomic; that

is, the audience is not envisioned as being on the verge of entering the Promised Land, contrary to some suggestions.²⁰⁶ The parallel in Hebrews' narrative imagination is closer to a Kadesh-Barnea moment²⁰⁷ where entering God's rest is *at stake* and the stark choice is belief versus disbelief, rather than the setting of Deuteronomy and covenant renewal on the plains of Moab.

With the preceding analysis in mind, we return briefly to revisit the proposals from the beginning of this chapter and to locate the scriptural center of gravity in this passage. Is this a midrash or homily on Psalm 95 or the exodus generation? Does the weight of scriptural authority rest on the Psalm or the Pentateuch or on both equally? Is Exodus one generative text among others or the primary generative text in this pericope?

Buchanan, who considers Hebrews as a whole a midrash on Psalm 110, writes that 4:1-13 "is a small midrash by itself, based on Psalm 95:7-11 and supported by Gen 2, Num 14, Deut 31, Josh 22, and a small poem which the author quoted in Heb 4:12-13a to strengthen his argument."²⁰⁸ He also claims that "Ps 95 is itself a midrash on passages from Numbers and Deuteronomy, and the author of Hebrews used all three texts as his sources."²⁰⁹ Buchanan's speculation that Hebrews may have elected to use Ps 95 "as his principal text rather than Num 14 or Deut 1 and 31 may have been his conviction that the

²⁰⁶ Allen, *Deuteronomy* 143-49, 56-95, esp. 68-74, 205, 24-25. Matthew Thiessen writes: "The letter to the Hebrews thus envisions its audience at the very spot that the book of Deuteronomy envisions the people of Israel—at the doorstep of God's promised land of rest." Thiessen, "Hebrews and the End of the Exodus," 369.

²⁰⁷ Persuasively argued by Cockerill, *Epistle*, 173-94. See also Vanhoye, "Longue marche." Attridge, "Let Us Strive," 120; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 87.

²⁰⁸ Buchanan, *Book of Hebrews*, 157.

²⁰⁹ *Book of Hebrews*, 137.

law had been superseded...”²¹⁰ speaks to the greater concern of this study. This is not far removed from Kistemaker’s notion that Hebrews “applies passages out of Moses to supplement prophesies about the Messiah” since Jesus occupied the place that the Torah had previously in Judaism.²¹¹ Both of these perceive a profound shift in the locus of scriptural authority to have occurred, from the Pentateuch to the P&W.

What I have tried to demonstrate is that viewing this section as an exposition (or a midrash) on the wilderness generation that uses Ps 95 exegetically is more reflective of what Hebrews is doing here than seeing it as the exegesis *of* the psalm. This is not merely a matter of semantics or of splitting hairs when viewed in light of the above statements. Hebrews’ main goal is to inspire faith and the rejection of *apistia*, a tension which is not drawn from the psalm but from Hebrews’ own interpretation of the story of the exodus generation. Hebrews uses Ps 95, its vocabulary, themes and puzzles, as an entry point into a new stage of its call to a better response to divine revelation than was seen in the exodus generation. The most critical paraenetic point—faith vs. disbelief—is perhaps inferred from the psalm but is developed mainly from further allusions to the Pentateuch (e.g. 3:18-19).²¹²

My view is that the generative element here is the exodus generation narrative—which originates in the Book of Exodus and then extends beyond it. The first section of

²¹⁰ *Book of Hebrews*, 157. He continues, “another may have been the fact that he believed David wrote the Psalm and that his late authorship would dispel all arguments to the effect that the promise had already been received.”

²¹¹ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 91.

²¹² The key contrast that divides the passage roughly in half is that of choosing the way of unbelief (*ἀπιστία*; 3:12, 19) or turning from God (*ἀφίστημι*; 3:12, cf. 4:1-2) versus the way of belief (*πίστις*; 4:2), which the author makes urgent through the repeated use of “today” (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).

Hebrews (1:1-3:6) was concerned with demonstrating Jesus' authority to speak for God, which it accomplished through the use of paradigms from Exodus (angels as agents of revelation, deliverance, Moses as prophet-leader). There we saw the concern that the present audience not respond as the exodus generation had in the past (2:1-4). Here the people of that generation who turned away at Kadesh-Barnea never to experience God's rest—a concept that ran from Exodus 33:14 to Joshua and beyond—continue to stand as the example to reject.

The passages we will examine in the next several chapters of Hebrews will show further uses of Exodus as a generative Pentateuchal text. While influences of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy can all be discerned in this passage, we will see that there is nothing in this passage that runs counter to that the idea that this exposition in 3:7-4:14 is based thematically on Exodus, the exodus period and the wilderness generation. Rather, in the context of a larger work based on Exodus (as I argue Hebrews is), this as a continuation of the thematic basis of the previous chapters, which will become much more specific to Exodus beginning in the next passage.

CHAPTER FOUR: PERPETUAL PRIESTHOODS (HEB 4:14-7:28)

Hebrews began to present Jesus as a priest within its first few verses and signaled the importance of his priestly role in Heb 1-3. Its main argument that Jesus is a priest—a “great high priest”—spans more than three chapters of the central section of the epistle (4:14-7:28). Hebrews’ claim and defense of Jesus’ priesthood is its most distinctive feature within the NT canon, and its most important theological innovation.¹ In the context of this study the interest lies, first and foremost, in how Hebrews makes its argument using the Scriptures. By all accounts, Ps 110(109):4 plays an essential role, much as Ps 95:7-11 did in the previous section. Psalm 110:4 is another divine oath (like Ps 95:11),² often referred to as an oracle featuring divine speech as it does: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’”³ In this section, Hebrews juxtaposes Ps 110:4 with several aspects of Aaron’s priesthood, mainly from Exodus, to demonstrate the legitimacy and effectiveness of Jesus’ priesthood in relation to the paradigm of Aaron.

As discussed in relation to prior passages, assumptions about Hebrews’ perceptions of the nature of the Scriptures influence one’s analysis of Hebrews’ exegesis.

¹ In support, see the lexical evidence presented by Gheorghita, "He Spoke," 178.

² Ps 95:11a: “I swore in My anger...”

³ For example, Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, 109-19; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 199; Cockerill, *Epistle*, 238; Kurianal, *Jesus; Albert Vanhoye, Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Subsidia Biblica (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto biblico, 1989), 61.

Interpretation of the logic and significance of Hebrews' argument for Jesus' priesthood is greatly affected by answers to the following sorts of questions: Do Hebrews' author and audience view the Torah as a relic—as having been superseded by the authority of the Psalms and/or Prophets—or as authoritative? Does the weight of Hebrews' argument rest on the authority of Ps 110:4 as a divine oracle about Jesus? Does the narrative of Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 provide the main scriptural authority for Hebrews' argument? And, if Hebrews has so far described Jesus in relation to paradigms originating in the text of Exodus, does it continue to do so here, or go in a new direction?

As we have seen thus far, Hebrews begins by juxtaposing texts from the Prophets and Writings to compare Jesus favorably (a) to the angels at Sinai and (b) to Moses as familiar paradigms from the Pentateuch in the first section (Heb 1:1-3:6). Then, in the second section (3:1-4:13), the Exodus generation is presented as a negative example using Ps 95:7-11 as an exegetical text, with the built-in interpretive stance Ps 95 serving as a springboard for Hebrews' exegesis.

The next section (4:14-7:28)⁴ has often been referred to as a midrash on Psalm 110:4. Portions of the psalm are cited or alluded to half a dozen times within the pericope.⁵ Similar to the previous section, Hebrews uses several segments of Psalm 110:4 in a series of shorter arguments that combine to claim Jesus is the great high priest of the New Covenant and that he serves as a better high priest than Aaron and his descendants.

⁴ See additional comments on structure in the passage overview, below. Although one does not find universal agreement on the structure in this section, this is one of the *least* contentious sections in that regard. Many scholars recognize similar boundaries within a few verses on either end and are usually not greatly at odds with one another.

⁵ Citations or allusion to Ps 110:4 are found in Heb 5:6; 6:20; 7:11, 17, 21, 28.

While scholars often view this section as an exposition of Ps 110:4, other passages from the Jewish Scriptures have been identified as base, or generative, texts as well. Allusions to Ps 2:7 and/or 110:1 can be detected in both 4:14-16 and 7:26-28 (framing the passage), and Ps 2:7 is cited in 5:6. The short section dealing with God's oath to Abraham in 6:13-20 is often considered an exposition on Genesis 22:16-17 (cited in 6:14). Hebrews 7 begins with a clear and substantial reference to Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek narrated in Genesis 14:17-20, causing some scholars to describe 7:1-10 or 7:1-28 as an exposition based on Gen 14.

When viewed from the perspective of the priority of the Pentateuch and the exegetical role of Prophets and Writings (P&W), this section is best read as an exposition with Aaron's (or the Levitical) priesthood that uses Psalm 110:4 as its main exegetical text. Hebrews sets about legitimating Jesus' priesthood in light of the paradigm of Aaron's priesthood, using words and phrases from Psalm 110:4 to create a dialogical exegetical argument. While scholars recognize that Hebrews is interacting with the figure of Aaron and the institution of the Aaronide priesthood, they frequently overlook the role of Exodus as the generative text. Aaron's call, ordination and the inception of the Levitical priesthood are all found in the Sinai pericope of Exodus (esp. chs. 28-30); those are a few examples that we will examine in this chapter.

The focus of this chapter is on examining the functions of the texts from the Psalms, Genesis and Exodus in relation to each other within the argument for Christ as "great high priest." Following an overview of the basic flow of the passage, several perspectives of other scholars on how the texts function is discussed. Then, Hebrews'

exegesis in 4:14-7:28 is analyzed with an emphasis on the priority of the Pentateuch and the exegetical role of texts from the P&W.

I. PASSAGE OVERVIEW

4:14-7:28 in Context

Priestly references to Jesus are evident in Hebrews from the first few verses of the book onward. After stating that Jesus had made purification from sins in 1:3, he is described as being crowned “with glory and honor” reminiscent of the high priest’s headpiece⁶ (2:7-9), being sanctified (2:11), having made atonement for his people (2:17) and as “high priest”⁷ in 2:17 and 3:1. The overall argument describes Jesus as a more authoritative messenger than the angels (1:1-2:9) and a leader and deliverer with greater authority over God’s family, or “house,” than Moses. Having compared Jesus with Moses, Hebrews warns its audience not to follow the disastrous example of the exodus generation’s hard hearts and lack of faith in 3:7-4:13.

Many have highlighted parallels between 4:14-16 and 10:19-23,⁸ occasionally describing them an *inclusio* delimiting the major central section of Hebrews that deals with the priesthood and cult in relation to Jesus and the New Covenant.⁹ Guthrie notes, in

⁶ Cf. Exod 28:2, 20

⁷ As ἀρχιερεὺς. Note that Aaron is described as ἀρχιερεύς in Josh 22:13 and 24:33 LXX.

⁸ Parallels include mention of Jesus as a great [high] priest, language of approach/drawing near, passing through the heavens or sanctuary, and exhortations to hold fast to hope. See Guthrie’ analysis *Structure*, 73, 79-81. Westfall’s discussion is informative: *Discourse Analysis*, 141, 230-41. She draws a similar conclusion, with some adjustments.

⁹ Guthrie, *Structure*, 73, 79-81.

addition, that statements related to the appointment (*καθίστημι*) to the office of high priest in 5:1-3 and 7:26-28 also mark off 4:14-7:28 within that larger unit.¹⁰

Parallels between 4:14-16 and 10:19-23

4:14-16

Therefore, having a great high priest
who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son
of God,

let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, having been tempted in everything, as we are, [yet] without sin. Therefore, let us approach with boldness to the throne of grace in order that we receive mercy and grace, to find timely help.

10:19-23

Therefore, brothers and sisters,
having boldness to enter into the sanctuary by means of [Jesus'] blood, which inaugurated for us a new and living way through the curtain (which is his flesh), and a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts having been sprinkled [to purify them] from an evil conscience and our bodies having been washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to our confession of hope without wavering, for faithful is the one who made the promise.

Parallels between 5:1-3 and 7:26-28

5:1-3

For every high priest is taken from among people on behalf of people, appointed to the things of God, in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins, being able to deal gently with the ignorant and those who have gone astray, since he himself is clothed in weakness. And because of this, he must make offerings for sin on behalf of the people and himself.

7:26-28

For us to have such a high priest is fitting, [one who is] holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and high above the heavens. He has no need, as did those high priests, to offer up sacrifices daily, first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the Law appoints people as high priests who have weakness, but the word of the oath, after the Law, [appointed] a son made perfect forever.

While the theme of the priesthood does run from 4:14 through most of Heb 10, there are two sections of the argument within that span, each based on different exegetical texts and underlying themes (4:14-7:28 and 8:1-10:18). The key elements of 4:14-7:28 are Aaron's priesthood and Psalm 110:4 as the exegetical text, with support

¹⁰ *Structure*, 73, 82.

from Genesis. Hebrews 8-10 will turn to the earthly tabernacle (Exod 28:40), cult and covenant (Exod 24:8), relating them to Jeremiah 31:31-34 as an exegetical text which speaks of the New Covenant connected with the heavenly sanctuary of Ps 110:1.

Although priesthood is an integral theme in both sections, Hebrews' use of different sets of texts makes it preferable to treat 4:14-7:28 and 8:1-10:18 as separate, albeit closely-related, sections.

Passage Summary

Dividing 4:14-7:28 into five units is efficient for this analysis; though it should be noted that one of the units (5:11-6:12) is generally seen as a paraenetic excursus which does not figure greatly in the larger priesthood argument (and thus receives scant attention below). The first unit, 4:14-5:10, transitions from prior sections, touching on themes from the previous passages (e.g. Jesus as high priest, passing through the heavens, sympathy, temptation, and perseverance; all in 4:14-16) before turning to show that Aaron and Jesus were both called from among the people by God to be high priests and represent the people before God. Hebrews alludes to the appointment of Aaron and his sons from Exod 28:1 and other Pentateuchal material related to priesthood. Two consecutive citations of Ps 2:7 (“You are my son...”) and Ps 110:4 (“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek”) in 5:5-6 are suggestive of a royal priesthood. Language reminiscent of the Psalms flavors 5:7-10, pointing to the intercessory nature of the priestly role.¹¹ The second unit, 5:11-6:12, is a paraenetic unit

¹¹ Taking into account the many and varied proposals as to which Psalm texts (or other texts) Hebrews alludes to or echoes in 5:7-10, esp. 5:7-8, it seems best to characterize it as a pastiche of Psalmic language, possibly attributable to Pss 22, 116, 69, and even 31, 39, 42, 43. Schröger's pointing to Ps 116 has much to commend it (*Der Verfasser des Hebräerbriefes als Schriftausleger* (Regensburg: Friedrich

that strengthens Hebrews' general exhortation and urges the audience to be faithful and to give careful consideration to the complex teaching they are about to receive.

The central feature of the third unit (6:13-20) is the citation and explication of the "oath" of Genesis 22:16-17, "By myself I have sworn...I will surely bless you and multiply you..." (6:14). The trustworthiness of the oath is the main point, which Hebrews connects to the oath that Jesus would be "a priest forever according the order of Melchizedek" of Ps 110:4 (6:20). The trustworthiness of divine oaths assures the audience of the validity of Christ's priesthood. It also sets up an argument related to the value of being appointed by an oath in 7:11-28.

The fourth unit, 7:1-10, is the section most often characterized as a "midrash on Ps 110:4."¹² It recalls the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek (obviously sparked by the reference to Melchizedek in Ps 110:4) by presenting a condensed, somewhat rearranged, paraphrase of Gen 14:17-24 that retains essential vocabulary from the Genesis text for exegetical purposes.

The fifth and final unit, 7:11-28, uses segments of Ps 110:4 to roll out a series of short arguments on track laid down by the previous units. These arguments deal (1) with the relationship of the Law to the priesthood, (2) with the fact that Jesus' non-Levite genealogy did not qualify him to be a high priest according to the Law of Moses, and (3) with the implications of the divine oath and Jesus' immortal nature for his priesthood. It

Pustet, 1968), Thesis/dissertation (deg), 120-27.) and Carlos Zesati Estrada offers perhaps the most comprehensive study of the issue: *Hebreos 5, 7-8: Estudio Historico-Exegetico* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1990). Since the reference is so difficult to determine and has minimal bearing on the overall argument, this particular use of the Psalms will not be treated in detail.

¹² Including Windisch, Spicq, Kistemaker, Caird, Hay, and Ellingworth among others, as discussed below.

concludes with allusions to Ps. 2:7 and Ps 110:1 (in 7:26-8:2) signaling an end to the argument for Jesus' legitimacy as great high priest.

II. PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN 4:14-7:28

Perspectives on Hebrews' use of scripture in this argument for Jesus' priesthood tend to fall into two main groups. Most consider a psalm or psalms (110:4, 110:1, 2:7) to be the primary text(s). A minority see Genesis 14 as the primary text (esp. in Heb 7.). Because the proposals that treat psalms as the primary texts are far more common, we begin there.

Exposition(s) based on Ps 110(109 LXX)

Although Guthrie and others have made a strong case for seeing both Heb 5-7 and 5-10¹³ as coherent sections, with 5-7 as a unit within 5-10; few treat 4:14 to 7:28 (or Heb 5-7) as a continuous exposition, despite the fact that the theme of the priesthood dominates the section. The predominant approach to Heb 7, in particular, has been to treat it as a midrash or exposition on Ps 110:4. Heb 7:1-28 is most often treated as a unit, part or all of which is described as exegesis of Ps 110:4. Windisch sees Hebrews as interpreting Ps 110:4 on the basis of Genesis 14.¹⁴ Spicq treats 7:1-10 and 7:11-28 as two expositions to a certain extent, the first on Genesis 14 and the second on Ps 110:4,¹⁵ yet he concludes that “Tout le chapitre VII n'est pas autre chose qu'une exégèse du *Ps. CX*,

¹³ The precise boundaries of the larger unit are debated, but seeing high-level unity from about the beginning of chapter 5 (4:14 or 5:1) to the middle or late sections of chapter 10 (usually 10:19 or 10:23) would be acceptable to most commentators. See discussion above in the passage overview.

¹⁴ Hans Windisch, *Der Hebraerbrief* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1913), 59.

¹⁵ Spicq, *L'Epître*, I, 2.179-80.

4.”¹⁶ Caird considers a substantial section of Hebrews to be an exposition dealing with Christ, Aaron and Melchizedek.¹⁷ While not making a specific section delineation (perhaps 5:1-7:28), Caird is very clear that, in his view, Hebrews is “concerned solely with the exegesis of Ps. 110” in that section and that Genesis 14 (in 7:1-10) is a supporting text.¹⁸ Kistemaker also highlighted the influence of Ps 110:4 and considered “the exegesis of Ps 110:4” to be given in Heb 7.¹⁹ Sowers called Heb 7 “a *midrash* on Ps. 110.4”²⁰ and quite a number of others consider 7:1-28 either a midrash or an exposition on Ps 110:4.²¹ Ellingworth suggests that “Gn. 14:17-20 is introduced and explained after the fashion of a rabbinic ‘enriching text’ subordinate to Ps. 110:4...”²² David Hay describes the analysis of many, though more elegantly than most, as he writes:

The main intent of Heb 7 is to show that Jesus’ priestly office is genuine and superior to that of the Levites. The two points are argued largely on the basis of Ps 110.4. The psalm verse has a dominant place in the thought of 7.11-25, but it

¹⁶ *L'Epitre*, I, 2.205.

¹⁷ Caird, "Exegetical Method," 48-49.

¹⁸ In context: “It is important to recognize that throughout his treatment of Melchizedek our author is concerned solely with the exegesis of Ps. 110. He carries us back to the story of Genesis 14 not to compose a fanciful and allegorical midrash on that chapter after the manner of Philo, but rather because he wishes to answer the very modern question: “What did the words ‘priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek’ mean to the psalmist who wrote them?” He clearly believed...that the Psalm was a messianic prophecy and that the Psalmist, feeling the need of a new priesthood to mediate between God and man, found the prototype of that priesthood in the shadowy figure of Melchizedek ...” “Exegetical Method,” 48.

¹⁹ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 118.

²⁰ Sidney G. Sowers, *The Hermeneutics of Philo and Hebrews: A Comparison of the Interpretation of the Old Testament in Philo Judaeus and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Basel Studies of Theology (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965), 123.

²¹ Examples referring to Heb 7 as either a *midrash* or exposition primarily on Ps 110:4: Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 117-18; *Book of Hebrews*, 212-13; Gareth Lee Cockerill, “The Melchizedek Christology in Heb. 7:1-28” (Union Theological Seminary, 1976), 18; David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews”*, vol. 47 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 106-07; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 187; Kurianal, *Jesus*, 215-34; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 159, 77; Compton, *Psalm 110*, 66-97; Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 256.

²² Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 350.

also appears at the end of the chapter and it glitters behind the fabric of 7.1-10, verses depending more consciously on Gen 14.18-20²³

Although many scholars see Ps 110:4 as the generative text of Heb 5-7, their conclusions about its significance vary widely. The following examples illustrate the diverse conclusions reached by those who have prioritized the text of Ps 110:4 in the interpretation of the passage.

Simon Kistemaker

Kistemaker generally accentuates the prophetic nature of the Psalms in Hebrews.²⁴ He assumes that the audience is more aligned with the Law and must be instructed regarding the prophetic implications of the Scriptures as applied to Jesus. Hebrews makes portions of its argument “in terms acceptable to those readers whose minds were thinking only in terms of Mosaic law,”²⁵ while he also sees Hebrews as communicating the priesthood of Christ as it reveals “a disannulation of the Law.”²⁶ Consistent with his emphasis on the prophetic nature of the Scriptures, he also sees the Genesis passage on Melchizedek (Heb 7:1-3) as prophetic, maintaining that “In Gen. 14:18ff., the author finds an allusion to Christ, which he understands as a messianic

²³ David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 146.

²⁴ For example, Kistemaker’s description of the audience and the importance of prophecy in the scriptures: “The recipients of the Epistle had lived, even though they had heard the Gospel, in the same spiritual lethargy as their fathers and forefathers (5:12). Their knowledge and insight of the OT Scriptures had not been stimulated and augmented by the preaching of the Gospel (6:1,2). They had failed to see in Jesus various aspects which he had fulfilled in OT prophecies. Although the Gospels related that Jesus had applied Ps. 110 to himself (Mt. 22:44 par.), they had never devoted any attention to the words recorded in the fourth verse of [Psalm 110].” *Psalm Citations*, 117.

²⁵ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 119.

²⁶ See “disannulling” in Heb 7:18 KJV.

prophecy.”²⁷ Kistemaker sees part of Hebrews’ task as moving the Law aside and changing the scriptural paradigm of the audience.

George Wesley Buchanan

Buchanan’s perspective on the use of scripture in this section contrasts somewhat with Kistemaker’s. Buchanan sees Hebrews’ posture such that the later Scriptures consistently supersede the Pentateuch. Rather than imagining an audience that maintained a high view of the Law, Buchanan reads Hebrews’ argument with the idea of a shared assumption between the author and audience that the Psalms—especially Ps 110—were regarded as prophetic *and* that they were perceived as more authoritative than the Pentateuch, effectively replacing or subordinating it. Concerning 7:20-28, he declares:

The author’s use of scripture here shows that he gave more credence to the Psalms than the Pentateuch. This may be because the prophets and the Psalmists contained more material suitable for his eschatological purposes, or it may be that he related the Pentateuch typologically with the old contract that had been superseded.²⁸

And, in the context of Hebrews’ description of Jesus as the guarantor of an even greater covenant (7:22), he writes, “Note the care with which the author used the terms taken from Ps 110 and Exod 28 and 29. He employed them in ways that would *qualify* Jesus and *disqualify* the sons of Aaron.”²⁹ In the conclusion to his comments on chapter 7, Buchanan stresses that Jesus was seen as superior to any aspect of the Mosaic covenant, “and this proof was presented on the basis of Ps 110 around which the whole document

²⁷ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 120.

²⁸ Buchanan, *Book of Hebrews*, 241.

²⁹ *Book of Hebrews*, 235. *Emphasis added.*

(1:1-12:29) was oriented.” For Buchanan, Hebrews’ hermeneutic is far less dialogical than it is supersessionist and Ps 110 is the most important, authoritative text in the book.

James Kurianal

In the most extensive study on the role of Ps 110:4 within Hebrews in the last several decades,³⁰ James Kurianal argues for the unity of Heb 5:1-7:28 and the role of Ps 110:4 as the “substructure” of the pericope,³¹ referring to 7:1-25 consistently as a “midrash on Ps 110:4.”³² The psalm verse is seen as an oracle with Heb 7 doing exegesis of each phrase of the verse: the name of Melchizedek (7:1-10), “a priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:11-19) and a priest “forever” (7:20-25).

As Kurianal compares Hebrews’ exegetical method to Philo and to Melchizedek material in the DSS, he determines that Hebrews’ methods are largely distinct from those traditions in its perspective and exegetical technique, although it shares some midrashic characteristics deemed to have been widespread in ancient Judaism with sources from Qumran. He concludes that “The Messianism as present in Hebrews and its eschatological perspective makes Hebrews as a whole and the midrash on Ps 110, 4 in particular, different from [Philo and the Qumran sources].”³³ Hebrews 7 is seen as an

³⁰ Kurianal, *Jesus*.

³¹ *Jesus*. On Ps 110:4 as the central text of the passage, see pp. 12-13. References to the exposition in Heb 7 as midrash are plentiful, but see pp. 15-16, 27, 85ff. For the structural argument and cohesion of 5:1-7:28, see especially pp. 235-261.

³² Kurianal’s definitional statement: “Midrashim are Scriptural explanations. One important characteristic of the midrashim is the actualizing of the Scriptural text, that is, explaining the relevance and meaning of the Scriptural text in the context of the addressees” (p. 27); citing LeDeaut, E. E. Ellis and R. Bloch. While there are passing references to a “midrash on Gen 14, 7-20” (e.g. on p. 137), that is clearly embedded within the larger unit of the “midrash on Ps 110:4” that comprises 7:1-25; 7:1-10 is by no means seen as an independent unit.

³³ Kurianal, *Jesus*, 197.

explanation of Ps 110:4 as a messianic oracle from the standpoint of realized eschatology (unlike Philo or writers at Qumran), which demonstrates the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. Kurianal perceives a complete contrast between Jesus and Aaron in his analysis of 5:1-10, where he does not consider Jesus to be included in the statement "every high priest taken from among men"; indeed, he does not see Hebrews as motivated to demonstrate any similarity between the priesthoods of Jesus and Aaron at all.³⁴ Kurianal's analysis of Hebrews' exegetical technique does not differentiate between the divisions of the Scriptures, emphasizing instead that the value of Hebrews' scriptural sources (e.g., Gen 14 and Ps 110:4) comes from them being "spoken by God."³⁵

Jared Compton

In *Psalm 110 and the Logic of Hebrews*, Jared Compton identifies Ps 110 as the principal generative text for Hebrews as a whole; a text which is, above all, messianic. To put his perspectives on the use of Ps 110 in Heb 5-7 in context, the following is Compton's summary of his overall argument:

The author uses [Ps 110] in the first part of his exposition to (1) interpret Jesus' resurrection as his messianic enthronement, (2) connect Jesus' enthronement with his fulfillment of Psalm 8's vision for humanity and, thus, (3) begin to explain *why* Jesus was enthroned through suffering (1:5-2:18...). In the second and third parts of the exposition, the author uses [Ps 110] to corroborate the narrative initially sketched. Thus, he uses the text to (1) show that messiah was expected to be a superior priest and, moreover, (2) show that this messianic priest was expected to solve the human problem through death (5:1-7:28; 8:1-10:18...).³⁶

³⁴ See Cockerill's brief critique of Kurianal in that respect; *Epistle*, 229 n 1.

³⁵ *Jesus*, 97.

³⁶ Compton, *Psalm 110*, 12.

From Compton's perspective, if the audience is willing to accept Jesus as the enthroned messiah of Ps 110:1, they may then be willing then to accept him as the eternal messianic high priest anticipated in Ps 110:4. As an eternal (Melchizedekian) high priest, Jesus is a more effective priest than the Levitical priests, "able to solve humanity's problem, to restore the vision of Psalm 8."³⁷ Compton sees Hebrews using Ps 110:1 and Ps 2:7 in conjunction with Ps 110:4 as it constructs its messianic argument.³⁸ The influence of Gen 14:17-21 and Melchizedek is limited to the establishment of the permanence—and therefore superiority—of Jesus as messianic high priest in Heb 7:1-10.³⁹ For Compton, Heb 5-7 is an exposition on Ps 110:4 embedded within Hebrews' larger exposition related to Jesus as the messianic high priest based on Ps 110:1 and 4.

Gareth Cockerill

Responding in part to Joseph Fitzmyer, who describes Hebrews 7 as a midrash on Gen 14:18-20 (see below), Gareth Cockerill argues that "The exegesis in Heb. 7:1-28 is midrashic in character, but Ps. 110:4 not Gen. 14:18-20, is the dominant text."⁴⁰ With all of 4:14-7:28 in view, Cockerill places significant emphasis on the fact that Hebrews both compares and contrasts Jesus to Aaron as high priests (in stark contrast to Kurianal).⁴¹ The author of Hebrews "carefully shapes his account of the OT high priest in order to show how that priesthood prefigures the Son's high priestly ministry,"⁴² according to

³⁷ *Psalm 110*, 96-97. The problem of Ps 8 is the fallen nature of humanity.

³⁸ *Psalm 110*, 70-71.

³⁹ *Psalm 110*, 84-85.

⁴⁰ Cockerill, "Melchizedek Christology," 18.

⁴¹ See esp. *Epistle*, 229-51.

⁴² *Epistle*, 230.

Cockerill. The climactic exposition of Ps 110:4 in Heb 7 “shows how this psalm provides divine/Scriptural substantiation for the superiority of Christ’s high priesthood,” and supports a priestly understanding of the phrase “sit at my right hand,” from Ps 110:1.⁴³ Cockerill’s view of the interrelationship of the texts is apparent as he writes, “By demonstrating the superiority of Melchizedek, Gen 14:14-27 supports the witness of Ps 110:4 to the superiority of the Priest Melchizedek foreshadows...”⁴⁴ Cockerill’s interpretation emphasizes Hebrews’ typological use of Melchizedek and its scriptural argumentation, with Ps 110:4 viewed as prophetic. Genesis 14 and the Law are generally read as prefiguring Jesus and the cult of the New Covenant.

All of the examples above see Ps 110:4 as the primary text upon which the exposition of Heb 7:1-28 is based, in one way or another, prioritizing the interpretive significance of the psalm over the role of the Pentateuch. Psalm 110:4 is viewed as a prophetic oracle by most, but the prophetic aspect holds greater or lesser degrees of importance in their analyses. Genesis 14:17-20 (Heb 7:1-3) is consistently seen as a subordinate text, not the basis of the argument in Heb 7. Some of these analyses minimize or eliminate *positive* comparisons between the priesthoods of Jesus/Melchizedek and Aaron/the Levitical priests; Cockerill, however, is a notable exception to that. In most cases here, and generally, despite Aaron’s high profile in the passage, the role of Exodus as a generative text is scarcely discussed.

⁴³ *Epistle*, 293.

⁴⁴ *Epistle*, 296.

Exposition on Genesis 14

A fair number of scholars treat Heb 7 as a pair of expositions, the first on Genesis 14, the second on Ps 110:4,⁴⁵ while others place a greater emphasis on the role of Genesis 14. Renée Bloch was one of the main precursors to the latter view in his description of Hebrews as a NT example of midrash (the literary genre) noting, “Particulièrement caractéristique est à cet égard la grand midrash sur Melchisédech” in Heb 7.⁴⁶ Two of the more prominent studies that designate Genesis 14 as the main text of Heb 7 are those by Joseph Fitzmyer⁴⁷ and Theo de Kruijf.⁴⁸ The function of Genesis 14 will be important to

⁴⁵ Notable examples include Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, 125-37; James W. Thompson, *Hebrews*, Paideia (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); "Conceptual Background and Purpose of the Midrash in Hebrews 7," *Novum Testamentum* 19, no. 3 (1977); Erich Gräber, *An die Hebräer, Hebr 7,1-10,18*, vol. 2, EKKNT (Zürich: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993), 8-35; Schröger, *Verfasser*, 156-59.

Spicq and Lane treat 7:1-10 and 7:11-28 as separate exegetical sections at first, but consider them to be based mainly on Ps 110:4, ultimately. Lane writes “7:1-10 provides an interpretation of Gen 14:17-20, and 7:11-28 directs attention to each phrase of Ps 110:4,” (p. 159) but also “...the dominant text is Ps 110:4, not Gen 14:18-20. In 7:1-10, Ps 110:4 is interpreted on the basis of Gen 14:17-20, but Genesis plays no role in the second half of the chapter.” (p. 177), *Hebrews 1-8*.

⁴⁶ Bloch, "Midrash," 1279.

⁴⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Now this Melchizedek' (Heb 7:1)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1963)., republished as "Now this Melchizedek' (Heb 7:1)," in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: G. Chapman, 1971). Page numbers below are from the 1971 version.

⁴⁸ In “The Priest-King Melchizedek: The Reception of Gen 14,18-20 in Hebrews Mediated by Psalm 110,” de Kruijf explores the “stream of tradition that flowed, mostly underground, from Gen 14 to Hebrews and beyond,” (p. 393) briefly considering the possibility that the Genesis account of Melchizedek that seems to appear out of nowhere could have been a late addition—perhaps even postdating Ps 110—but concluding that first century readers would have, in any case, read Genesis as the older text (pp. 395-397). He suggests that the emphasis of the exegesis “is not on the superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham and Levi, but on the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood to that of Aaron.” As an exposition based on Gen 14 which is read together with Ps 110:4, de Kruijf sees the main exegetical points being the establishment of the connection between Jesus and Melchizedek and the ranking of Melchizedek over Abraham (and hence their respective priesthoods). In his consideration of the stream of traditions related to Melchizedek (including those found at Qumran and in other ancient traditions) he concludes that Hebrews 7 is a rare clarifying case in which both Genesis 14 and Ps 110 are evident, and the psalm mediates the interpretation of Genesis. De Kruijf’s conclusion is interesting and worth including here from the standpoint of the interrelationship of the texts: “In this case our large scale map should look somewhat like this: We find a tradition of an enigmatic figure, Melchizedek. Its origin is unknown but it has become connected with Jerusalem. We find this figure in two text fragments, Gen 14,18-20 and Ps 110,4, but we do not know if and in what way these texts are related to the original tradition or to each other. Much later the

the eventual determination of the scriptural center of gravity of this passage at the end of the chapter. Fitzmyers' study is the best representative for our purposes.

Fitzmyer asserts that "the detailed comparison of Christ and Melchizedek in Heb 7 is an excellent example of a midrash on Gn 14:18-20."⁴⁹ His basis for this is mainly the idea that the point of departure for the "midrash" is 7:1-3 where the Gen 14:18-20 is "implicitly quoted" and then analyzed and adapted to the contemporary situation in the course of its homiletic development.⁵⁰ This view, he claims, "...is certainly a more valid analysis than Spicq's view that the entire chapter 7 is nothing more than an exegesis of Ps 110:4...".⁵¹ Fitzmyer proposes that the midrash first features the etymological treatment of "Melchizedek" (which, in his estimation, actually contributes little to the argument)⁵² followed by three main elements of the midrash: (1) Melchizedek's lack of genealogy, (2) the receiving of tithes and (3) the blessing. Phrases from Ps 110:4 are introduced into the midrash beginning at 7:11, which reinforces existing messianic interpretations of Gen 14 and allows for the exploitation of the notion of the reference to "the likeness" of Melchizedek in Ps 110:4.⁵³ While Fitzmyer does not explicitly assess Gen 14 as the base

figure appears, however briefly, in several different contexts, but the connection with the two original text fragments is tenuous at best, except in one case: the Epistle to the Hebrews. There the figure of Melchizedek is once more firmly anchored in the text of Genesis and the interpretation of the author shows that it is mediated by the other text, Psalm 110." "Priest-King," 403-04.

⁴⁹ "Melchizedek [1971]," 221-22.

⁵⁰ "Melchizedek [1971]," 222. Fitzmyer cites Bloch's definition of midrash (Bloch, "Midrash," 1265-67.) in so doing, and briefly compares formal characteristics of Heb 7 to Gen Rabbah 43:6 and 4QFlor.

⁵¹ Fitzmyer, "Melchizedek [1971]," 221-22.

⁵² "Melchizedek [1971]," 229.

⁵³ "Melchizedek [1971]," 223-27.

text because it is from the Pentateuch, he does treat Ps 110:4 as an interpretive text in relationship to Gen 14.

Additional Perspectives

Two other perspectives round out the selected examples of text-based analyses of 4:14-7:28. Gabriella Gelardini identifies Ps 110:4 as an important text for 7:1-28, but Heb 7 and most of the priesthood argument are seen as part of the larger topic of the New Covenant for which Exod 32 and Jer 31 are the main generative texts.⁵⁴ Craig Koester's analysis suggests that Hebrews interprets Gen 14 by means of Ps 110, not prioritizing either text over the other.

Gabriella Gelardini

Gelardini's text-based structure of Hebrews considers 4:14-6:20 to be a continuation of the previous section involving Ps 95 and Num 13-14; then, 7:1-28 begins a new section, *Neuer Bund und Kultinstitution*, that runs through 10:18. From her perspective, the Pentateuchal base text for that larger pericope, and the homily as a whole, is Exod 32, or possibly 32-34 (golden calf and covenant renewal), and the *haftarah* for the homily as a whole is Jeremiah 31:31-34 (new covenant).⁵⁵ Gelardini sees 7:1-28 as an exposition on the *Neuer Hohepriester*, with Ps 110(109):4 as the text that evokes Melchizedek. She does not discuss the role of that text from the psalm in great detail, however, choosing instead to elaborate more on Hebrews' concern with legal aspects of tithing as found in Gen 14.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Gelardini, *Verhärtet*.

⁵⁵ "Hebrews," 117-20.

⁵⁶ *Verhärtet*, 288-98, 303-09.

Craig Koester

One who finds a middle ground between those who declare Ps 110:4 to be the principal text and those who argue for the primacy of Gen 14 in this section is Craig Koester. Koester avers that Hebrews found in Melchizedek a biblical precedent for both a non-Levitical priesthood and a priest-king,⁵⁷ largely a typological argument. In terms of the interrelationship of the texts, he suggests that “Psalm 110 is the scriptural key to what Hebrews says about Melchizedek...” and that “...Ps 110:4 is the lens through which the author interprets the narrative about Melchizedek in Gen 14:17-20.”⁵⁸ Providing a broader sense of how Koester sees Hebrews’ exegesis operating, he explains that “The author interprets Gen 14:17-20 in terms of Ps 110:4, and Ps 110:4 in terms of Christ’s exaltation..., just as he interprets the biblical narrative that is summarized in Heb 11 in light of Hab 2:4, ‘my righteous one will live by faith.’”⁵⁹

With the exception of Koester, all of the above declare either Ps 110:4 or Gen 14 to be the primary text upon which the exposition in Hebrews 5-7 (or 7) is based. Although most do not emphasize differences between the roles of the Pentateuch and the Prophets and Writings (as divisions of the Scriptures) in Hebrews’ exegesis, when a distinction is made, the Ps 110 tends to be deemed more authoritative than the Pentateuch (esp. by Buchanan). Although he does not articulate it specifically, Koester’s interpretive scheme is the notable exception in that the Prophets and Writings are seen as interpreting the Pentateuch with some consistency.

⁵⁷ Koester, *Hebrews*, 346.

⁵⁸ *Hebrews*, 346.

⁵⁹ *Hebrews*, 347.

III. ANALYSIS OF 4:14-7:28

We now turn to consider how Hebrews develops its innovative priestly Christology from a textual standpoint, with the primacy of the Pentateuch as a foundational principle. At a textual level, we can say that Hebrews does this by juxtaposing Ps 110(109):4 with the paradigm of Aaron's priesthood as represented in the Pentateuch. The most direct allusion to a specific text connected to Aaron comes at the very beginning of the exposition (5:1, 4), where Hebrews discusses the appointment of Aaron from among the people at the initiation of his priesthood. Most commentators recognize this as an allusion to Exod 28:1.⁶⁰ While Ps 110:4 provides ample opportunity for Hebrews to argue that Jesus is a priest "according to the order of" (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν) Melchizedek, the psalm has very little to offer in the way of priestly specifics. Ps 110:4 facilitates Hebrews' assertions that (1) Jesus *is* a priest, (2) that he is a priest *like Melchizedek*, (3) that he is a priest *forever*, and (4) that he became a priest *on the basis of a divine oath*. Yet, although Hebrews manages to squeeze every drop of juice out of the fourteen Greek words that make up Ps 110:4 (109:4 LXX), the data the psalm verse provides is nowhere near sufficient (a) to prove conclusively that Jesus is a great high priest or (b) to describe the features of that priesthood in any substantial way. This is particularly clear when one considers the vast amount of scriptural data available related to Aaron's priesthood. In order to develop its apologetic and theological exposition on Jesus' priesthood, Hebrews turns to Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, explaining Jesus' priesthood in direct relation to Aaron's, even as it makes dramatic contrasts in the

⁶⁰ See detailed exegesis below.

process. Ironically, although Jesus is a priest “resembling Melchizedek,”⁶¹ Hebrews describes him in very Aaronic terms throughout the argument.

Hebrews incorporates several texts into this section in addition to Ps 110:4 and those directly related to Aaron’s priesthood. The most famous divine oath in the scriptures, God’s oath to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-17, is discussed at length in Heb 6:13-20. The Melchizedek narrative of Gen 14:17-20 is the focus of Heb 7:1-10 (with continuing influence thereafter). Other citations of and allusions to Psalms (e.g. 2:7, 110:1, perhaps 116) occur in this section, as well. The following analysis will show that the thrust of the exegesis is the juxtaposition of Jesus’ priesthood with Aaron’s, that Ps 110:4 is the main exegetical text and Aaron’s priesthood is the Pentateuchal paradigm. We begin with an examination of texts and themes from the Pentateuch in Heb 4:14-7:28, followed by an explication the exegetical function of the psalms throughout the passage.⁶² The final section of this chapter describes the scriptural center of gravity in 4:14-7:28 with some interpretive implications.

Passage Outline

4:14-5:10 – Transition; Divine son and priest like Aaron (Pss 2:7, 110:1, 4)

5:11-6:20 – Warning against apostasy, encouragement to persevere through faith.

6:13-20 – Oath and Assurance – the power of the oath (Gen 22:17 &Ps 110:4)

7:1-10 – A superior priesthood: Aaron/Levi vs. Melchizedek (Gen 14 & Ps 110:4)

7:11-28 – Oath, Law, covenant, priesthood and Aaron (Ps 110:4)

⁶¹ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ; 7:15. NRSV translates as “resembling.”

⁶² There are not any references to other books from the Prophets or Writings in this section that significantly affect Hebrews’ exegesis.

The Pentateuch in 4:14-7:28

The Pentateuch has two main functions within the extended argument for Jesus' priesthood.⁶³ First and foremost, the Aaronic/Levitical priestly paradigm originates in the Pentateuch and most or all of Hebrews' priestly referents are traceable to material in the Torah. Second, two passages from Genesis both play key roles in Hebrews' exegesis as they are juxtaposed with elements of Ps 110:4: God's oath to Abraham (Genesis 22:16-17; Heb 6:13-20) and the brief Melchizedek narrative (14:17-20; Heb 7:1-10). These Genesis texts will be each be addressed in turn, with consideration given to whether they are best viewed as primary generative texts or supporting texts in their respective segments of the argument.

Aaron and the Levitical Priests as Paradigm

Most of the major characteristics of Jesus' priesthood laid out by Hebrews relate to the paradigm of Aaron's priesthood which originates in Exodus (esp. 28-30). Hebrews attributes six major characteristics to Jesus as a priest according to the Aaronic/Levitical paradigm, along with two that are not necessarily Aaronic. While Jesus does not *match* Aaron in each of those six cases, all of the major criteria by which Jesus' priesthood is evaluated are grounded on Aaron's priesthood and derived from it. In the argument of Heb 4:14-7:28, these six criteria are: (1) an appointment to the priesthood from among the people, (2) functions of atonement and intercession, (3) a priestly genealogy, (4) the

⁶³ As noted above, Hebrews' paraenetic excursus in this section (5:11-6:12) is omitted from the present analysis. Hebrews also alludes to the Pentateuch in that section in the course of its exhortation. Three particularly interesting and helpful analyses of uses of the Jewish Scriptures in that section are: Guthrie, "Hebrews," 962-64., David Mathewson, "Reading Heb 6:4-6 in Light of the Old Testament," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 61, no. 2 (1999). and Allen, *Deuteronomy*

perpetual nature of the priesthood, (5) receiving tithes and (6) a priesthood stemming from the Law or covenant. None of those are drawn directly from Ps 110:4. Hebrews also discusses two characteristics of Jesus as priest that are not clearly based on the Aaronic paradigm: (1) being appointed by an oath and (2) Jesus' suffering connected with empathy. Those will be briefly discussed after a closer examination of the six criteria based on Aaron.

1. Appointment to priesthood from among the people (5:1-4; 7:20-21, 28). Hebrews shows a consistent concern to link Jesus' priesthood with his identity as a member of the people, or family, of God.⁶⁴ In 5:1-4, Hebrews' first major assertion is that "Every high priest is from among [the] people, appointed on behalf of people for the things of God..." (5:1),⁶⁵ and 5:4 recalls that Aaron was "called by God." The call of Aaron and his descendants to the priesthood is found in Exod 28:1, as noted by many commentators.⁶⁶ It comes at the beginning of three chapters related to priestly garments (Exod 28), ordination (Exod 29) and offerings (Exod 30). God instructs Moses to "bring near to yourself both Aaron, your brother, and his sons from the sons of Israel to serve me as priests..." (Exod 28:1a). At numerous other points in the Pentateuch, the call of Aaron

⁶⁴ This began with the explanation in 2:11 the one who sanctifies (Jesus) and those being sanctified (God's people) have the same origin and that Jesus was not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (2:11-12). The connection between family and priesthood is reinforced throughout the rest of Heb 2 and in 3:1, as he is declared to have become a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17, cf. 3:1), able to make atonement for the people.

⁶⁵ "Πάς γὰρ ἀρχερεὺς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καθίσταται τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν..." (5:1) Regarding "appointed" καθίσταται; cf. Num 3:10, 32

⁶⁶ So most commentators, e.g.: Attridge, *Hebrews*, 145; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 94; Cockerill, *Epistle*, 237; David Arthur DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 188; "Invention," 300; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 281; Koester, *Hebrews*, 287; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 117; O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 193; Spicq, *L'Epître*, I, 106; Thompson, *Hebrews*, 114.

and the Levites to the priesthood is reiterated and developed.⁶⁷ Hebrews draws a parallel between Aaron and Jesus in the sense that neither glorified himself by becoming high priest (5:4-5). Sirach 45:6-7 reflects a similar point of view: “He exalted Aaron, a holy man like Moses who was his brother, of the tribe of Levi. He made an everlasting covenant with him, and gave him the priesthood of the people. He blessed him with stateliness, and put a glorious robe on him...”⁶⁸ Hebrews returns to the issue of the divine appointment to the priesthood in 7:20-28, contrasting the idea that Jesus became a priest by means of a divine oath (Ps 110:4a) with the appointment of priests under the Law without such a strong affirmation (7:20-21). It also states that the people appointed (καθίστησιν; 7:28) to the high priesthood by the Law were subject to weakness but the son was appointed by an oath forever. Whereas the emphasis of 5:1-10 is on the similarities of Aaron and Jesus with respect to being called and appointed, 7:20-28 contrasts the role of the oath/non-oath in their respective appointments.

2. *Atonement and Intercession* (5:1, 3, 7; 7:13, 25, 27). One of the essential functions of Aaron’s priesthood was to act as mediator between God and humanity by offering sacrifices, officiating at the altar, interceding, etc. None of these priestly functions are explicit in either Ps 110:4 or Gen 14:17-20. Hebrews describes priests as offering gifts and sacrifices for sins (5:1), on behalf of the priests themselves and the people (5:3), intercession by Jesus in a priestly context, which is implicitly paralleled in 4:16 (Jesus)

⁶⁷ E.g., Exod 29:4-9, 44; Num 3:10, 12, 41; 8:6; 16:5; 18:1ff. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 145; Cockerill, *Epistle*, 237; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 272-73; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, 117.

⁶⁸ Ααρων ὕψωσεν ἄγιον ὅμοιον αὐτῷ ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ φυλῆς Λευιτῶν αὐτὸν διαθήκην αἰῶνος καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ἱερατείαν λαοῦ ἐμακάρισεν αὐτὸν ἐν εὐκοσμίᾳ καὶ περιέζωσεν αὐτὸν περιστολὴν δόξης...

and 5:2 (Aaron, et al). Specific references to the priestly cult and sacrifice emerge in 7:13-27, the main points being the eligibility of officiants (7:13) and a contrast between the necessity of repetitive sacrifices by mortal priests (7:23-27) and the once-for-all atonement of Jesus as an immortal high priest. Jesus' priestly functions are defined in each of these cases according to the existing paradigm set by the Law and carried out by the Levitical priests. Hebrews makes no innovation with regard to priestly functions, just qualitative adjustments and contrasts, such as the duration of the priesthood, the frequency of sacrifices, etc. Jesus' basic priestly functions all correspond to Aaron's.

3. *Priestly genealogy* (5:1, 5-6, 8; 7:3, 5, 10-16). Perhaps the most important aspect of the Aaronic paradigm that Hebrews addresses is genealogy. As is evident in virtually all the scriptural texts related to the appointment of Aaron and his descendants, their priesthood was ordained as a hereditary priesthood.⁶⁹ The fact that Aaron's priesthood is almost always described in tribal or hereditary terms seems to have presented a daunting, but not insurmountable, problem for the viability of Jesus' priesthood. This concern is certainly the most evident in the Melchizedek section of Heb 7 and the subsequent argument (7:10-16) which addresses the issue of priestly lineage head-on, where Hebrews declares that one who is a priest by virtue of an indestructible life and a divine oath is superior to one who attains to the priesthood merely as a result of biological ancestry. A number of possible explanations have been offered for Hebrews' unusual use of the term "Levitical" (Λευιτικῆς)⁷⁰ which, at the very least, underlines the importance that the issue of tribe

⁶⁹ For example: Exod 28:1-4, 41, 43; 29:9, 29; 40:15; Num 3:10; 18:1,7; 25:13; Lev 24:9; 1 Chr 23:13.

⁷⁰ NT *hapax legomenon*. Notably, Hebrews does not seem to suggest that Levitical priests are any different from, form a subset of, or hold a lower status than Aaronide priests. For brief discussions see

and lineage held in the mind of Hebrews' author (and probably the audience). A substantial portion of the argument is dedicated to demonstrating that Jesus can legitimately be a high priest despite his lack of conformity to the reigning Aaronic paradigm—this portion of the argument bears the strongest sense of apology. It is quite possible that the concern with a priestly genealogy also motivated some of the preceding arguments that emphasize Jesus being of the same family, the same origins, as those he is delivering (Heb 2).

While there were plenty of complications when it came to the actual, historical outworking of priestly genealogy related to the descendants of Aaron, the tribe of Levi and the Zadokites and Hasmoneans, William Horbury presents persuasive evidence that the priesthood was still viewed predominantly, and meaningfully, as “Aaronic” through the first century and beyond. If that was indeed the case, Hebrews’ Aaronic paradigm would have been both biblical and relevant to contemporary perceptions.⁷¹

4. *Perpetual priesthoods* (Heb 5:6-9; 6:20; 7:3, 17, 23-28). The assertion that Jesus’ priesthood is “forever” ($\varepsilon\iota\varsigma\tau\circ\alpha\iota\omega\nu\alpha$) based on Ps 110:4 is often highlighted as one of the great points of contrast between Jesus as high priest and the Levitical priesthood—and, in a way, it is. That does not, however, mean that Aaron’s priesthood is not paradigmatic in this regard, as well. Exodus 28:43 is one of a number of texts which makes clear that the priesthood to which Aaron and his descendants are to be ordained is

Ellingworth, *Hebrews*; Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*. For a more extensive treatment, William Horbury, "The Aaronic Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 19 (1983).

⁷¹ William Horbury offers a number of examples from Josephus, Philo, Targumim, inscriptions, and Dura Europos, among others, in "Aaronic Priesthood," 43-49.

perpetual: “And Aaron and his sons shall have [the garments] whenever they enter the tent [etc.]...and this shall be a perpetual statute for him and for his seed after him.”⁷² Exodus 29:9 is also explicit on that point: “...and they will be a priesthood to me forever, and you shall ordain Aaron and ordain his sons.”⁷³ In addition, we find at least twenty references in the Pentateuch to “perpetual statutes” (usu. νόμιμον αἰώνιον) given in direct relation to the priesthood.⁷⁴ So, while the language of “a priest forever” certainly works its way into Hebrews’ exposition as a result of Ps 110:4, it is made far more significant when understood in relation to Aaron’s priesthood, which was consistently referred to as a perpetual priesthood. The perpetuity of Aaron’s priesthood was reinforced by the word of the Lord for Aaron’s grandson Phineas, “...there shall be for him and his offspring after him an everlasting covenant of priesthood...” (Num 25:13 NETS; cf. 1 Mac 2:54; Sir 45:23-24⁷⁵). The ambiguity or openness of Ps 110:4 combined with the silence of Gen 14:17-20 with regard to Melchizedek’s birth and (non-)death allows Hebrews to posit that Jesus’ priesthood is “forever,” like that of Melchizedek.

5. *Receiving tithes* (Heb 7:1-10). One of the characteristics of Aaron’s priesthood least likely to leap to mind is that of receiving tithes, but Hebrews’ exegesis involving Gen 14 represents it as a priestly function. Whether or not the exegesis that asserts that Levi tithed to Melchizedek while still in the loins of Abraham is “playful,” as Attridge

⁷² καὶ ἔξει Ααρων αὐτὰ καὶ οἱ νιοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς ἂν εἰσπορεύωνται εἰς τὴν ... νόμιμον αἰώνιον αὐτῷ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ μετ’ αὐτὸν Exod 28:43 LXX

⁷³ καὶ ἔσται αὐτοῖς ἱερατεία ἐμοὶ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα καὶ τελειώσεις τὰς χεῖρας Ααρων καὶ τὰς χεῖρας τῶν νιῶν αὐτοῦ Exod 29:9b LXX

⁷⁴ Exod. 27:21; 28:43; 29:28; 30:21; Lev. 3:17; 6:11; 7:34, 36; 10:9, 15; 16:34; 24:3, 9; Num. 10:8; 18:8, 11, 19, 23; 19:10, 21

⁷⁵ See Horbury, “Aaronic Priesthood,” 53.

suggests,⁷⁶ it is made meaningful only because the tithe in the Genesis episode can be related to the receiving of tithes by the priests.⁷⁷ There has been debate as to whether the receiving of tithes by priests is an exclusively biblical phenomenon—not reflective of lived experience in the world of Hebrews author—but Horbury makes a good case for it having been both a biblical and contemporary phenomenon.⁷⁸

6. The Priesthood and the Law/covenant. Hebrews makes two much-discussed statements about the Law in relation to the priesthood: First, that the people received the law under the “Levitical priesthood”⁷⁹ in 7:11, followed by the statement “For with the change of the priesthood, a change in the law necessarily comes as well” (7:12).⁸⁰ On one hand, the Torah was the source of Aaron’s priesthood and governed the priesthood in many respects. Hebrews’ impulse to conform Jesus’ priesthood to the general shape of Aaron’s priesthood as described in the Torah should be evident by this point. On the other hand, as Horbury ably argues, there was a perceived interdependence of the Law and the priesthood evident in many ancient sources, such that “the law seems to rest upon the priesthood,” and was in some ways “subordinate to the priesthood.”⁸¹ The priests and Levites were to be the custodians of the Law as well as to be teachers of the Law (cf. Deut 33:10). And, in some ways, the priests were the *source* of the Law, as seen in Sirach

⁷⁶ Attridge, *Hebrews*.

⁷⁷ See esp. Num 18:21-32; see also Neh 10:36-37.

⁷⁸ Horbury, “Aaronic Priesthood,” 50-52.

⁷⁹ Λευιτικῆς ιερωσύνης

⁸⁰ μετατιθεμένης γὰρ τῆς ιερωσύνης ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ νόμου μετάθεσις γίνεται

⁸¹ See Horbury’s extensive argument to this effect, using sources from Jubilees to Philo to Josephus to Sirach, the Mishnah and the Pseudepigrapha; as well as the blessing of Levi in Deut 33:8-11. Horbury, “Aaronic Priesthood,” 52-59.

45:17: “In his commandments he gave [Aaron] authority and statutes and judgments, to teach Jacob the testimonies, and to enlighten Israel with his law.”⁸² Through the act of inaugurating and presiding over a “new covenant,” then, Jesus also fulfills a priestly role consistent with the Aaronic paradigm.

Additional characteristics of Jesus’ priesthood. Only two of the prominent characteristics of Jesus’ priesthood discussed in Hebrews are *not* clearly based on the Aaronic paradigm, one of which is attributable to Ps 110:4 and one does not have an obvious relationship to either Aaron or Ps 110:4. Jesus becoming a priest by means of a divine oath seems to be the unique contribution of Ps 110:4 to the description of Jesus’ priesthood vis-à-vis Aaron. Hebrews links the oath of Ps 110:4 to the appointment of Jesus as priest, in contrast to the appointment of Aaron and sons, however, so that even the oath is applied exegetically with some connection to the paradigm of Aaron and the Levitical priests. A final priestly characteristic of Jesus highlighted by Hebrews is that of his suffering combined with empathy. Aspects of Jesus’ suffering are integral to Hebrews’ agenda throughout the epistle, sometimes related to atonement (2:9-10; 9:26), and sometimes to his leadership, as a virtue to be imitated (Heb 11-12). Here in 4:14-7:28, his suffering relates most to his effectiveness and reliability as a compassionate mediator.⁸³

⁸² ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ἐν ἐντολαῖς αὐτοῦ ἔξουσίαν ἐν διαθήκαις κριμάτων διδάξαι τὸν Ιακώβ τὰ μαρτύρια καὶ ἐν νόμῳ αὐτοῦ φωτίσαι Ισραὴλ

⁸³ It could be that, as F.F. Bruce has suggested, this is also related to Aaron and/or Moses as mediators for the people. Moses is known for his compassionate and passionate intercession for the people (e.g., in Exod 33:12-16; Num 14:13-19; 21:7), and the Scriptures also tell of instances in which Aaron either suffers for or intercedes for the people (Exod 8:12; Num 14:5; 16:22, 47; Ps 106:16); Bruce, *Epistle*, 120.

In addition to the paradigm of Aaron as high priest, two specific passages from the Pentateuch figure prominently in consecutive arguments in this section: God's oath to Abraham in Gen 22:16-17 (Heb 6:13-20) and the Melchizedek narrative in Gen 14:17-20 (Heb 7). Here we consider whether those texts form the basis of their respective expositions or are used exegetically—or both.

Genesis 22:16-17 in Heb 6:13-20

The short passage beginning “For, in making the promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater by which to swear, God swore upon himself...” (6:13-20) is rarely referred to by commentators as a “midrash” on Gen 22:16-17, more often simply as a short exposition.⁸⁴ These eight verses have a remarkably rich set of contextual relationships within Hebrews. The warning and exhortation of 5:11-6:12 which immediately precedes this passage begins and ends by chiding the audience for apparent sluggishness⁸⁵ and calls them to be “imitators of those who inherit the promises through faith and patience” (6:12). Certainly, one purpose of 6:13-20, which then features Abraham, is to assuage fears the rebuke may have provoked by highlighting God's faithfulness. With a wider context in view, this is the second divine oath Hebrews expounds upon, the first having been that God swore in anger that the people “would not enter My rest” (Ps 95:11; Heb 3:7-4:13). Within the context of 4:14-7:28, on Jesus as

⁸⁴ Alan Mitchell, referring to it as “a midrashic reflection on Gen 22:16-17,” is one of very few commentators to classify it as such; *Hebrews*, 13, 135. For some reason, commentators to refer to this passage as “midrash” much less frequently than they do 7:1-28 (on Melchizedek); perhaps because it is shorter or perhaps because it is so often compared to Philo's material, which is not usually considered midrash.

⁸⁵ νωθρός; 5:11; 6:12

high priest, this is the first of two segments related to the significance a divine oath pertaining to his priesthood (cf. 7:20-22).

The purpose of the “oath” argument in 6:13-20 goes beyond just reassuring the audience of God’s faithfulness. Hebrews quite clearly uses the example of God’s oath to Abraham to show that the oath of Ps 110:4 is trustworthy: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.”⁸⁶ That piece of the psalm verse is implied with the citation of Ps 110:4bc in 6:20. Here, in 6:13-20, the *legitimacy* and *reliability* of Jesus’ priesthood are asserted on the basis of the oath. Later, Hebrews will build on this argument to suggest that the oath of Ps 110:4 denotes not only a legitimate priesthood, it also indicates that his priesthood attains to a higher *status* than the Aaronic/Levitical priests in 7:20-23.

Whether Genesis 22:16-17 is a primary or exegetical text with respect to this exposition is of particular interest in this study. Does the oath of Ps 110:4 interpret the oath of Genesis 22, or is it the other way around? It is evident from the wide range of ancient sources that are concerned with the exegesis of Gen 22:16-17 that God’s self-referential oath was a source fascination, puzzlement and a certain degree of consternation, as seen in a number of other traditions from Philo⁸⁷ to R. Eleazar.⁸⁸ I would suggest that Hebrews uses Gen 22 and the issue of the surprising divine oath to bolster the claim of priesthood from Ps 110:4, probably importing and adapting an existing exegetical tradition on Gen 22 from the vast intertextual networks of ancient

⁸⁶ ὁμοσεν κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται σὺ; Ps 110(109):4a – which is implied here, not stated.

⁸⁷ Abr. 273; Leg. 3.203-204; Sacr. 91

⁸⁸ b. Ber. 32a: Cf. Jub. 1:7, Sir 44:21-23; Koester, *Hebrews*, 325.

Judaism⁸⁹ to do so. In that case, Hebrews is using a text from the Pentateuch (Gen 22) as a proof text in support of the exegesis that juxtaposes Ps 110:4 with Aaron's priesthood.

If we take the Gen 22:16-17 exposition in 6:13-20 on its own, the exegesis is essentially logical prior to the juxtaposition with Ps 110:4 in 6:20: God made the oath as an added reassurance in response to the human weakness or limitations of the “heirs of the promise” (6:17), similar to Philo’s conclusion in *Leg. All.* 3:206.⁹⁰ However, even there, it is possible that Genesis 22:16-17 was already being interpreted in light of a text or texts from the P&W in the exegetical tradition Hebrews imported. For instance, I Sam 15:29 declares that God cannot turn or change God’s mind (οὐκ ἀποστρέψει οὐδὲ μετανοήσει), with a similar sense to Ps 110:4a, “Ὥμοσεν κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται σὺ.” And, Ps 89:35(88:36 LXX) declares “Once I have sworn in my holiness, [I will not] lie to David” (ἄπαξ ὤμοσα ἐν τῷ ἀγίῳ μου εἰ τῷ Δαυὶδ ψεύσομαι), similar to Hebrews’ statement that “it is impossible for God to lie” (ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι [τὸν] θεόν, 6:18). Both elements converge in Ps 110:4. Whether the exegesis is original or imported and adapted, it is apparent that Hebrews uses this smaller unit based on Genesis to support its larger argument on Jesus’ priesthood in conjunction with Ps 110:4.

Gen 14:17-20 in Hebrews 7

Hebrews 7 is often referred to as a distinct midrash or exposition,⁹¹ although scholars debate whether Heb 7 is best regarded as an exposition of Genesis 14:17-20 in

⁸⁹ Recalling Flusser, "Today."

⁹⁰ Philo argues that human beings are limited in their ability to “entertain belief” with respect to God apart from assurances that must originate from God’s own self.

⁹¹ See *Perspectives on the Use of the Scriptures in 4:14-7:28* above.

light of Ps 110:4⁹² or an exposition of Ps 110:4 that uses Genesis 14:17-20 in its exegesis.⁹³ While they differ as to which text is primary, both Fitzmyer and Cockerill have argued that reading Heb 7:1-28 as a unit is appropriate.⁹⁴ Fitzmyers' main argument for the priority of Gen 14 is that the passage opens with that passage and proceeds to comment on it, comparing its exegetical method to 4QFlor.⁹⁵ Cockerill contends, instead, (1) that the citation of Ps 110:4 in 6:20 sets up the passage which begins at 7:1, and (2) that Gen 14 fades into the background as Hebrews returns to the direct exegesis of words and phrases of Ps 110:4 in 7:11-25; thus, he concludes, Ps 110:4 is primary.⁹⁶ Fitzmyer's position aligns more with the idea of the primacy of the Pentateuch.

One further question to ask would be which of the topics, concerns or controlling language in the passage are traceable to Gen 14 versus Ps 110:4? To answer that question, we can begin by recognizing that the figure of Melchizedek is the obvious point of connection between the two passages. There are two or three key goals Hebrews works to achieve by its use of Genesis 14. First, Hebrews seeks to establish Jesus' priestly credentials. The famous argument from silence based on the Genesis narrative—that Melchizedek was “without father, without mother, without genealogy and without beginning or end of days”⁹⁷—allowed Hebrews to argue that Jesus could also be a priest

⁹² Notably Fitzmyer, "Melchizedek [1971]," and Bloch, "Midrash," 1279.

⁹³ Notably Cockerill, who directly rebuts Fitzmyer; but this is a far more common perspective, as demonstrated above. Cockerill, *Epistle*, 293.

⁹⁴ Fitzmyer, "Melchizedek [1971]," 222; Cockerill, "Melchizedek Christology," 16ff., 277-352.

⁹⁵ Fitzmyer, "Melchizedek [1971]," 222.

⁹⁶ Cockerill, *Epistle*, 293-94.

⁹⁷ Heb 7:3: ...ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων...

without the requisite Aaronic/Levitical genealogy. In fact, there are two arguments from silence: one regarding genealogy and one regarding mortality. Having pointed out that Melchizedek was a priest without a pedigree (7:3), Hebrews goes to some length to argue that Jesus could also be a legitimate priest without meeting the tribal criterion inscribed in the Mosaic Law (7:11-17). This could be so by merit of the fact that, like Melchizedek, Jesus is immortal; having demonstrated “the power of an indestructible life” (7:16). The two “silences” of the Genesis narrative, then, allow Hebrews to construct priestly credentials based on a Pentateuchal example. It probably did not hurt that Melchizedek was the *first* character to be called a priest in the Scriptures.⁹⁸

Not only did the Genesis narrative allow Hebrews to present necessary priestly credentials that Ps 110:4 did not provide, Hebrews takes advantage of the ambiguous references to tithing and blessing in the Genesis narrative⁹⁹ to establish Melchizedek’s status as higher than Abraham, Levi and their descendants; a status which was then extended to Jesus. Attridge describes the tithing argument as “playful”¹⁰⁰ while Koester considers the argument that Levi had tithed to Melchizedek while still within Abraham’s loins to be hyperbolic and perhaps a rhetorically appropriate “fanciful remark” that provided a welcome “momentary respite” amidst Hebrews’ intense argumentation.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ As noted by Josephus: “[Jerusalem’s] original founder was a Canaanite chief, called in the native tongue ‘Righteous King’; for such indeed he was. In virtue thereof he was the first to officiate as priest of God and, being the first to build the temple, gave the city, previously called Solyma, the name of Jerusalem.” *J.W.* 6.438. Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ed. H. St J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927); Fitzmyer, “Melchizedek [1971],” 235.

⁹⁹ That is, the MT is ambiguous with regard to who blessed whom. “Melchizedek [1971],” 238-39.

¹⁰⁰ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 187, 97.

¹⁰¹ Koester, *Hebrews*, 350-52.

Hebrews later tackles the status argument from another angle, contending that being appointed a priest by oath confers a higher status than one who is not appointed with an oath. That being the case, the tithing argument does not appear to be essential; it may indeed have been whimsical and/or mainly anticipatory of 7:20-22 (where the oath elevates status). Whether playful or serious, it was not an argument that could have been made solely on the basis of Ps 110:4.¹⁰²

A third goal Hebrews may have had in the exposition on Melchizedek was to reinforce the concept of a royal priesthood, since Melchizedek is an early and prominent example of a priest-king or royal priest. Where this fell in Hebrews' set of priorities is difficult to discern. The argument does start out with a heavy emphasis on his kingship as it discusses the etymology of "Melchizedek," and the son of God theme—often having royal connotations—does return in 7:28, though without heavy emphasis. The fact that Hebrews bookends the broader argument of 4:14-10:23 with royal-priestly language (4:14-16; 10:13, 21) suggests that Hebrews wanted to take advantage of that dimension of the figure of Melchizedek to some extent.¹⁰³

¹⁰² It would be difficult to determine with certainty whether this is a playful or a serious argument. But, given the way Hebrews piles up the evidence here, the case would not be weakened by a humorous or hyperbolic argument (there is enough other evidence to carry the argument) and, rhetorically, a bit of humor may have been quite effective, as Koester suggests.

¹⁰³ Israel Knöhl treats the topic of a royal-priestly Messiah at length, in both 11Q13 and Hebrews. He concludes that "We can ascertain that the author of Hebrews is adopting a line that views the Messiah according to the ideology of divine kingship rooted in several parts of the Hebrew Bible. As we have seen above, these biblical sources describe the king as having divine names and qualities. As such, it is natural to see him as superior to the angels, who are merely the servants of God. The union of kingship and priesthood in one figure attests to the perfection of the divine king. The model for this union is Melchizedek, the ancient king of Shalem-Jerusalem. In the figure of Melchizedek in Hebrews, as in 11 QMelchizedek, we see the new combination of an eschatological King and High Priest, who is at the same time the redeemer of his people." (p. 266) He also makes the following thought-provoking observation: "As a non-Israelite king, Melchizedek is not restrained by the limitations that the Torah puts on Israelite kings. He serves as a king and a priest at the same time. His priesthood is a legitimate one and thus Abraham gives him a tenth of the booty (Gen 14:20). Therefore, Melchizedek can serve as the ideal biblical model

Looking at the role of the Pentateuch in the priesthood argument of 4:14-7:28, then, I have argued that two functions stand out. First, Aaron's priesthood provides the Pentateuchal paradigm by which Jesus' priesthood is both measured and explained. Hebrews makes those comparisons largely through allusions and most of the antecedent material can be found in Exodus. Second, two texts from Genesis function as exegetical texts or, simply stated, prooftexts in this context. God's oath to Abraham in Genesis 22 is evoked to reinforce the reliability of the oath "You are a priest forever..." in Ps 110:4. The brief and tantalizing episode concerning Melchizedek in Gen 14:17-20 provides the means to begin filling out the idea of "the order of Melchizedek" as Hebrews juxtaposes that narrative with the Aaronic paradigm. The ways in which the Genesis texts support the psalms in exegesis will become clearer as we continue.

The Psalms as Exegetical Texts in 4:14-7:28

Hebrews uses three main texts from the Psalms as exegetical texts in this section, chiefly in relation to the priestly paradigm of Aaron and the Levitical priests. The predominant exegetical text is Ps 110(109):4, words and phrases of which are integral to the exegesis and portions are cited five times from 5:6 to 7:21. The pairing of Psalms 2:7 and 110(109):1 also plays an important role theologically and structurally. The emphasis in the following analysis is on Ps 110:4, but brief examinations of the roles Pss 2:7 and 110:1 are addressed to begin with.

for the union of kingship and priesthood." (p. 259). Israel Knohl, *Melchizedek: A Model For The Union Of Kingship And Priesthood In The Hebrew Bible, 11QMelchizedek, and The Epistle To The Hebrews*, Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, Jointly Sponsored by the Hebrew University Center for the Study of Christianity, 11-13 January, 2004 ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

Psalms 2 and 110(109 LXX)

Hebrews frames the larger argument related specifically to Jesus' priesthood with combined references to Psalms 2 and 110. Psalm 2:7 and Ps 110:1 are paired at the beginning and end of the section (4:14-5:5 and 7:25-8:2).¹⁰⁴ Psalms 2:7 and 110:4 are also linked three times at the beginning, middle and end of the passage.¹⁰⁵ The most relevant inquiries to be made concerning Hebrews' uses of these texts for our purposes pertain to (1) the reasons they are paired in this way and (2) how they affect the exegesis related to the Aaronic priesthood, if at all. Several theories have been proposed regarding the linkage of Ps 2:7 with Ps 110. Many commentators attribute the connection between the two Psalms, at least in part, to the texts being critical to Hebrews' Christology, which they are; but that does not seem to tell the whole story.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Citations or allusions in the section: Ps 2:7 (Son of God) and 110:1 (sit at right hand/heavenly sanctuary) in 4:14 (Ps 110:1), 5:5 (Ps 2:7), 7:25 (Ps 110:1), 7:28 (Ps 2:7), and 8:1-2 (Ps 110:1).

¹⁰⁵ In 5:5-6, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" (Ps 2:7) is paired with the citation of Ps 110:4bc, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 7:3 refers to Melchizedek as being "in the likeness of the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually," a synthesis of the assertions Hebrews makes based on Ps 2:7 and 110:4. And, in 7:28, the elements of the Son (Ps 2:7) and the oath (110:4a) are joined.

¹⁰⁶ Among the least likely additional reasons to explain why they are paired, in my view, but possibly contributing, is Guthrie's assertion that the second-person direct address ("You are my Son..."; "You are a priest...") is a factor. "Hebrews," 960.

Figure 3.1 Structural Use of Citations and Allusions in 4:14-8:2

	Ps 2:7	Ps 110:1	Ps 110:4
FRAME	4:14	allusion	
	5:5	citation	
	5:6		citation
	5:10		citation
	6:20		citation
	7:3	allusion	allusion
	7:15		allusion
	7:17		citation
	7:21		citation
	7:24		allusion
	7:26	allusion	
	7:28	allusion	allusion
	8:1-2		allusion

Among the most important ideas is that Hebrews presents Christ as both a royal and priestly messiah, and the combination of these psalms makes a strong scriptural case for that. Flusser suggests that, while mysterious, an opaque phrase in the MT at the end of Ps 110:3 strengthens the connection. Normally rendered in terms similar to the translation of the NRSV, “From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you,” the LXX helps a little with “from the womb of the morning I have begotten you.”¹⁰⁷ Flusser posits that “the author of the Psalm (110:3) really wanted to say: ‘I (God) have begotten thee’,” which he supports with evidence from other manuscript traditions.¹⁰⁸ If

¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Kraus: “...from the womb ‘of the rosy dawn,’ ‘have I begotten you like the dew.’”—which he interprets as the begetting of a divine king, much like Ps 2:7. Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, trans. Hinton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 344, 50. Weiser, on the other hand, renders the phrase, “...in holy array, at the dawn of the morning, your youth will come to you like the dew.” Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, ed. Hebert Hartwell, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 692.

¹⁰⁸ He continues, The rendering 'I have begotten thee' is based upon the spelling 'מֵתָה־לִי.' If one begins with the assumption that, in Psalm 110, God addresses Himself to Melchizedek, the text from which the LXX translated almost compels the conclusion that 'the Word of God has created' Melchizedek in the

correct, both Ps 2 and Ps 110 speak of (and to) a divine scion, which reinforces the connection between the two texts—one with a royal emphasis, one with a priestly emphasis. Whether Hebrews is critically- or polemically-minded with regard to a competing messianic concept (e.g. two messiahs, one Aaronic, one royal) is difficult to say with as little data as we have.¹⁰⁹ What is certainly reasonable is to see Hebrews creating a consistently royal *and* priestly portrait of Jesus as messiah, with the emphasis in this section (4:14-7:28) placed squarely on the latter.¹¹⁰ In that case, Psalms 2:7 and 110:1-3 provide the frame into which the exegesis of Jesus' relationship to the Aaronic priesthood fits. Also, as we shall see, it creates a striking connection to the figure of Melchizedek—another royal priest—that will powerfully propel the priestly exegesis forward.

Ps 110:4 as the key exegetical text

While Hebrews never cites Ps 110(109):4 all at once, portions of the verse are cited at five points throughout 4:14-7:28 (5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21). For ease of reference, sections of the verse are designated as 110:4 a, b, and c, in the analysis that follows:

- (a) The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind,
ὅμοσεν κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται·

womb of his mother ..." David Flusser, "Melchizedek and the Son of Man," in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 190, 92n.

¹⁰⁹ See Flusser and Knohl, who both take views that differ from Yadin's well-known hypothesis. Flusser, "Melchizedek and the Son of Man."; Knohl, *Melchizedek*.

¹¹⁰ A fascinating aspect of this, if it is indeed the case, is that Hebrews rarely makes direct reference to David or tries to create a very Davidic image, apart from what is implicit in the use of Davidic psalms. Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, 174-78, 87-88.

(cited only in 7:21; implicit in 6:13-20)

(b) “You are a priest forever...

σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα...

(5:6; 6:20; 7:17; 21)

(c) ...in the order of Melchizedek”

... κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ

(5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17)

Hebrews juxtaposes words and phrases of Ps 110:4 with various texts, concepts and themes from the Pentateuch throughout the four exegetical sections of 4:14-7:28.

First, in 4:14-5:10, as mentioned above, the combination of Ps 2:7 (“You are my son, today I have begotten you”) and Ps 110:4bc (“You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek”) are applied to Christ and juxtaposed with the appointment of Aaron (5:1-4). Second, in 6:13-20, the discussion divine oath to Abraham clearly (although implicitly) relates to the oath of Ps 110:4a (“I have sworn and will not change my mind...”). The reference to Melchizedek in Ps 110:4c cited in 6:20 leads into the third exposition in 7:1-10 featuring the Melchizedek narrative from Genesis 14:17-20, where Hebrews juxtaposes Melchizedek with Abraham and, by extension Levi. Fourth, in 7:11-25, Hebrews pulls all the elements together, juxtaposing Ps 110:4a, b & c with several aspects of the priesthood of Aaron. Scholars almost universally regard 7:26-28 as a conclusion to the section’s exegesis as it summarizes the priestly argument and again evokes the language of sonship and being appointed.

Figure 3.2 Psalm 110:4 in 4:14-7:28—Citations, Allusions & Juxtapositions

	Ps 110:4 (a,b,c)	Pentateuch
	Ps 110:4 (a,b,c) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind b. “You are a priest forever c. according to the order of Melchizedek” 	
4:14-5:10	Ps 110:4 bc, “You are a priest forever” Designated as (royal) priest	Allusion to Exod 28:1 [etc.] <i>Like Aaron:</i> Appointed from among people
6:13-20	[Ps 110:4 a; “I have sworn....” <i>implicit</i>] Declared a priest by <i>oath</i> <i>Ps 110:4c (6:20) – transition to 7:1-10</i>	Gen 22:16-17 Divine <i>oath</i> with promise to Abraham: Trustworthiness of divine oaths
7:1-10	[Implicit: Ps 110:4c “Melchizedek”] Melchizedek	Gen 14:17-20 vs. Levi & priestly descendants
7:11-25	<i>Synthesis:</i> Ps 110:4 a, b & c (7:11-17) Ps 110:4c “order of Melchizedek” (7:20-22) Ps 110:4a “I have sworn...” (7:23-25) Ps 110:4b “...a priest forever...”	vs. Mosaic law & priestly genealogy vs. appointed without an oath vs. perpetual Aaronic priesthood
7:26-28	Ps 110:4 a, b “priest” (b) “forever” (b) “oath” (a)	vs. repetition of sacrifices, priests subject to weakness, appointed by law

Ps 110:4 in 4:14-5:10

The introduction and initial use of Ps 110:4 is the first step in Hebrews’ argument legitimizing Jesus’ priesthood. It lays out common ground between Aaron and Jesus as (1) both having been called by God from among the people—not assuming the priesthood of their own initiative—and (2) both acting as priestly mediators.¹¹¹ It is likely enough that Hebrews leverages the audience’s prior acceptance of the application of Ps 110:1 to

¹¹¹ Bruce, *Epistle*, 120.

Jesus as it further applies 110:4 to him.¹¹² Here, the divine declaration that “You are a priest forever” is presented within the broader context of Jesus as a leader of and from the people, the priestly ἀρχηγός of the descendants of Abraham (2:10-18; 12:1-25), which Hebrews has already sought to establish. Hebrews sets out the divine appointment of Jesus (“You are a priest forever...”) parallel to the call of Aaron and his sons (Exod 28:1). As mentioned above relative to the paradigm of Aaron’s priesthood, the elements of honor and glory associated with the high priest (Exod 28:2, 40) are easily enough transferred to Jesus (5:4-5). These substantial similarities between Jesus and Aaron are thus established in 4:14-5:11 before moving on to contrasts in Heb 7.¹¹³

Ps 110:4 in 6:13-20

The oath portion of Ps 110:4 (a), “The Lord has sworn (ὤμοσεν κύριος) and will not change his mind...,” is clearly the motivation behind the short discourse on Gen 22:16-17, where God “swore by himself” (ὤμοσεν καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ) in affirming the promise to Abraham. Hebrews evokes the Genesis text to support or highlight the assertion that a divine oath is reliable and trustworthy. If the promise to Abraham is to be viewed as even more secure because of the oath that reinforced the promise, then certainly an oath affirming the appointment of Jesus as a priest can also be viewed as trustworthy. This is not primarily an exegesis of the Genesis text (which scarcely needs explanation); rather,

¹¹² Compton, *Psalm 110*, 96-97.

¹¹³ Attridge writes, “The reference to Aaron does not serve any special polemical purpose. There is not even a hint of contrast between Jesus and his ancient counterpart, as there was with reference to Joshua (4:8),” Attridge, *Hebrews*, 145. Among those agreeing that Hebrews seeks first to establish similarities, Koester, *Hebrews*, 292, 97-99; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 271-72. Kurianal, taking a minority position, does not see Jesus as included in Hebrews’ reference to “every high priest”; he emphasizes, instead, what he sees as a series of contrasts, not similarities, between Jesus and Aaron/the high priests: Kurianal, *Jesus*, 48-60.

Genesis 22 provides authoritative corroboration of the power of a divine oath to support Hebrews' assertion based on the oath in Ps 110:4.

Ps 110:4 in 7:1-10

The last phrase of 6:20, at the end of the oath discourse, cites 110:4bc, "a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek," leading into the exposition featuring the Melchizedek narrative (Gen 14:17-20). The primary contribution of Ps 110:4 to 7:1-10 is the mention of Melchizedek. Although it was suggested above that the Melchizedek-Levi exposition could also possibly have been pre-existing exegetical material,¹¹⁴ seeing the argument of 7:1-10 as a case of Ps 110:4 *interpreting* Gen 14 is not the best option in this context. Rather, Hebrews takes advantage of two mysteries related to Melchizedek in the Genesis text—the lack of a genealogy and no mention of his death—and uses them to address issues or gaps related to Jesus' priesthood that Ps 110:4 does not address. Jesus is shown to be a priest like Melchizedek with respect to *not* having a genealogy traceable to Aaron and *not* having died. Psalm 110:4 does not explain what "according to the order of Melchizedek"¹¹⁵ entails, so the Genesis text helps to complete the picture. In the larger scheme of the priesthood argument, Genesis 14 falls on the Jesus side of the ledger, helping fill gaps in Ps 110:4. If someone were to insist on the perspective that Hebrews uses Gen 14 to interpret Ps 110:4, it must be recognized that it does so within the larger operation in which Ps 110:4 is used to explicate Jesus' priesthood in relation to Aaron's priesthood.

¹¹⁴Cockerill, "Melchizedek Christology," 277-307.

¹¹⁵ κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ

Ps 110:4 in 7:11-25

Psalm 110:4 takes center stage again in 7:11-25, after having been in the background of the Gen 22 and Gen 14 discourses. The text of Ps 110:4 functions exegetically in three ways in this section. First, it is used to address the issue of priestly lineage by showing that being a priest in the order of Melchizedek was a legitimate alternative to being a priest in accordance with the rules of physical descent in the law (7:11-17). Second, the oath of Ps 110:4 is presented as offering “a better hope” in conjunction with “a better covenant” (7:18-22), drawing on the prior argument of 6:13-20. Here, the oath is taken as an indicator not just of assurance but of status, elevating the priesthood affirmed by an oath over Aaron’s, which was not affirmed by an oath. (3) The “forever” of Ps 110:4b is used to argue for Jesus’ priesthood being based on “the power of an indestructible life” (7:16) and to take the idea of a perpetual priesthood to another level. Instead of Aaron’s perpetual line of mortal priests, Jesus would be one immortal and effective priest, able to offer a once-for-all sacrifice in place of the continuous series of sacrifices. This last exegetical move manages to extract this impressive set of claims from the phrase “σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.”

Ps 110:4 in 7:26-28

The final few verses of Heb 7 pull together the whole priesthood argument as they declare Jesus to be a holy, exalted high priest who does not need to offer repeated sacrifices and that, in contrast to those appointed by the Law and subject to weakness, Jesus was appointed by “the word of the oath”¹¹⁶ *which came after the Law*, a son made

¹¹⁶ ὁ λόγος δὲ τῆς ὄρκωμοσίας, 7:28

perfect forever. Here Hebrews again draws attention to Ps 110:4 as a divine word which post-dates the Law (7:28), as it did with Ps 95 and a “day” (of rest) that was spoken of long after Moses (4:7-8). The exegetical use of Ps 110:4, then, has both logical and diachronic aspects to it (as was the case with Ps 95).

Summarizing the exegetical use of the Psalms in 4:14-7:28, then, we find that throughout the section, psalms are used to make arguments to legitimize Jesus’ priesthood through positive comparisons of Jesus to Aaron, to assure the audience that it is a trustworthy priesthood and later to demonstrate that it is even a greater priesthood than Aaron’s. Psalm 110:4 is a brief and limited text, but a text that also holds great exegetical potential, with its mysterious and ambiguous elements. Texts from the Pentateuch (Gen 22 & 14) are marshaled to fill out the meaning of Ps 110:4 as it relates to both Jesus’ priesthood and Aaron’s. Psalm 2:7 and Ps 110:1, both cited previously in Hebrews, continue to reinforce the royal aspect of Jesus’ identity, as well, framing the priesthood argument within the context of Jesus as divine Son.

Figure 3.3 Texts and Arguments in 4:14-7:28

	Ps 110:4 (a,b,c)	Pentateuch
Psalm initiates comparison to Aaron— both appointed as priests by God from among the people		
4:14-5:10	Ps 110:4 bc, “You are a priest forever” Designated as (royal) priest	Allusion to Exod 28:1 [etc.] <i>Like Aaron:</i> Appointed from among people
The trustworthiness of the oath of Ps 110:4 applied to Jesus’ priesthood is supported by Genesis 22, showing that a divine oath can be trusted.		
6:13-20	[Ps 110:4 a; “I have sworn....”] Declared a priest by <i>oath</i> <i>Ps 110:4c (6:20) – transition to 7:1-10</i>	Gen 22:16-17 Divine <i>oath</i> with promise to Abraham: Trustworthiness of divine oaths
Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 & Gen 14) is juxtaposed with Levi in an argument for the higher status of Melchizedek (and therefore his priesthood).		
7:1-10	[Implicit: Ps 110:4c “Melchizedek”] Melchizedek	Gen 14:17-20 vs. Levi & priestly descendants
Jesus’ priesthood juxtaposed with Aaronic/Levitical priesthood via Ps 110:4.		
7:11-25	<i>Synthesis: Ps 110:4 a, b & c</i> (7:11-17) Ps 110:4c “order of Melchizedek” (7:20-22) Ps 110:4a “I have sworn...” (7:23-25) Ps 110:4b “...a priest forever...”	vs. Mosaic law & priestly genealogy vs. appointed without an oath vs. perpetual Aaronic priesthood
Summary & conclusion of priesthood argument.		
7:26-28	Ps 110:4 a, b “priest” (b) “forever” (b) “oath” (a)	vs. repetition of sacrifices, priests subject to weakness, appointed by law; word of the oath came <i>after</i> the law.

IV. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY IN 4:14-7:28

What, then, is the textual center of gravity in 4:14-7:28? Psalm 110 plays an integral role; both in framing the section and, even more, in Hebrews’ extensive series of references to words and phrases from Ps 110:4. Is this an example of a midrash on Ps

110:4? Alternatively, is Genesis 14 the basis of 7:1-10 or 7:1-28 as some have proposed?

The best answer is not necessarily the simplest answer.

Through this analysis I have tried to show that, while Ps 110 does exert consistent influence throughout this pericope, the psalm is not the locus of scriptural authority.

Psalm 110:4 is the principal basis for the claim that Jesus is a great high priest—that he is a priest *at all*—and that he is a “forever” priest like Melchizedek. Psalm 110:4 is absolutely indispensable to this argument. However, while indispensable, it is also insufficient. Hebrews clearly senses a need to legitimize its novel claim that Jesus is a great high priest, and nearly every aspect of that legitimization is done with respect to some aspect of the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood. From his appointment to atoning and cultic functions, to genealogical requirements, to the perpetual nature and duration of the priesthood, to its effectiveness, to its status; each of these characteristics has far more to do with Aaron than with Melchizedek. The text of the psalm verse is authoritative to an extent, but it is used to *raise* issues related to Jesus’ priesthood, not to *settle* them. Its power may lie in the perception of the psalm as an oracle, but the oracle itself is not sufficient to complete the argument from the point of view of Hebrews’ author.

When it comes to the views of those who describe the passage as a messianic apology or explanation, there is something to be said for their attentiveness to the royal-priestly messianic profile. From that perspective, the Pentateuch becomes mainly a means of supporting the messianic claim. While not unreasonable, however, we might ask whether that is sufficient to explain Hebrews’ attention to priestly and cultic detail (as in Heb 8-10, 13).

Buchanan's claim that the author "gave more credence to the Psalms, than the Pentateuch,"¹¹⁷ fails to explain Hebrews' dedication to demonstrating that Jesus can meet (and exceed) the Aaronic standard. If the Pentateuch is no longer authoritative, why go to the trouble to argue that Jesus was appointed from among the people like Aaron, that he intercedes like Aaron, and that he will be a priest forever, as Aaron's line was described? Wherever Jesus is different from Aaron, especially with respect to genealogy and the law, Hebrews carefully builds its case, cognizant of the need to reckon with the paradigm that had prevailed for centuries. That line of argumentation does not suggest that the Psalms had so far eclipsed the Pentateuch as to render it irrelevant.

When it comes to more typological perspectives, the attention paid to the details of the relationship between the two priesthoods is a positive aspect of those analyses. Cockerill's analysis is among the most fruitful, in my opinion, especially because he recognizes the supporting role played by Melchizedek and Genesis 14 in the argument that mainly compares Jesus and Aaron. Where I differ is that I do not see in the text of Hebrews, as Cockerill and many others do, a preoccupation with demonstrating that Melchizedek and Aaron *prefigure* Jesus—that, in a sense, the *raison d'être* of Aaron, or Melchizedek, was to point ahead prophetically to Jesus. It may be that authors elsewhere in the NT perceived Aaron and the cult, etc. as having existed *primarily* to prefigure Jesus. In my estimation, however, *Hebrews* does not put much energy into trying to convince its readers that Aaron existed mainly to pave the way for Jesus or to set the cosmic stage for his advent. Melchizedek was a mysterious and fascinating figure and the

¹¹⁷ Buchanan, *Book of Hebrews*, 241.

fact that he originated in the Pentateuch was used in this argument to enhance Jesus' status, not to show that Jesus had been predicted from days of old. The argument for Jesus' priesthood benefitted from the credibility (odd as it was) of Melchizedek. The accent in Hebrews is on making sure the audience is convinced that Jesus, the *newly appointed* high priest of the *new covenant* is better than the priesthood of the Sinai covenant, so that they would put their trust in his priesthood and regard it as sufficient.

When it comes to the appearance of material from Genesis in the Aaron argument, I see no reason to dismiss the possibility that Hebrews incorporated existing exegetical motifs or arguments to serve its purposes, e.g. the humility of Aaron, the oddity of the divine oath in Gen 22, or the mysterious priest-king Melchizedek. In that case, Fitzmyer's claim that the exposition in Heb 7 would have been based on Gen 14 has its appeal—especially prior to its inclusion in Hebrews. But, in the context, of Hebrews, it is preferable to attach Gen 14 to the same side of the exegetical ledger as Ps 110:4—a text or exposition that supports Hebrews' exegesis of Jesus' priesthood (Ps 110) juxtaposed with Aaron's priesthood (Exodus, etc.). In a sense, it is reasonable to say that Hebrews is doing exegesis of Ps 110:4, since it mines its words and phrases for meaning. But, if Hebrews' view of Scripture was Torah-centric, it is surely more correct, or at least more helpful, to describe Hebrews doing exegesis based on Aaron's priesthood, explaining Jesus' priesthood in relation to the paradigm of Aaron and the “Levitical priests” by means of Ps 110.

CHAPTER FIVE: ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN (HEB 8:1-10:18)

One of the keys to understanding Hebrews' exegesis in 8:1-10:18 is to perceive the citation of Exodus 25:40 in 8:5 as the tip of a textual iceberg. Many scholars have suggested that the passage is an exposition based on the amplified allusion to Ps 110:1 in 8:1 which envisions Jesus, as high priest, "seated at the right hand of the throne of majesty in Heaven." An even greater number see the passage as a reflection or exposition on the extensive four-verse, 131-word quotation of Jeremiah 31(38):31-34 and the New Covenant. Both of those texts from the Prophets and Writings are essential to the exegesis Hebrews performs in this passage; I suggest, however, that the quotation of Exodus 25:40 in 8:5, which reads "'See,' he says, 'that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain'" is Hebrews' textual and conceptual starting point, the Pentateuchal text from which the exposition is generated. In that quotation, "everything," refers to the wilderness sanctuary and everything in it. Hebrews creates a literary and theological construct of a heavenly sanctuary in which it links the citation from Exod 25:40 to the implication of Jesus in a heavenly sanctuary from Ps 110. Using contextual, verbal and thematic strategies, the heavenly sanctuary is then linked with the "new covenant" of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and its promises of sanctification and forgiveness. Therefore, this chapter argues that Exodus 25:40 represents a cluster of sanctuary texts from Exodus that act as the Pentateuchal basis for 8:1-10:18, with Ps 110:1 and Jer 31:31-34 functioning as the main exegetical texts.

Like the tip of an iceberg, Exodus 25:40 is the visible extension of a substantial conglomeration of texts, concepts and vocabulary which lurks just below the surface; perceived but not seen. This cluster of texts related to sanctuary in Exodus forms the basis from which the majority of the exegesis in 8:1-10:18 is generated. The Exodus event, a reference to the sanctuary of YHWH from the Song of the Sea (Exod 15:17), the inauguration of the Sinai covenant (Exod 24:3-8); the sanctification and sacrifices of the priests (Exod 25-31) also come into play; as do the tabernacle and its contents, which occupy a large portion of the book of Exodus. The collection of topics throughout Hebrews 8-10—the wilderness sanctuary, priesthood, covenant inauguration, sacrifice, offerings—makes it one of the passages most clearly dominated by Exodus.

Hebrews uses its sanctuary construct to explain the major themes of priesthood, covenant and sacrifice. This passage continues the explanation and legitimization of Jesus' priesthood as part of the broader priesthood argument in 4:14 through 10:29. Jesus is discussed mainly in priestly terms throughout the entire passage. The difference between Heb 5-7 and 8-10 is that, whereas Aarons' priesthood—especially his appointment to the priesthood—was the main Pentateuchal paradigm by which Jesus' priesthood was explained in Heb 5-7, here the sanctuary becomes the central paradigm Hebrews uses as it continues making the case for Jesus as High Priest in 8-10. The sanctuary is the place priestly activity, purification, sanctification, sacrifice and atonement converge in the context of Hebrews' priesthood argument. The wilderness sanctuary becomes the imaginary/symbolic setting in which to work out the priesthood argument.

Much as it was the physical and geographical center of the covenant, priesthood, cult and life of the Israelites, the sanctuary functions as the textual/literary and theological center here in Heb 8-10. The main exegetical texts—Ps 110, Jeremiah 31, Exod 24:8 and Ps 40—all relate to Hebrews’ argument in 8:1-10:18 via connections to the sanctuary in one way or another. While Jeremiah 31 does not mention sanctuary, Hebrews makes the connection by describing the sanctuary, priesthood and cult as part of the “first covenant” (9:1), covenant being a key element of Jeremiah’s message. Very similar to the way Ps 110:4 provided four phrases or ideas from the exegesis developed in Heb 5-7,¹ three key phrases from Jeremiah’s oracle divide the exegesis of Heb 8-10: (1) “I will establish a new covenant” (not like the covenant I made with their ancestors) ... (2) “I will put my laws in their minds and write it on their hearts” ... and (3) “I will remember their sins no more.” Hebrews asserts that Jesus obtained a more excellent ministry, that he mediates a better covenant, a covenant with better promises (8:6). Those better promises include the internalization of the Law—also expressed as a purified conscience—of Jer 31:33 and complete forgiveness envisioned in Jer 31:34. The sanctuary is the site Hebrews chooses to demonstrate how those promises are fulfilled in Christ.

A few comparisons and contrasts of Heb 8:1-10:18 with the example from Mek. Bah. 1 on Exod 19:2 from chapter 1 of this study, are helpful here. The exegesis in the Mekilta pericope begins from the cited verse and then moves through a series of brief

¹ (1) I have sworn... (2) You are a priest... (3) forever... (4) according to the order of Melchizedek

expositions using exegetical texts. The texts are connected to Exod 19:2b via different links and we often see that more than one segment (phrase or verse) of the exegetical text comes into play before moving to the next text. In the end, all of the short exegetical units in the Mekilta pericope contribute to the assertion that “The Torah was given in public, openly in a free place”; the statement immediately following the citation. In Hebrews, all of the shorter exegetical components work together to support the assertion immediately following the citation of Exod 25:40, that Jesus “has now obtained a more excellent ministry, insofar as he is also the mediator of a better covenant which has been ordained as law through better promises” (8:6). Like the Mekilta, that is not an assertion we might perceive as arising from the Torah text, but the exegesis proceeds to build its case.

I. PASSAGE OVERVIEW

8:1-10:18 in Context

Hebrews 8:1-10:18 continues its exposition on Jesus’ priesthood which began with the Aaronic paradigm set out in 4:14-7:28. But, having now established that Jesus is a great high priest, the focus shifts to showing that Jesus has a *better*, or more effective, priesthood than the Aaronic priesthood inaugurated in Exodus. There are several parallels between 4:14-16 and 10:19-25, the two exhortations framing the priesthood argument (as noted in the previous chapter).² Both of those describe Jesus as a great priest,³ refer to his movement toward or into the heavenly sanctuary envisioned on the basis of Ps 110:1,⁴

² See the passage overview section in chapter 4.

³ ἀρχιερέα μέγαν 4:14; ἵερέα μέγαν 10:21

⁴ Cf. Jesus having “passed through the heavens” (4:14) and the exhortation to “enter the holy place” through the way which Jesus had inaugurated (10:19-20).

exhort the people to hold fast to their confession⁵ and, in sacramental language, to “approach” or “draw near.”⁶ In 4:14-7:28, Hebrews argued that Jesus is a priest by both comparing and contrasting his priesthood with Aaron’s.

In 7:11-12 Hebrews briefly discussed the relationship of the law to the priesthood, stating that the people had received the law under the Levitical priesthood (7:11) and that “with a change in the priesthood the law is changed by necessity” (7:12).⁷ In 8:1-10:18, Hebrews moves to show how Jesus’ priesthood functions in the context of a “new covenant,” or “second covenant,” compared to the priesthood and cult of the “first covenant.”⁸

From a textual perspective, a clear shift occurs between Heb 7 and Heb 8 and again at the end of Heb 10. Psalm 110:4 was the predominant exegetical text for much of Heb 5-7 (...a priest forever...” etc.) but Ps 110:1, with its heavenly sanctuary concept, becomes a key text in Heb 8-10. Following the exhortation that concludes the priesthood argument (10:19-25), Hebrews raises the stakes with a warning (10:26-39) before moving on to the discourse on faith and faithfulness beginning with the citation of Hab 2:3-4 in 10:37-38.

⁵ Κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας 4:14; even more emphatically, κατέχωμεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῇ 10:23

⁶ προσερχόμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος (Heb 4:16); προσερχόμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας (Heb 10:22)

⁷ μετατιθεμένης γὰρ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ νόμου μετάθεσις γίνεται. (Heb 7:12)

⁸ “first covenant” (8:7, 13; 9:1, 15, 18; 10:9); “new covenant” (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15); “second covenant” (8:7, 10:9).

Passage Summary

Hebrews begins the passage depicting Jesus in a heavenly sanctuary in 8:1-2:

Now the main point of what we are saying [is] that we have such a high priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that was built by the Lord, not by a human being.

This allusion to Ps 110:1, being seated at God's right hand in the heavens, shifts the focus from Jesus' appointment and legitimacy as a high priest (Heb 5-7/Ps 110:4) to the *effectiveness* of his priesthood over against the priesthood ordained at Sinai (Heb 8-10).

This is no small task; Hebrews attempts to bring about major paradigm shifts in the readers' conceptions of sanctuary, law, covenant, sacrifice and priesthood. A radical reimagining of most of those concepts is required as Hebrews claims that Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant based on better promises (8:6).

Structurally, the combination of the allusion to Ps 110:1 in 8:1 and the citation of Jer 31:31-34 in 8:8-12 form the first part of an *inclusio* framing this passage, with Ps 110:1 and Jer 31:33-34 cited again in 10:12-17 to signal the conclusion of the argument and close the *inclusio*.⁹ Hebrews 8:1-13, which includes the long quotation from Jer 31, is the introduction to the entire section. The argument can then be divided into three major parts, as shown in more detail below: an illustration using the sanctuary (9:1-14), a brief section on purification by blood (9:15-23) and an argument related to sacrifice and forgiveness (9:24-10:18). The exhortation of 10:19-39 begins with a summary of the benefits

⁹ Guthrie, *Structure*, 73, 85; Gareth Lee Cockerill, "Structure and Interpretation in Hebrews 8:1-10:18: A Symphony in Three Movements," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11, no. 2 (2001); Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives," 260. See the concise but thorough structural analysis by Harold W. Attridge, "The Uses of Antithesis in Hebrews 8-10," *Harvard Theological Review* 79, no. 1-3 (1986): 1-5.

of Jesus' priesthood in 10:19-25—the beginning of that exhortation (10:19-22) summarizing the exegesis of 8:1-10:18.

The complexity of the argument in Heb 8-10 is such that it defies attempts to outline it concisely, largely because multiple themes are intertwined throughout. The following approach using short summaries should, therefore, be more helpful than a traditional outline:

8:1-13 **Introduction: Jesus is the priest of a new covenant in a heavenly sanctuary.**

Jesus is a priest in the heavenly sanctuary (8:1-2).

The earthly priesthood operates in a sanctuary that is a copy of the heavenly sanctuary (8:3-5);

Jesus has a better ministry, covenant and promises than the earthly priesthood (8:6).

Since the [Sinai] Covenant had its faults, God has spoken of a “new covenant” through Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34) which promises that the Law will penetrate minds and hearts, and sins will be completely and permanently forgiven (8:7-12).

The “first” (Sinai) covenant is growing old and is soon to disappear.

9:1-14 **Argument 1: Sanctuary and internal righteousness.**

In the most complex portion of the argument for the effectiveness of Jesus' priesthood, Hebrews describes the sanctuary and cult in detail, for two distinct purposes. One of those is to compare Jesus'

priestly activity to the Aaronic paradigm. The other is a symbolic purpose. Hebrews creates an internal/external literary tension as its description shows the inability of worshippers to enter the inner tent (where the tablets of the law rest). Calling the sanctuary a *παραβολὴ* (9:9), Hebrews makes an analogy illustrating the inability of the cult in the present age to bring about purification all the way to the depths of one's conscience. In other words, the present cult cannot fully accomplish the vision of Jeremiah 31:31-34 in which the law penetrates the minds and hearts of the people, as will happen under a new covenant.¹⁰

9:15-23 **Argument 2: Purification through blood.**

Hebrews makes three brief arguments to show that death and blood go along with making covenant purification. The inauguration of the Sinai Covenant involving the sprinkling of blood by Moses (Exod 24:3-8) is one example of purification through blood. The idea that the earthly sanctuary is a subordinate or secondary copy of the heavenly one is reiterated with the stipulation that better sacrifices were required for the purification of the heavenly sanctuary.

¹⁰ See further explanation below.

9:24-10:18 Argument 3: **Sacrifice and forgiveness.**

The longest portion of the argument could be subtitled, “The Power of *Once*.” Here Hebrews explains how it is possible for Jesus’ one-time sacrifice to suffice and how it could even surpass the effectiveness of the many sacrifices and offerings of the ongoing system. The point is to show that Jesus’ single atoning act could make Jeremiah’s prophecy that God “will remember their sins no more” a reality. The Law “has only a shadow of the good things to come” and cannot perfect worshippers—an argument aided by the apparent critique of the sacrificial system in Ps 40:6-8—but Jesus’ sacrifice has the potential to sanctify and perfect his followers forever.

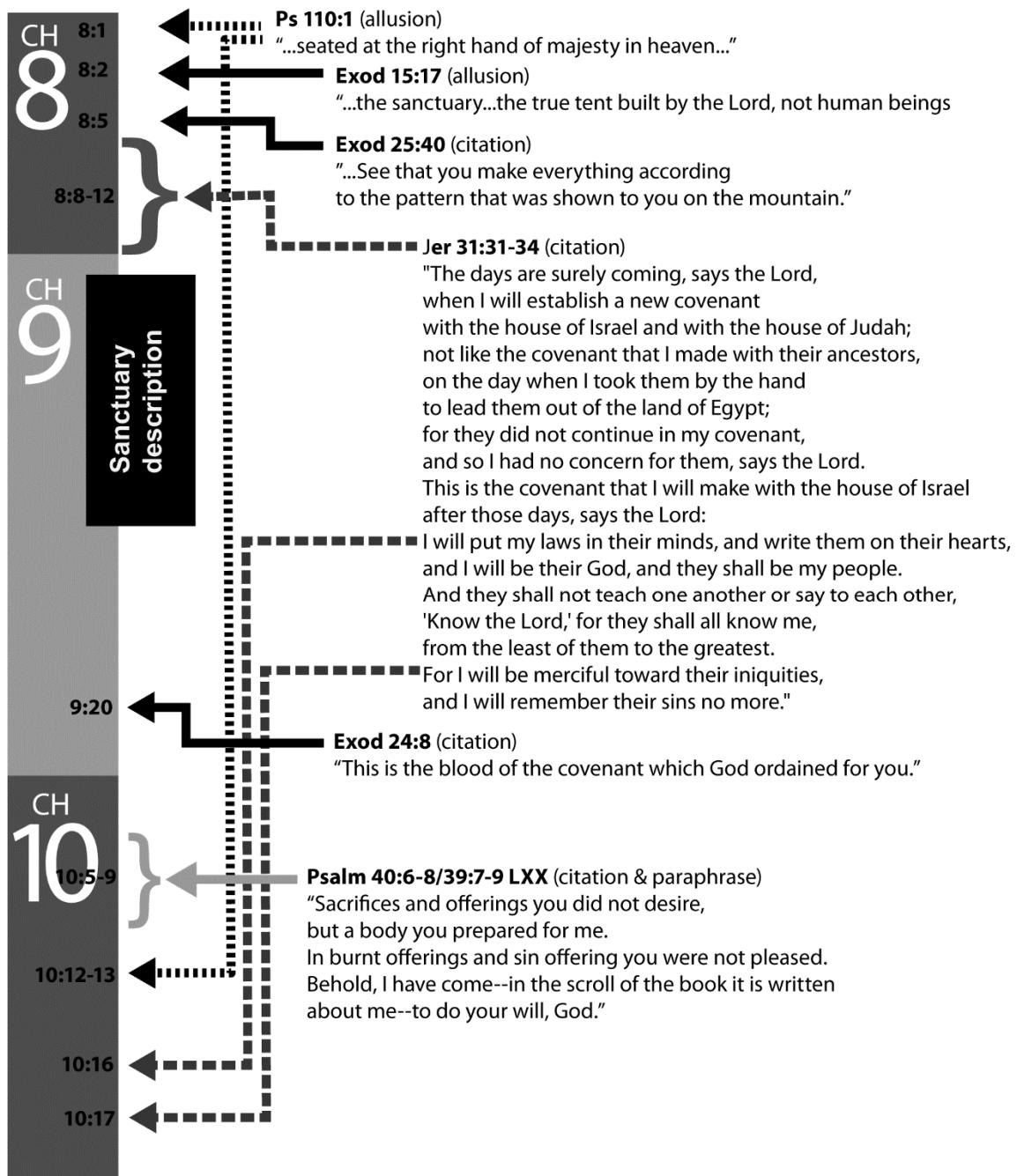
10:19-25 **Enter the Sanctuary with a Pure Heart**

(Summary and exhortation)

The exhortation following the argument of 8:1-10:18 begins by summarizing the benefits of Christ’s priesthood just explained and applying them directly to the audience in the form of an exhortation. These include having the boldness to enter the sanctuary via the new way Jesus inaugurated through his blood, having a great high priest over the house of God, and having “hearts sprinkled [clean] from an evil conscience.”

The sanctuary, covenant inauguration and sacrificial system are all components of the Aaronic paradigm to which Jesus and the “new covenant” (NC) are compared in this section, all of which revolve around the sanctuary. Having introduced this new phase of the priesthood argument, Hebrews describes each of these aspects of the Sinai Covenant (SC) and Aaron’s priesthood, then explains how a corresponding aspect of Jesus’ priesthood under the NC is better. Figure 3 (below) shows how each of the texts involved are worked in throughout the course of the argument.

Figure 3. Citations and allusions in 8:1-10:18



Text in figure 3 from the NRSV

II. PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN 8:1-10:18

Those who analyze Heb 8-10 with an emphasis on its use of the Scriptures commonly see either Jeremiah 31(38):31-34 or Ps 110 as the principal text for chapters 8-

10. There are some exceptions, including Simon Kistemaker, who takes the distinct approach of describing Heb 8-10 as an exegesis of Ps 40(39):6-8 (cited in Heb 10:5-9). Although the citations of Exodus referring to the tabernacle (Exod 25:9, 40 in 8:5) and the inauguration of the Sinai covenant (Exod 24:8; Heb 9:20) are normally recognized as significant in their immediate context, only occasionally is Exodus described as exerting influence over Heb 8-10 as a whole, Radu Gheorghita being an important recent exception.¹¹

Not surprisingly, those who view Ps 110 as the text that governs the Book of Hebrews as a whole also tend to see it as the principal text in Heb 8-10.¹² They often focus on Jesus' priesthood as a key theme (as opposed to covenant or sanctuary, for instance). References to Ps 110 do frame the section; the first verse of the pericope (8:1) alludes to Ps 110:1, combined with the priesthood element of Ps 110:4, and there is a clear two-part allusion to Ps 110:1 again in 10:12-13, near the end of the section. From Buchanan's point of view, "The author's reintroduction of a passage from Ps 110 [in 8:1] reminds the reader that this Psalm is the major text of the entire book." Steve Stanley highlights the fact that in 8:1 Hebrews proclaims, "the main point of what we are saying is this...," observing that "in the one place where the author offers a clear and straightforward statement of his point, 8:1, he relies on allusion to both Psalm 110:1 and 110:4."

¹¹ "He Spoke," 170-82. Spicq does mention Exod 25:40 *in conjunction with* Ps 110: "C'est un commentaire du Ps 110 signalant la session de Prêtre-Messie à la droite de Dieu, mais cette fois en fonction d'Exode 25, c'est -à-dire des prescriptions mosaïques relatives au tabernacle." Spicq, *L'Epître*, I, II, 231.

¹² Including William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), 117-21; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 132; Stanley, "The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives," 253; Jordaan and Nel, "From Priest-King.;" Compton, *Psalm 110*, 98-164.

Jared Compton perceives the influence of Ps 110 throughout the passage, especially in the emphasis on priesthood and sacrifice which, he says, are implicitly related to the heavenly sanctuary and priesthood in Ps 110.¹³ For Compton, Hebrews is very much about the demonstration of Jesus as messiah, a messianic priest envisioned and anticipated in Ps 110, who will solve the problem of sin and restore humanity (cf. Ps 8 in Heb 2).¹⁴ He places a strong accent on the idea that Hebrews understands the old covenant as provisional and anticipatory—something that pointed beyond itself to the ministry of Christ in the context of the new covenant.¹⁵

Kistemaker proposes that Hebrews is comprised of four parts, each based on one of four main psalm citations from Pss 8, 95, 110 and 40. He sees Heb 5-7 as an exposition on Ps 110:4 to which Heb 8-10 closely related. Hebrews 8-10 maintains the theme of the priesthood from Heb 5-7, but Ps 40:6-8 is, instead, the key text in Heb 8-10. He determines that Heb 8-9 is a long introduction to the exegesis of Ps 40 in Heb 10¹⁶ which shows that Jesus fulfilled both the priesthoods of Aaron and of Melchizedek.¹⁷ Through his sacrifice (Ps 40), Christ accomplished atonement for sins once-for-all, fulfilling a major purpose of the Aaronic priesthood. The fulfillment of Melchizedek's

¹³ Compton's brief summary of the passage in relation to Ps 110 is as follows: "...the author uses Psal 110 to (1) explain the connection between the messianic priest's permanence and his ability to perfect asserted in 7:11-28 (8:1-13), (2) connect the ideas of covenant and cult and, thus, introduce the self-confessed inadequacy of the old covenant's cult (9:1-10), (3) explain why Jesus' priesthood required superior sacrifices (9:11-28) and, related, (4) support his argument about the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice (10:1-18).

¹⁴ Compton, *Psalm 110*, 19, 38-53, 1165-169.

¹⁵ *Psalm 110*, 98, 106-16.

¹⁶ Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 124.

¹⁷ *Psalm Citations*, 124.

priesthood “consists in dedication” and “remains for ever.”¹⁸ Hebrews cites Jeremiah 31 to prove the establishment of the new covenant that made the old one obsolete.¹⁹

A somewhat greater number of scholars²⁰ see Jeremiah 31(38):31-34 as the key text in Heb 8-10, including George B. Caird,²¹ Richard Longenecker,²² R. T. France,²³ Harold Attridge.²⁴ Two main reasons for their emphasis on Jer 31 are, first, that citations

¹⁸ *Psalm Citations*, 124.

¹⁹ *Psalm Citations*, 129.

²⁰ In addition to those mentioned below, these include: O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 287; Walters, "The Rhetorical Arrangement of Hebrews."; Daniel E. Buck, "The Rhetorical Arrangement and Function of OT Citations in the Book of Hebrews: Uncovering their Role in the Paraenetic Discourse of Access" (Dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 2002), 175-91.

²¹ Caird's scheme proposed that Hebrews was a series of expositions on Ps 8 (Heb 2), Ps 95 (Heb 3-4), Ps 110 (Heb 7) and Jer 31 (Heb 8-10). In a section of his essay entitled "The Self-confessed Inadequacy of the Old Order," Caird describes the reason for the prediction of a new covenant by Jeremiah as owing to fact that Jeremiah believed the old covenant "to be inadequate for the religious needs of sinful men." (47) Sacrifices were a perpetual reminder of sin and people needed a truly effective means for the removal of sin. Longenecker and France have largely followed and amplified Caird's scheme. While Longenecker and France added detail with regard to Heb 1-2 and 11-13, the three agree that Heb 8:1-10:19 (or 10:39) is based on Jer 31.

²² From Longenecker's vantage point, the author of Hebrews essentially poses the question, "What did the prophet Jeremiah mean by a new covenant?" Assuming that the audience was tempted to "think of the Mosaic covenant as the culmination and apex of God's redemptive program," Hebrews, instead, looked ahead to the establishment of a new covenant, according to Longenecker. Jeremiah recognized that there was "a God-ordained obsolescence" built into the old covenant. Jeremiah 31 serves in Heb 8-10 as both (a) a messianic prophecy and (b) a scriptural "confession of inadequacy for the Mosaic covenant," even as it promises a new covenant. (164) *Biblical Exegesis*, 164.

²³ For France, the main point of the exposition is the recognition of Jeremiah's words being fulfilled in the messianic age. (265) He makes two interesting observations from a textual point of view; first, that Jer 31 is *not* cited directly anywhere else in the NT and, second, that in this exposition (which he deems to be based on Jer 31) the author does not continue citing phrases of the text throughout the exposition as was the case with Ps 95:7-11 in Heb 3-4 or Ps 110:4 in the previous chapter. (264, 265) For France, the theme of the section is "the inadequacy of the former sacrificial system to deal effectively and permanently with the alienation caused by sin," a problem solved by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. All three of these interpretations that highlight Jer 31 have an emphasis on the covenant, the inadequacy of the old covenant (vs. the new) and the messianic fulfillment of Jeremiah's oracle in common.

²⁴ Attridge also designates Jer 31:31-34 as the key text, noting its structural significance (*Hebrews*, 225-226, "Uses of Antithesis," 4-6), although he notes that Ps 110 participates in the *inclusio* that frames the passage, as well (8:1; 10:12-13). Heb 7:27 sets the theme for the following section, according to Attridge, as it states, "he did this, having offered himself for all," the first reference to Christ's self-sacrifice in Hebrews ("Uses of Antithesis," 3). He places greater emphasis on the positive aspects of the promise of a new covenant and its potential for the divine-human covenant relationship than on the oracle as a critique

from Jer 31 (also) frame the section²⁵ and, second, the fact that the Jeremiah quotation is so extensive.²⁶ Those who identify Jer 31 as the textual center of gravity tend to emphasize covenant and/or the fulfillment of prophecy, whereas those focused on the Psalms in this section have typically seen priesthood as the dominant theme.

Gareth Cockerill sees Hebrews' exposition in terms of combinations of texts, with Christ's sacrifice as a central theme. He describes Heb 8-10 as "a symphony in three movements."²⁷ In the first movement (8:1-13), Ps 110:1 and Jer 31:31-34 are the important texts. Ps 110:1 allows for the assertion that "Christ's sacrifice enables him to sit down in the heavenly sanctuary" and Jeremiah 31 facilitates the assertion that Christ's sacrifice "has enabled him to be a minister of the new and better covenant." Exod 25:40 (8:5) shows that the earthly Tabernacle was only a copy of the heavenly and that Christ's sacrifice related to the heavenly sanctuary was greater.²⁸ The second movement (9:1-22) describes the old sanctuary and old covenant in order to demonstrate the significance of Christ's sacrifice, the fact that blood sacrifice was necessary to deal with sin, and that the old system was inadequate to deal with sin completely.²⁹ In the third movement (9:23-10:18), the author explains the significance of Christ's high priestly sacrifice using Ps

of the old covenant and cultic system (*Hebrews*, 225). Those positive aspects include the interiority of the new covenant and effective forgiveness (281-2).

²⁵ Jer 31:31-34 in Heb 8:8-12 and Jer 31:33, 34 in Heb 10:16-17. Ps 110:1 is also cited or alluded to in close proximity at both points.

²⁶ Comprising four substantial verses, 131 words in length, this is the longest citation in the NT.

²⁷ Cockerill, *Epistle*, 345-49; "Structure."

²⁸ "Structure," 183-85.

²⁹ "Structure," 185-90.

110:1 and Jer 31:31-34, bringing Ps 40:6-8 into the exposition at a climactic point.³⁰ The principal contribution of Ps 40 is in showing that Christ's obedience to the will of God in that sacrificial act was the most important factor in effecting deliverance from sin.³¹

Finally, for Gabriella Gelardini, the use of Jeremiah 31 in Heb 8-10 is the hermeneutical key to understanding the Torah/*haftarah* relationship she sees throughout Hebrews. Her idea that Hebrews is a synagogue homily on the occasion of *Tisha b'Av* is based, in part, on the pairing of Exod 31:18-32:35 and Jer 31 in Jacob Mann's reconstruction of the Palestinian Triennial Cycle (PTC) of synagogue readings. Gelardini suggests that the connection between Jeremiah 31 and the golden calf episode in Exodus (31:18-32:35) is perceptible in Hebrews.³² Emphasizing the length and prominence of the Jer 31 citation in Hebrews and its placement at approximately the center of the book (or homily) Gelardini posits that Jer 31 would have been the *haftarah* text, had Hebrews originated as a synagogue homily. Mann's triennial lectionary scheme suggests that a Torah reading beginning at Exodus 31:18 was linked to a *haftarah* of Jer 31:31-34.³³ Mann notes verbal tallies between the Jeremiah passage and the incipit of the Exodus reading (Exod 31:18) involving the covenant and writing:

Exod 31:18 When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

Jer 31:31 ...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

³⁰ "Structure," 191.

³¹ "Structure," 195, 99.

³² Gelardini, "Hebrews," 117-20.

³³ Mann, *Bible*, 510-11.

31:32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors ... a covenant that they broke...

31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make ...: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts...

The most crucial connection between the two texts (Jer 31 and Exod 31-32) is the covenant theme: the breaking of the covenant in Exod 32 (with a renewal in Exod 34) and the new covenant—or covenant renewal—in Jer 31:31-34. *Tisha b'Av* is a fast day recalling the destruction of Solomon's Temple and, eventually, the Second Temple that has been observed since the Second Temple era.³⁴ Further, Gelardini suggests that Hebrews' emphasis on sacrifice and atonement reflects the close relationship between *Tisha b'Av* and *Yom Kippur*. In terms of her perspective on the use of texts, then, the citations of Jer 31 in this section of Hebrews point to Jer 31 as the main text; the reading from the Prophets in Hebrews, which would have been juxtaposed with a Torah reading beginning at or about Exod 31:18. The combination of covenant breach and renewal is seen as the central theme or motif of Hebrews, with sacrifice and atonement related to covenant, perhaps also mindful of the approach of *Yom Kippur*.³⁵

³⁴ As Gelardini puts it, "*Tisha be-Av* commemorates and mourns over the sins of Israel and the covenant curse that followed upon them," also regarded as the day that the wilderness generation was barred from entering the promised land due to the failure at Kadesh-Barnea. "Hebrews," 121. That being the case, the themes of covenant breach and renewal evident in Hebrews—covenant renewal in particular in Heb 8-10—that are evident throughout Hebrews comport with the idea that Hebrews could have been a Jewish-Christian synagogue homily for that occasion. Additional evidence is seen in Hebrew's apparent reference to the Kadesh-Barnea incident of Num 14 in 3:7-19.

³⁵ Gelardini, "Hebrews," 115-24.

III. ANALYSIS OF 8:1-10:18

A look back at the exegetical process in Mek. Bah. 1 on Exod 19:2³⁶ offers a helpful comparison to what Hebrews does here in its process of connecting texts and using them exegetically before engaging in the analysis below. The genre of the Mekilta is very different from Hebrews, walking sequentially through the text of Exodus, but the exegesis related to the particular phrase from Exod 19:2 bears some resemblance to Hebrews' exegesis here.

The exposition in the Mekilta begins with the citation of the phrase that is the basis of the exegesis ("they encamped in the wilderness") followed by the thesis of its exegesis (The Torah was given in public, openly in a free place). It then proceeds through a series of short expositions. The first citations come from a verse in the same pericope as Exodus 19:2; Exod 19:16a and then 19:16b demonstrate that the Torah was given (a) in broad daylight and (b) not in silence but with lightning and thunder. A verbal link is made from the voice of the Lord in Exod 19 to "the voice of the Lord..." in Ps 29, and four phrases from the psalm (29:4, 10, 11a, 11b) are then discussed, using the imagery of the psalm (and a bit of embedded exegesis from a previous passage³⁷) to show that the Law was given in a powerful voice and that the people responded in public. A section attributed to R. Jose then begins from Isa 45:19, treating four segments of that verse individually to show that the Torah as given openly, not just to the seed of Jacob. The exegesis shifts abruptly to a statement that the Lord offered rewards for obeying the

³⁶ Ch. 1, pp. 37-41

³⁷ See pp. 38-40 above.

commandments; the relation of that assertion to the overall argument at first unclear. Exod 16:5 and Lev 15:21 are cited as examples of divine rewards, then the connection between rewards and the original topic of the Torah being given openly becomes apparent as “the nations” are mentioned and the land of the nations is given as a reward to Israel so that the nations would obey the commandments and laws, citing Ps 105:44, 45. Psalm 147:19-20 is then cited in a way that implies an exegetical problem (God’s word was declared to Jacob but not to the nations [they do not know his ordinances], etc.). The Mekilta resolves the problem by citing portions of Hab 3:3-6 to show that the issue was not that the nations did not receive the law, rather they did not accept it. The implication of the last part is that, yes, the Torah had been given publically, etc., despite what Ps 147 seems to be saying.

To summarize and compare, the exposition in the Mekilta begins with the citation from Exodus 19:2 and uses another verse from the near context (Exod 19:16) before using verbal links to then involve other passages. In several cases, multiple segments of the exegetical texts are used and commented upon. Movement from one exegetical text to the next may come from the near context (Exod 19:2 to 19:16), direct verbal links (wilderness), indirect verbal links (voice) or thematic links (law observance, nations). The exposition is based on Exodus 19:2, but certainly covers a good deal of ground that one might not anticipate from that verse, although there is always a connection. Most, but not all, of the exegetical texts are from the P&W. There are often abrupt shifts between the exegetical units (owed partly to the genre), but occasionally there is a transition of some sort. Among the most important aspects for our purposes is that, once engaged, the

exegetical texts tend to take over the flow of the exegesis. Each unit expands on segments of the exegetical text to make the larger argument, rarely referring back to the generative text other than can be discerned through the use of the controlling language of the citation itself (e.g. wilderness) or its near context (e.g. voice) from time to time.

Several of those characteristics are evident in Heb 8-10, as well, as it commences with a citation from Exodus, makes connections with language from the citation itself and its immediate original context which is uncited or submerged. Hebrews also makes surprisingly abrupt shifts from one unit to the next, at times. Different from the Mekilta passage, two of the key exegetical texts, Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ps 40, are cited in full to begin with (not in segments), but thereafter concepts, vocabulary or phrases from those texts take over the exegetical flow. Also unlike the Mekilta passage, two exegetical texts (Ps 110, Jer 31) frame Heb 8:1-10:18.

In Hebrews 8:1-10:18, the citation of Exodus 25:40 (pars.) is the principal text from which the exegesis is generated and two other texts—Ps 110:1 and Jer 31:31-34—exert exegetical influence over 8:1-10:18 as a whole. Those are supplemented by several other specific texts (Isa 53:12; Exod 24:8; Num 19; Ps 40:6-8) and additional allusions. The influence of Psalm 110 is evident from the allusion in 8:1 and the citations of Ps 110:1b and c in 10:12, 13. Ps 110 is a critical text in Hebrews' development of Christ's priesthood and the idea of Jesus seated in a heavenly sanctuary based on Hebrews' prior exegesis is pervasive here. The famously lengthy citation of Jeremiah 31:31-34 early in the passage affects the exegesis throughout Heb 8-10 through its contribution of three major themes (new covenant, internalized law, forgiveness). And, Exodus 25:40 is the tip

of a textual iceberg, a cluster of sanctuary texts including its direct parallels (Exod 25:8-9; 26:30; 27:8) and Exod 15:17, an important complementary verse. Exodus 15:17 is a forward-looking verse in the Song of the Sea which is the very first prophecy of a permanent sanctuary for YHWH.³⁸ That cluster of texts forms the basis of Hebrews' description of the earthly representation of a heavenly reality, a motif which resurfaces several times. Exodus, more broadly, functions paradigmatically here, much as it has in prior sections, with priesthood, sanctuary, covenant and sacrifice being the more prominent aspects of the Sinai Covenant with which Hebrews is concerned as it makes its case.

We now turn to consider the respective roles of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings within each of the sections of the argument of 8:1-10:18 in turn:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 8:1-13 | Introduction: Jesus is the priest of a new covenant in a heavenly sanctuary. |
| 9:1-14 | Argument 1: Sanctuary and internal righteousness. |
| 9:15-23 | Argument 2: Purification through blood. |
| 9:24-10:18 | Argument 3: Sacrifice and forgiveness. |

A few comments will also be made about the role of the in the transitional exhortation in 10:19-25.

Introduction: Priesthood, Sanctuary, Covenant, Law and Forgiveness in 8:1-13

The three most important texts in this section are all placed front and center in the introductory verses (8:1-13). Hebrews paraphrases Ps 110:1, describing Jesus as high

³⁸ First in canonical sequence.

priest being seated in heaven (8:1). The mention of Jesus as a minister in the sanctuary ($\tauῶν ἀγίων$) and the true tent ($\tauῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς$) as the site of Jesus' ministry in 8:2 anticipates the citation of Exodus 25:40 (8:5) where Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle according to the pattern ($\tauὸν τύπον$) that was shown to him by God on Sinai. The extensive citation from Jeremiah 31(38):31-34 comprises nearly half of this introductory section. The exegesis will discuss Jeremiah's "new covenant" in Heb 8-10, as well as the Law (placed in minds and hearts) and forgiveness. The themes and language from these three texts—priesthood, sanctuary, covenant, law and forgiveness—establish the exegetical agenda for the entire section. The topic of sacrifice emerges later in Heb 8-10 in connection with the sanctuary (as the locale), the covenant (inaugurated with blood) and forgiveness (atoning sacrifice), especially in the exposition featuring Ps 40.

Pentateuch in 8:1-13

The generative role of Exodus in 8:1-10:18 is especially evident in three ways: (1) The continuation of the priesthood argument, (2) Exodus' unparalleled dedication of attention to the sanctuary and (3) the lexical and conceptual influence of Exodus 25:40 and the heavenly/earthly or pattern/copy motif. We see that Hebrews constantly grounds its argument on the paradigms of priesthood, sanctuary, covenant and the sacrificial system. Priesthood continues to be a central topic, with 8:1-2 referring to Jesus as a high priest in a heavenly sanctuary. Hebrews turns again to the Aaronic paradigm in 8:3, stating "For *every high priest* is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices...," much as the previous section began by noting that "...*every high priest* is taken from among people

on behalf of people, appointed to the things of God, in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins” (5:1). The priestly functions of bringing offerings (5:1) and sacrifices (5:3; 7:27), doing so regularly and repeatedly (7:27) according to the Law (7:28) continue in this section (8:3-4) from Heb 5-7. The major new element is that of the sanctuary, or tent, and its role in the cultic activity of the priests on earth, as it is in heaven.

Exodus is more concerned with the sanctuary than is any other book of the Scriptures. The description of the tabernacle, the priestly rites to be carried out there, and the subsequent construction and inauguration of the sanctuary (chs. 25-31, 35-40) occupy roughly 13 of the final 16 chapters of the Exodus, more than *one-third of the entire book*.³⁹ Everett Fox’s outline shows the great extent to which Exodus is concerned with the sanctuary, or Tabernacle:⁴⁰

- I. The Deliverance Narrative (1:1-15:21)
- II. In the Wilderness (15:22-18:27)
- III. Covenant and Law (Chaps. 19-24)
- IV. The Blueprints for the Tabernacle and Its Service (Chaps. 25-31)**
- V. Infidelity and Reconciliation (Chaps. 32-34)
- VI. The Building of the Tabernacle (Chaps. 35-40)**

The topic of a sanctuary emerges in Exodus well before the plan for the wilderness tent is revealed to Moses. First, in the Song of the Sea, one of the most memorable moments in Exodus, language of a sanctuary emerges in 15:17, after having

³⁹ 34% of Exodus, by verse count. Looking at Exodus proportionally, we find that the narrative through chapter 18 (just before the arrival at Sinai) comprises about 42% of the book. Adding the remaining narrative sections, which generally pertain to the making or breaking of covenant (mainly chs. 19, 32-34), brings us to about 52.5%. **Legal and ritual material** (including Passover instructions) comprises about 47.5% of the book. Within that, the amount of material dedicated to the sanctuary and priests (34%) far surpasses that dedicated to the covenant itself (11.7%).

⁴⁰ Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary, and Notes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995).

celebrated the spectacular defeat of the Egyptians (Exod 15:1-13) and having looked ahead confidently to future conquests (Exod 15:14-16):

Lead them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance,
the prepared dwelling that you made, Lord, a sanctuary, Lord, that
your hands prepared.

The idea of a sanctuary where YHWH dwells, made or prepared by God's own hands, which echoes later in Exodus (e.g. 24:9-11; 25:40), became a topic of interest and imagination which surfaced in Wisdom 9:8 and in a wide range of other works, from Qumran (4Q174) to Philo (*Plant.* 1:47ff), to the rabbis (e.g. Mek. Shir. 25-40). In 8:2 Hebrews refers to the sanctuary as the true tent "which the Lord has pitched (or built), not human beings."⁴¹ While the vocabulary of Exod 15:17 and Heb 8:2 is slightly different, the idea of a sanctuary built by the Lord is the same. Hebrews refers to "the perfect tent—not made by hands"⁴² in 9:11 and, again in 9:24, declares that "Not into a hand-made

⁴¹ 8:2b: ἦν ἔπηξεν ὁ κύριος, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος. While the vocabulary is somewhat different, the main idea of a sanctuary built by the Lord is the same. Hebrews refers in 9:11 to τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς οὐ χειροποιήτου, "the perfect tent—not made by hands" and again in 9:24 declares that "Not into a hand-made sanctuary did Christ enter...but into heaven itself..." (οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἄγια Χριστός,... ἀλλ' εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν...). The language of the Lord pitching or setting up a tent is considered by some to be an allusion to Num 24:6 LXX, "like tents which the Lord pitched" (ώσει σκηναί ὡς ἔπηξεν κύριος), in the context of Balaam's oracle. Philip Church has made the most substantial argument for this reading, to my knowledge, taking up an G. K. Beale's analysis of Num 24:5-9. Philip A. F. Church, "The True Tent which the Lord has Pitched": Balaam's Oracles in Second Temple Judaism and in Hebrews," in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Contexts*, ed. Richard Bauckham, et al., LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2008); G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, NSBT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 123-26. Church argues that Hebrews alludes several times to Balaam's oracles—indicating the author's familiarity with the oracles—and highlights a messianic/eschatological interpretive stream associated with Balaam's oracles. I do not find Church's arguments to be compelling for most of the allusions to Balaam's oracles in Hebrews (although neither are they entirely baseless). It does seem unlikely that Heb 8:2 alludes to or echoes Num 24:6 LXX because there are other more likely texts to which Hebrews could be alluding, in my view. For Hebrews to make an allusive contrast to tents pitched by Moses in Exod 33:7 or human beings in Isa 66:1-2, passages which also use similar language, seems more likely. If one is willing to consider high levels of multivalency in Hebrews, then an allusion to Num 24:6 at 8:2 is not out of the question, but there are other, more straightforward, options that take priority, in my opinion.

⁴² τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς οὐ χειροποιήτου

sanctuary did Christ enter...but into heaven itself...”⁴³ These statements reinforce Hebrews’ heavenly/earthly cosmology reflected in Exod 25:40 and the incorporation of the language of Exod 15:17 as the seminal expression of this sanctuary concept.

Later in Exodus 24, after the Decalogue but prior to the plans for the Tabernacle are given to Moses, we find a surprising and curious description of a sanctuary-related vision which could easily be overlooked. Immediately after the inauguration of the covenant in Exod 24:9-11, Moses, Aaron, his sons, and the seventy elders go some distance up the mountain. They see “the place, there where the God of Israel stood,” described in language with a transcendent tone as a sapphire pavement, “like the very heaven for clearness” under God’s feet (24:10). The narrative notes that they ate and drank, beholding God. Thomas Dozeman insightfully observes that this vision of God in a heavenly sanctuary marks a key turning point in the Exodus narrative. From that point on, the sanctuary becomes the major concern in Exodus.⁴⁴ These two remarkable passages that envision sanctuaries—one described as “made with God’s own hands” and the other a spectacular vision or experience immediately after the ratification of the covenant—show Exodus’ preoccupation with the sanctuary even before it begins to dedicate chapter after chapter to the specifics of the Tabernacle.

It is important to note, particularly in light of Dozeman’s description, that neither Hebrews nor Exodus ever use the term “temple”⁴⁵ (although his point does well to

⁴³ οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἄγια Χριστός,... ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν...

⁴⁴ Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, 567-68. Dozeman writes “...the heavenly temple in Exod 24:9-11 lacks an earthly counterpart, providing the central theme for the remainder of the book of Exodus: the construction of a temple on earth.”

⁴⁵ Most common lexemes: **לְבָנָה**, ναός

highlight the great importance of the sanctuary in Exodus). Hebrews uses mainly ἅγιος,⁴⁶ usually translated as “sanctuary” or “holy place,”⁴⁷ and σκηνή, “tent” or “tabernacle,”⁴⁸ and seems to be consistent in envisioning the wilderness tabernacle. One answer to the perennial question of why Hebrews refers to the tent (σκηνή) instead of the temple is that Hebrews intentionally draws its paradigms and examples from Exodus—where no temple is mentioned and where the tabernacle dominates the second half of the book.⁴⁹

Another reason Exod 25:40 can be regarded as the tip of a textual iceberg is that multiple texts within Exodus refer to a heavenly prototype for the earthly sanctuary and Hebrews draws concepts and vocabulary from several of them. Exodus 25:40 is the second of at least five similar statements.⁵⁰ During Moses’ first 40-day encounter with God on Sinai (Exod 24:18-32:15), he is instructed to collect material from the Israelites and then, in Exod 25:8-9(7-8 LXX), told to “make for me a sanctuary (ἀγίασμα) and I will be seen among you. And you shall make for me according to everything I show you on the mountain: the pattern (τὸ παράδειγμα) of the tent and the pattern (τὸ παράδειγμα) of all the objects, thus you shall make it.”⁵¹ After receiving the instructions for making

⁴⁶ Not ἀγίασμα as in LXX Exod 15:17; 25:8 and several other places where it translates וְאַמְנוֹן (1 Chr 22:19; 28:10; 2 Chr 20:8; Pss 77:69; 95:6 LXX; Isa 8:14; 63:18; cf. Sir 47:10, 13; 49:6; 50:11).

⁴⁷ “Sanctuary” in 8:2; 9:1, 24 and “holy place” or “Holy of Holies” in 9:2, 3, 8, 12, 25. The use of “altar” (θυσιαστηρίῳ, 7:13) serves basically the same purpose in chapter 7.

⁴⁸ Often translating יְשֻׁבָּה

⁴⁹ There are other probable reasons, as well, but maintaining consistency with the text of Exodus and its narrative background is likely to be the strongest. Among others, Hebrews is also concerned with permanence and impermanence, as evident in Heb 1-2 and 12. A mobile tent has a less permanent feel to it than a temple.

⁵⁰ 25:8-9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; 31:6, 11

⁵¹ καὶ ποιήσεις μοι ἀγίασμα καὶ ὄφθήσομαι ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ποιήσεις μοι κατὰ πάντα ὅσα ἔγώ σοι δεικνύω ἐν τῷ ὅρει τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα πάντων τῶν σκευῶν αὐτῆς οὕτω ποιήσεις Exod 25:8-9 LXX

the ark, the cover for the ark, the table for the bread, sundry other items and the lampstand, Moses is told, “See that you make⁵² [them] according to the pattern (*tò tóπov*) which was shown to you on the mountain”⁵³ (Exod 25:40, cited at Heb 8:5). The instructions for fabricating the tabernacle itself begin in the next verse (Exod 26:1) concluding with the statement, “and you shall set up the tent according to the form (*tò εἶδος*) that was shown to you on the mountain” (Exod 26:30).⁵⁴ After the instructions to build the veil that would divide the inner and outer sanctuaries and the altar, Moses is told one final time, “According to what was shown (*tò παραδειχθέν*) to you on the mountain you shall make it.”⁵⁵ In Exod 31:6 and 11, Moses is told to instruct the craftsmen to make everything that God had commanded him.

The Greek text of Exodus uses several different terms to describe what Moses was shown on the mountain: *παράδειγμα* (pattern or model, 25:9 twice), *τύπος* (pattern, form, image, copy, 25:40), *εἶδος* (form, appearance) and *παραδειχθέν* (representation or that which was manifested, 27:8⁵⁶). In fact, other than the repetition of *παράδειγμα* within 25:9, the Greek text never uses the same term twice, which complicates Hebrews’ exegetical task and doubtless helps explain the variety of terms Hebrews uses. As Hebrews develops its exegesis, it cites Exod 25:40 containing *τύπος*, later using

⁵² There is no adjective or relative pronoun, singular or plural, between “make” and “according” in either the MT or the LXX. Predictably, some mss traditions supplied “παντα,” as in Heb 8:5. My translation.

⁵³ ὅρα ποιήσεις κατὰ τὸν τύπον τὸν δεδειγμένον σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει Exod 25:40 LXX

⁵⁴ καὶ ἀναστήσεις τὴν σκηνὴν κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τὸ δεδειγμένον σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει Exod 26:30 LXX

⁵⁵ κατὰ τὸ παραδειχθέν σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει οὕτως ποιήσεις αὐτό Exod 27:8 LXX. My translation.

⁵⁶ *hapax leg.*, ptc. *παραδείκνυμι*. LSJ: “representation”; LEH: “manifestation.” MT: “what was shown” *מְבָרֶךְ*

ἀντίτυπος to declare that Christ did not enter a *copy* of the true sanctuary, one made with human hands (9:24). The plural ὑποδείγματα, a synonym of παράδειγμα, refers to copies of sketches of “the heavenly things” (in the heavenly sanctuary) that need to be purified as the New Covenant is inaugurated (9:23). Also, pulled into this conceptual grouping at the outset is “shadow” (*σκιὰ*), not derived from the Exodus concept, but attached to it (“copy and shadow,” 8:5). Hebrews applies *σκιὰ* first to the earthly sanctuary and later to the Law (10:1). The heavenly-pattern/earthly-copy (or prototype/copy) motif pervades the passage, drawing not just on τύπος (Exod 25:40) but on the whole lexical cluster. This is a remarkable example of controlling language drawn from the Pentateuchal text, even as some of the vocabulary emerges from sources that remain below the surface of the text.

In this introductory section, then, Exodus provides the basis for Hebrews’ exegesis in three main ways. First, the topic of Jesus’ priesthood in light of the paradigm originating in Exodus continues here from Heb 5-7. Second, Exodus provides the basis of the sanctuary construct. The sanctuary built by God, the idea of a heavenly pattern, and the role of the sanctuary within the context of the covenant will all be expanded upon in the subsequent sections. None of them could be drawn as easily from the non-Pentateuchal texts involved. Third, the language and background of Exodus 25:40—and its parallels within Exodus—serves as the lexical foundation of the heavenly-pattern/earthly-copy motif that proves essential to Hebrews’ exegesis of the reigning paradigms of sanctuary, covenant and sacrifice, all of which will be redefined under the New Covenant.

Prophets and Writings in 8:1-13

Psalm 110:1 and Jeremiah 31:31-34 are the exegetical texts in this first portion of the passage (returning again at the end, 10:12-18). Both texts are used to explain Jesus and his ministry in relation to paradigms set in the Sinai covenant. Each contributes lexically and conceptually to the exegesis, situating Jesus and acting as a prism through which the Pentateuch is refracted.

Psalm 110 connects the major sections of the priesthood argument, bridging from the exegesis in Heb 7, the “priest forever in the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:4), to the focus on Jesus the high priest seated at God’s right hand in heaven (Ps 110:1) in 8:1. An allusive expansion on Ps 110:1 in 7:26, Jesus the high priest “exalted above the heavens,” is followed by a further amplification in 8:1, where “Sit at my right hand” becomes “one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven.” The key contribution of the psalm at that point is to specify Jesus’ location in heaven, inferred from the psalm’s reference to being seated at God’s right hand. That allows for the connection with the heavenly sanctuary inferred from Exodus 25:40 (and pars.). The mention of this high priest being *seated* is spatial, but it also introduces that language that have a different exegetical purpose later on.⁵⁷

Jeremiah 31(38):31-34 is quoted at length in 8:8-12. It is the main exegetical text from that point through the rest of the argument. The Jeremiah passage itself interprets Exodus, explaining the outcome of the Sinai Covenant for the exodus generation, much

⁵⁷ Being seated connoting the *completion* of Christ’s priestly work (or part thereof) in 10:11-14. See below.

as Ps 95:7-11 interpreted the experience of that generation. Jeremiah 31 recalls “the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt.” The fact that the people “did not continue in my covenant” is the expressed reason for the anticipated “new covenant” (8:8, 10; Jer 31(38):31, 33; cf. 8:13). Hebrews includes a brief note of agreement with Jeremiah’s evaluation that God found fault with those people (8:8a), adopting the interpretive slant of the oracle to a point, but then moves on to make use of other elements of the citation. Hebrews is less concerned with the reason for creating a new covenant than it is with explaining how it relates to Jesus.

The exegesis in Heb 9-10 develops three themes from the Jeremiah citation: (1) a new covenant, (2) the idea of the law becoming internalized (in their minds, written on their hearts) and (3) a complete forgiveness of sins. At the conclusion of the citation, Hebrews asserts that the prophecy of a new covenant indicates that the first covenant is getting old and is ready to vanish (8:13).

Synthesis: Texts and exegesis in 8:1-13

As Hebrews transitions from building its case that Jesus is a great high priest to demonstrating that his priesthood is effective, it moves from making direct comparisons to Aaron and the Levitical priests to showing how Jesus’ priesthood works out in the context of the sanctuary. It does this by paraphrasing Ps 110:1 so as to suggest that Jesus is a great high priest in the heavens and introducing the idea that the wilderness sanctuary was a copy of a heavenly prototype from Exodus 25:40 (pars.). That heavenly sanctuary is where Jesus sits at God’s right hand. The reference in Exodus 15:17 to a sanctuary made with God’s own hands (alluded to in 8:2) supports the idea of two sanctuaries.

Jeremiah 31:31-34, which refers to an old covenant, a new covenant, the internalization of the law under the new covenant and the complete forgiveness of sins, is cited in the introduction with very little interpretation. Those themes will guide much of the exegesis in the rest of the passage. With the sanctuary concept from Exodus as its basis, Hebrews is also able to use the prototype/copy motif to interpret the sanctuary, covenant, Law and sacrificial system, all as copies and shadows of a heavenly reality in one way or another.

The Sanctuary and the Conscience: 9:1-14

In 9:1-14, Hebrews' author develops the first of three arguments (9:1-14; 9:15-23; 9:24-10:18) that employ themes from the Jeremiah citation in its exegesis of the Pentateuch. In this first argument, the Sinai Covenant is juxtaposed with the New Covenant by means of an illustration based on a description of the sanctuary. In the process of describing the sanctuary, Hebrews develops a literary tension between access and non-access to the inner sanctuary (9:1-7). The picture is one of constant activity taking place in the outer sanctuary, but with entry to the inner sanctuary extremely limited (only the high priest entered) and very rare (once a year). Hebrews uses this inner-outer, or interior-exterior, tension as an illustration to explain that the priestly service of the first covenant was able to sanctify or purify the exterior of a person—the flesh—but that purification did not reach to the interior. Even though the priestly service in the wilderness sanctuary did not get all the way in, so to speak; with Jesus as the high priest in the new covenant, on the other hand, even the conscience would be purified. Put another way, the sanctuary parable (*παραβολὴ*; 9:9) shows that the new covenant is capable of sanctifying or perfecting all the way into the heart (inner tent), whereas the

sanctification effected by first covenant was limited to sanctifying the flesh (outer tent), consistent with the internalization or interiority of the Law envisioned in Jer 31:33-34a, i.e., the Law placed in minds and written on hearts.

The inner/outer motif is the concept behind the sanctuary analogy and most of the exegesis in 9:1-14. The prototype/copy motif factors into the beginning (“earthly sanctuary,” 9:1; and “built,”⁵⁸ 9:2) but is then set aside until the end of the exposition (9:11-14). There are five parts to the exposition in 9:1-14:

- 9:1 (Introductory sentence) First covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary.
- 9:2-5 Description of the “first tent”
- 9:6-10 Parable of the sanctuary
- 9:11-12 Christ’s entry to the greater tent
- 9:13-14 Sanctifying the flesh vs. sanctifying the conscience

Pentateuch in 9:1-14

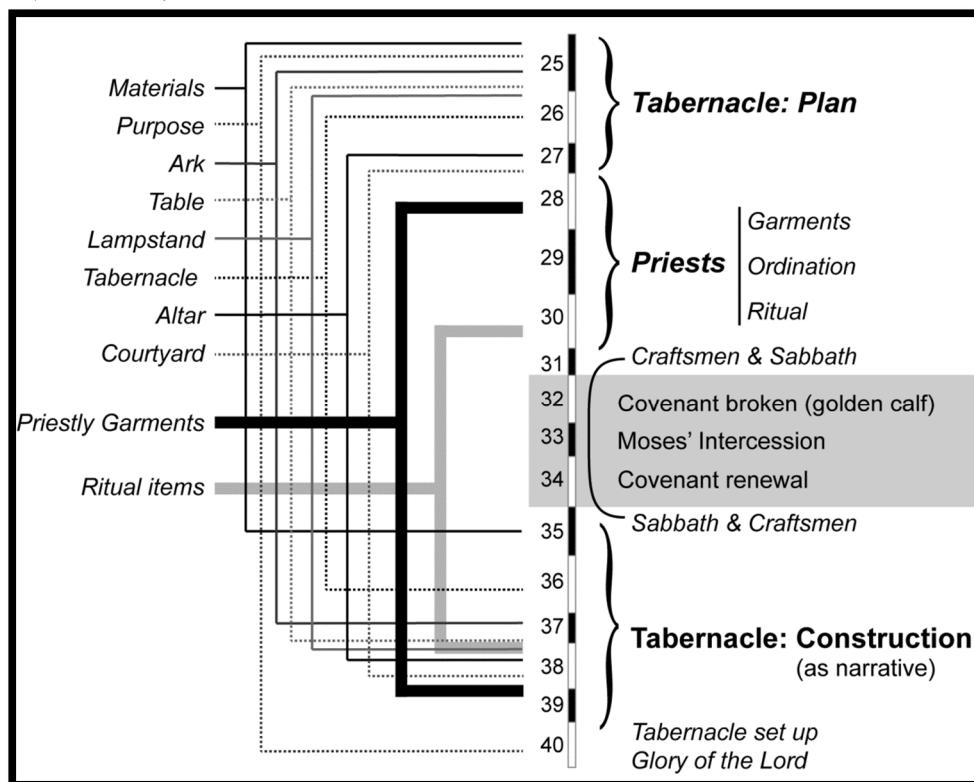
At least the first three-quarters of this exposition pertain directly to the Pentateuch, with no reference to Jesus or anything related to the NC until 9:11; nor is there much direct critique of the “first covenant” sanctuary or cult prior to that point. The influence of Exodus cannot be missed as this passage, like Exodus itself, dedicates much of its attention to the tent sanctuary. As indicated by the following diagram, Exodus describes every element of the sanctuary, as well as the priestly garments and ritual items twice; first as the plan for all of it is described, then as the process of fabrication and set-

⁵⁸ Built, constructed or prepared: κατεσκευάσθη.

up is narrated in detail. The priests' "ritual duties"⁵⁹ referred to in 9:6-7 originate in Exodus, as well (see esp. Exod 30).

Figure 5.1 Plan and Construction of the Tabernacle in Exodus

By chapter (Exod 25-40)



The opening statement of this exposition makes clear that the regulations for worship (*δικαιώματα λατρείας*) and earthly sanctuary (*ἄγιον κοσμικόν*) are the main topics and that they are part and parcel of the “first covenant.” The choice of “first” covenant makes it apparent that the first covenant and the “new” covenant, just mentioned, are juxtaposed. In its description of the sanctuary the objects within, Hebrews forms a verbal link between the sanctuary texts and Jer 31 with the word *διαθήκη*,

⁵⁹ τὰς λατρείας ἐπιτελοῦντες

mentioning both the “ark of the covenant” and the “tablets of the covenant.”⁶⁰ The sanctuary and its rites and regulations are also inextricably part of the covenant.

Hebrews describes the sanctuary in terms of its contents and components, moving from the outer to the inner sanctuary (9:2-5). The description of the outer sanctuary, or “first tent” is spartan; an unadorned list of just three items: the lampstand, the table (for the bread), and the presentation of the bread.⁶¹ Next, Hebrews describes that “behind the second curtain” was a tent called “Holy of Holies.”⁶² The description of the contents of the inner sanctuary is far more detailed. The objects in the inner sanctuary are all described in elaborate terms: e.g. the golden altar, the ark covered in gold, the golden jar that holds manna, Aaron’s rod that had budded, etc. All of the items are have at least one modifier attached to them. In contrast, Hebrews does not mention the fact that lampstand in the outer tent was also made of gold (Exod 25:31) or that the table for the bread and its vessels were very elaborate, with gold ornamentation (Exod 25:23-26). In so doing,

⁶⁰ The tablets are also referred to in Exodus (LXX) as “stone tablets” (*πλάκας λιθίνας*; 31:18; 32:15; 34:1; 34:4) and “the two tablets of the witness” (*αι δύο πλάκες τοῦ μαρτυρίου*; Exod 31:18; 32:15). Only once are they called “tablets of the covenant” (*τῶν πλακῶν τῆς διαθήκης*; 34:28).

⁶¹ ἢ τε λυχνία καὶ ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων 9:2

⁶² There is text critical issue in 9:2-3 with regard to the anarthrous use of ΑΓΙΑ (*Ἄγια* NA28) and ΑΓΙΑ ΑΓΙΩΝ (*Ἄγια Ἅγιον* NA28) and related variants. The main problem is in 9:2, where it is unclear whether “holy” or “holies” (*ΑΓΙΑ*) refers to the outer sanctuary in a grammatically irregular way, to the tent, to the bread, or problematically designates the outer tent as the “holy of holies” (P⁴⁶ A D* vg^{mss}). The MSS differ with regard to accenting ΑΓΙΑ as a neuter plural noun (*Ἄγια*) or feminine singular adj (*άγια*); some make additions, including the addition of the neuter plural definite article or adding *αγιων* (*αγια αγιων* P⁴⁶ A, D* vg^{mss}) to produce “holy of holies.” Some MSS lack accents (¶ D¹ I P), others add the neuter plural article to clarify, and others make additions to clarify. Though a minority opinion, I tend to agree with Vanhoye, who takes ΑΓΙΑ as a fem. sg. adj. modifying *σκηνὴ*, which would be perfectly understandable in the case of majuscules/unaccented text. Vanhoye, *La structure littéraire de l’Épître aux Hébreux*, 144. In that case *σκηνὴ* and *άγια* are the first and last words of the longer clause (emphatic placement) and Hebrews then moves in 9:3 to describe *τὸ δεύτερον καταπέτασμα σκηνὴ ἡ λεγομένη Ἄγια Ἅγιον*, in parallel fashion. Ultimately, the variant is not highly consequential unless one determines that Hebrews’ author is confused about the sanctuary layout, which is an unlikely and unnecessary conclusion.

Hebrews emphasizes what Koester calls “the splendor of the inner chamber,”⁶³ representing the inner sanctuary as more fascinating, important and appealing; an attitude consistent with the thrust of the exegesis to follow.

Table 5.1 Descriptions of the Sanctuary in 9:2-5

Outer tent	Inner tent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the lampstand: ἡ λυχνία • the table: ἡ τράπεζα • the setting forth of the bread: ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • golden altar of incense: χρυσοῦν θυμιατήριον • ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold: τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης περικεκαλυμμένην πάντοθεν χρυσίῳ • golden jar that holds the manna: στάμνος χρυσῆς ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα • Aaron’s rod that had budded: ἡ ῥάβδος Ααρὼν ἡ βλαστήσασα • tablets of the covenant: αἱ πλάκες τῆς διαθήκης • the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat: Χερουβὶν δόξης κατασκιάζοντα τὸ ἰλαστήριον

The description has a decisive outer-to-inner trajectory. Beginning with the outer tent and its objects (9:2), it mentions the curtain (9:3), then the altar and ark within the inner sanctuary, then the objects within the ark: the tablets, jar of manna and Aaron’s rod. The final items mentioned may be, symbolically and spatially, the most central of all, the pair of cherubim (from which God would speak) and the mercy seat, the place of atonement. Commentators have puzzled over the composition of the list, which is a composite, not from just one scriptural source, so there was intentional editorial effort involved. Two reasons behind the construction of the list, I would suggest, were the creation of the outer-to-inner directionality and the enhanced prestige of the inner sanctuary.⁶⁴

⁶³ Koester, *Hebrews*, 402.

⁶⁴ The most challenging interpretive issue arises with regard to the placement of the altar of incense (θυμιατήριον, 9:4), which Hebrews places in the inner sanctuary while most descriptions in the Pentateuch have it in the outer sanctuary. Another issue, pertaining to sources, is that Aaron’s rod was

As Hebrews proceeds from the description of the sanctuary itself to its interpretation of the sanctuary as a parable, issues of limited entry and access emerge. The priests, as a group, are said to go into the first (outer) tent continually or regularly ($\deltaι\alpha\pi\alpha\nu\tau\alpha\zeta$ ⁶⁵) whereas the high priest enters the second (inner) tent “only once a year.”⁶⁶ The negative phrasing of entering “not without blood”⁶⁷ (9:7) has a restrictive tone, furthering the sense of limited access. Making a major interpretive statement in 9:8, Hebrews explains that “by this” (arrangement of priestly activity and access) the Holy Spirit “indicates that the way of into the sanctuary has not yet been revealed as long as the first tent stands.⁶⁸ This, explains the author, is “a $\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\beta\omega\lambda\dot{\eta}$ of the present time” (9:9), during which the priests’ offerings and sacrifices cannot “perfect the conscience of the worshipper”; rather the regulations are only on food, drink, and ritual washing—regulations of the flesh that have been imposed until the time of a new order (or “reformation”). This assertion of externality is reinforced with another exegetical analogy that references the blood of goats and bulls with “the sprinkling of ashes of a heifer”—the latter a ritual for purification from corpse defilement (Num 19; 9:13).⁶⁹ This *qal wahomer*

obviously not part of the account in Exodus, since that episode came later (Num 17). So, Hebrews creates its lists either from memory or from several scriptural accounts. Regarding the placement of the θυμιατήριον, a few possibilities exist to explain that apparent inconsistency, including the ambiguity of certain passages in the LXX, especially Exod 30:6 (“you shall place it before the veil that is over the ark...” θήσεις αὐτὸ ἀπέναντι τοῦ καταπετάσματος τοῦ ὄντος ἐπὶ τῆς κιβωτοῦ) and Exod 40:6. Extrabiblical traditions are also mixed on the placement of the θυμιατήριον. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 234-38; Cockerill, *Epistle*, 375-78; Koester, *Hebrews*, 401-04; Gheorghita, “He Spoke,” 181.

⁶⁵ Ellingworth 433

⁶⁶ ἄπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος

⁶⁷ οὐ χωρὶς αἴματος

⁶⁸ (With the present participle of $\xi\chi\omega$) ἔχούσης στάσιν. See Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 439; Eisenbaum, “Letter.”

⁶⁹ “Letter,” 417; DeSilva, “Invention,” 307. See also Mayer Irwin Gruber, S. David Sperling, and Arie Strikovsky, “Red Heifer,” in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik

argument (9:14) asserts that, as effective as those sacrifices and rites of purification might be, they purify only the flesh; how much more can Christ's blood—offered without blemish—purify, even penetrating to one's conscience. Here we begin to see Hebrews make a connection between conscience and the Law placed in minds and written on hearts when reading this “parable” in light of Jer 31 (see Prophets and Writings in 9:14, below).

One final observation related to the role of the Pentateuch in this passage is that the prototype/copy motif is directly applied to the sanctuary more than once. Having referred to the tent as “earthly” in the opening verse, the next thing said about it is that a first tent (the outer sanctuary) was “built,” “constructed,” or “prepared” (*κατεσκευάσθη*)⁷⁰ in 9:2, which we know was by human hands (cf. 8:2, 5).⁷¹ In 9:11, the “greater and perfect tent” which Christ enters, on the other hand, is “not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.”⁷² It is crucial to note that the “parable” or analogy of 9:6-10 is *not* a product of the heavenly/earthly motif. The parable of 9:6-10 is a different analogy based on the layout of the sanctuary itself, and on movement and access. A heavenly prototype does not inform that particular analogy.⁷³

(Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007): “The ashes of the red heifer were combined with spring water (Heb. *mayim hayyim*) in a vessel (Num. 19:17) to produce a mixture called “water of lustration” (Heb. *me niddah*). The mixture was applied by dipping into it and sprinkling (19:18) on the third and seventh days after defilement (19:19). This defilement was acquired by touching a corpse, a grave, or a human bone, or by being under the same roof with any of these.”

⁷⁰ Κατασκευάζω also punctuates the end of the description of the tent and furnishings in 9:6, “These things having been prepared/built/made...”

⁷¹ The same verb was used to declare that Jesus was the builder of God’s house (3:3-4).

⁷² οὐ χειροποιήτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως

⁷³ Disagreeing with Steve Stanley, “Hebrews 9:6-10: The ‘Parable’ of the Tabernacle,” *Novum Testamentum* 37, no. 4 (1995). The fundamental difference of interpretation is that Stanley takes “first tent”

Prophets and Writings in 9:1-14

This pericope (9:1-14) is rather unique in that there are no citations or paraphrases of any text from the Prophets or Writings, as there are in each of the other sections of this argument (and, indeed, most of the expositions throughout the book). It is evident, however, that the exegetical functions of Ps 110 and, especially, Jeremiah 31 continue in 9:1-14. The role of Ps 110 is straightforward, with the previously discussed portrayal of Jesus as an eternal priest (Ps 110:4) in the heavens (Ps 110:1) reinforced here. Christ enters the greater, perfect sanctuary *not of this creation* (9:11-12) for eternal redemption (9:12).

The influence of Jeremiah 31 is more complex and more significant. First, the exposition is framed by the term “covenant,” drawn directly from the Jer 31 citation. In 8:13, the first covenant is described as aging, passing away, as a result of the oracle foreseeing a “new covenant,” and a reference to the “first covenant” begins 9:1. At the end of this exposition, the transition in 9:15 begins, “for this reason he is the mediator of a new covenant.” That the exegesis of 9:1-14 occurs in the covenant context is one of the major contributions of Jer 31. The second effect of Jer 31 on this passage is sometimes overlooked, the connection between Jer 31:33 and the conscience (9:11, 14; 10:2, 22).

With the interpretive statement in the exposition at 9:9-10, the conscience becomes the key issue. Hebrews says that the sacrifices and offerings of the present time cannot perfect the conscience (9:9), and we learn that Christ *can* purify the conscience

in mainly a chronological, rather than spatial, sense as explained above. Also *contra* Attridge’s analysis showing a continuation of the heavenly/earthly dichotomy in Attridge, “Antithesis,” 6-7.

(9:14). One definition of συνείδησις, the word here for conscience, is “the inward faculty of distinguishing right and wrong.”⁷⁴ Read in light of Hebrews’ citation of Jer 31, this relates directly to Hebrews’ understanding of “I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts” (Jer 31:33). In effect, Hebrews employs “conscience” as shorthand for the internalization of the Law envisioned under the NC. This connection is also made clear in 10:22, where “hearts are purified from an evil conscience.” The description of the sanctuary elevates importance of the inner sanctuary over the outer, not least because the ark of the covenant and the tablets of the covenant—the Law—can be found within the Holy of Holies, the inner tent. Most priestly activity, by far, is restricted to the outer sanctuary; only the high priest had very limited access to the inner sanctuary during that time (9:9). According to Hebrews, the first covenant, as explained here, deals principally with the external—purifying the *flesh*, etc. “The way in” to the most interior part of the sanctuary is not yet available (9:8). Hebrews links the future purification or perfection of the conscience to the penetration of the Law all the way into minds and hearts in Jeremiah,⁷⁵ anticipated as the NC comes to fruition.

Synthesis: Texts and exegesis in 9:1-14

The exposition concerning the sanctuary and the conscience in 9:1-14 uses the paradigm of the earthly sanctuary juxtaposed with Psalm 110’s vision of Jesus as an eternal priest in the heavens and Jeremiah’s vision of a new covenant. In Jeremiah 31, God’s law comes to be placed within the minds and written on hearts of the people.

⁷⁴ BDAG, συνείδησις, εως, ἡ (2).

⁷⁵ Jeremiah’s vision is not far, really, from the sense of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-9) or the Law being in one’s mouth and heart in Deut 30:14.

Under that new covenant, sanctification will be more than skin-deep; it will be so effective that even the conscience can be perfected.

The sanctuary analogy is perhaps deceptively simple. Hebrews describes the design of the outer and inner sanctuary and the limitations on priestly access in order to indicate that, under the first covenant, the priests' sacrifices and offerings were more external than internal. An impediment to understanding Hebrews' "parable" of the sanctuary, it seems, lies in the fact that, having brought the sanctuary into its priesthood argument by means of Exodus 15:17 and 24:50 (pars.) and discussing the prototype/copy cosmology, Hebrews leaves that metaphor aside from 9:2-11 as it introduces the outer-inner spatial dynamic, instead. There is some contact between the prototype/copy motif and the interior/exterior tension in this passage, but to confuse them with each other renders the passage unintelligible.⁷⁶

Blood, Death and Covenant: 9:15-23

In 9:15-23, Hebrews develops the second, and shortest, of the three arguments that apply themes from Jeremiah 31 to paradigms from the Pentateuch. Covenant is a prominent theme here, but forgiveness (Jer 31:34) also begins to be worked into the exegesis. This brief argument is a digression to offer additional evidence in support of the idea that Christ's death—often expressed in terms of his blood—was a reasonable and necessary part of his being able to bring about forgiveness. This portion provides logical support for the premise of the previous four verses (9:11-14): that the blood of Christ could perfect or purify the consciences of worshippers. Hebrews now makes a series of

⁷⁶ Again, *contra* Stanley, "Hebrews 9:6-10." See Attridge, "Antithesis," 6-7.

brief statements to explain, in general terms, how blood and sacrifice relate to purification before returning to argue specifically for the effectiveness of Christ's death as a purifying, atoning act (9:24-10:18).

Hebrews piles up several examples to show that (a) blood is an essential element of covenants and (b) that it *purifies*, the latter being the more important point of the two. The style here is about as close to a purely legal or *halakhic* argument as Hebrews gets. The argument can be summarized as follows:

9:15 Two-part claim: (1) Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant *because* he can purify consciences (assumed from 9:11-14). (2) *Since* the death of Jesus redeemed transgressions of the first covenant ($\delta\imath\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\kappa\eta$), those who are forgiven can receive the promised inheritance.

("Inheritance" sets up a wordplay in the next verse.)⁷⁷

9:16-17 Analogy/logical wordplay: As with a legal will or testament ($\delta\imath\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\kappa\eta$), death is necessary for the will to be put into effect.⁷⁸

9:18-20 Evidence: The first covenant ($\delta\imath\alpha\theta\acute{\eta}\kappa\eta$) was inaugurated with the sprinkling of blood (Exod 24)

9:21 Evidence: The tent and vessels were also sprinkled with blood. (Num 19, Lev 8, Exod 29)

⁷⁷ DeSilva, "Invention," 308; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 255-56.

⁷⁸ Attridge, "Antithesis," 7; DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle "to the Hebrews"*, 308-09; Ceslaus Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 3rd ed., vol. II (Paris: Gabalda, 1953), 262.

9:22 Summary of evidence: Almost everything is purified by blood under the law.

Inference: Without death and blood there is no forgiveness for sins (cf. 9:15)

9:23 Conclusion: The “copies” of the heavenly things must be purified this way (by blood according to the Law) but the heavenly things themselves (i.e. the heavenly sanctuary, etc.) need better sacrifices.

The argument associates the concepts of forgiveness and covenant as it seeks to show that blood and death are associated with covenants, especially when it comes to the inauguration or ratification of a covenant. All of this strengthens the assertion of 9:15 that Jesus is the mediator of the NC and helps to explain how his death/sacrifice relates to that covenant.

Hebrews is concerned with purification leading both into and out of this passage. In 9:13-14, purification of the flesh is contrasted with purification of the conscience. In 9:23, purification of the earthly things (sanctuary, etc.) is contrasted with the purification of heavenly things. Christ’s blood is the ultimate purifying agent, able to bring about forgiveness, purifying the conscience. It is also suitable for the ritual purification of the heavenly sanctuary.

The key point of the preceding passage (9:1-14) is the assertion that the earthly priesthood and sacrifices of the SC provided external sanctification whereas the NC will provide sanctification that reaches as deep as a person’s conscience through Christ’s sacrifice and his heavenly priesthood. In 9:15-23, Christ’s sacrifice and the significance

of his blood are further explained as part of the inauguration of the NC. The prototype/copy motif comes into play again in 9:23 as the sanctuary and its vessels are described as “sketches” or “copies” of heavenly things.

Pentateuch in 9:15-23

The brief argument in 9:15-23 provides support for the twin assertions (a) that Christ is the mediator of a new covenant and (b) that his blood purifies. Rather than drawing one main paradigm from the Pentateuch, as was the case with the sanctuary in 9:1-14, here we find a series of short proofs and allusions drawn from the Pentateuch to prove those assertions. The idea of a covenant mediator (9:15, cf. 8:6), transgressions under the first covenant, promise and inheritance, the ceremony inaugurating the first covenant (Exod 24) and two other examples of purificatory rites (Num 19, Lev 8) are all Pentateuchal elements found in the proofs. The second citation from Exodus in Hebrews is found here, Exod 24:8 in 9:20. The final verse, 9:23, is transitional, connecting purification from this section back to sanctuary and forward to sacrifice, one of the key themes in 9:24-10:18.

Jesus had been described as the mediator of a better covenant in 8:6, a role which—although not described in the same words—had also been explored in Heb 2-3. There Jesus was compared to Moses, the original covenant mediator, in multiple respects (see chapter 2 above). Here, consistent with the overall concern of Heb 8-10, the priestly function of dealing with sins is most relevant. The inauguration of the covenant in Exodus 24, one of the most dramatic moments of Moses’ career as covenant mediator,

figures into this this passage, as well. Transgressions under the first covenant (i.e. against the Mosaic Law) are those for which Christ brings redemption.

The Pentateuchal themes of promise and inheritance surface often in Hebrews. Heb 1:14 mentions those who will inherit salvation. Heb 3-4 discuss rest and promise. Heb 6 relates oath and promise (Gen 22:17). Heb 11 refers to the promise to Abraham and inheriting blessing, and Esau's forfeiture of inheritance is part of a warning in 12:17. In 9:15-23, Hebrews connects the terms inheritance and covenant (the one assured by the other) to facilitate the use of διαθήκη as both "covenant" and "will" (9:16-17) in advancing the argument.

While the inauguration of the covenant is sometimes seen as the central, even orienting, element the Pentateuch brings to Heb 8-10, this particular reference to the inauguration of the covenant in Exodus 24 is (mainly) one of three examples of purification through blood that Hebrews stacks up in order to demonstrate that Jesus' priesthood has that capacity. The brief discussion of the inauguration of the covenant begins with the mention that even that διαθήκη was not inaugurated without blood (9:18). The actions of Moses, the covenant mediator, are described in some detail, most notably the sprinkling of blood (9:19). Exodus 24:8 is quoted in 9:20, including the phrase, "this is the blood of the covenant..." Then, 9:21 refers to two other instances of sprinkling with blood: the purification of the tent in Num 19:4 (the red heifer passage) and purification of items in the sanctuary with blood during the ordination of Aaron and sons (Exod 29:15-36; Lev 8:15-30).

In the account of the inauguration of the covenant in Exod 24, Moses is called up the mountain again with Aaron and two of his sons, Nadab and Abihu, and “the seventy elders of Israel” (24:1). Only Moses is permitted to come near the Lord.⁷⁹ The covenant ceremony involves a sacrifice and setting aside of blood, sprinkling blood on the altar (24:6), reading the “book of the covenant” to the people with their affirmation that they will do all that the Lord has spoken (24:7), and sprinkling “the blood of the covenant” on the people (24:8). This rite of purification for this holy nation by the sprinkling of blood is paralleled only by the sprinkling in the rite of ordination of Aaron and sons as priests, commanded in Exod 29:15-21 and carried out in Lev 8:22-30.⁸⁰ Dozeman, builds on Jacob Milgrom’s assertion that the blood was sprinkled on priests at ordination in Lev 8 “as a means of decontaminating and purifying them” as he asserts that the sprinkling of blood on the people in Exod 24 may have functioned similarly, “as a form of purification for the covenant.”⁸¹ F. F. Bruce also sees Hebrews making a connection between Exod 24 and Num 19 based on “their common interest in ritual aspersion,” and that purification is the key issue.⁸² Guthrie suggests that Hebrews has the sprinkling and purification of blood associated with *Yom Kippur* in Lev 16:16-19, as well.⁸³ So, while Attridge observes that Hebrews manages to pull off the hermeneutical feat of representing the Christ event in terms of *both* the atonement of Yom Kippur and the inauguration of the

⁷⁹ Their subsequent descent is not recorded, but they were with the people for the ceremony, then called to come up again afterward.

⁸⁰ Dozeman, *Commentary on Exodus*, 566.

⁸¹ *Commentary on Exodus*, 564-67.

⁸² Bruce, *Epistle*, 226.

⁸³ Guthrie, "Hebrews," 975.

covenant as seen in Exod 24,⁸⁴ which is correct, the point of the covenant inauguration reference has more to do with demonstration that purification is done with blood than with event itself, in my judgment. This is made clear by the summary statement that concludes the short section (9:22): “almost everything is purified (καθαρίζεται) by blood according to the Law.” Thus, Jesus’ ability to purify (consciences and the heavenly sanctuary) is explained according to Pentateuchal principles. The accent is more on purification than covenant.

Prophets and Writings in 9:15-23

Although there are no citations or strong allusions to the P&W in this short pericope, the themes of the NC and the purification of consciences drawn from Jeremiah 31 motivate the exegesis that occurs here. Jesus’ ability to effect forgiveness as anticipated in Jer 31:34 begins to be shown here and becomes even more prominent in the rest of the section (9:24-10:25). The argument of 9:15-23 supports the idea that Jesus’ blood can purify consciences, part of Hebrews’ conception of the Law put in minds and written on hearts (Jer 31:33). The influence of Ps 110 is seen only in 9:23, the transitional verse, with reference to a heavenly sanctuary.

Synthesis: Texts and exegesis in 9:15-23

This is a short series of proofs that (1) Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant *because* he can purify consciences and that (2) *since* the death of Jesus redeemed the first covenant transgressions, those forgiven can receive the promised inheritance; which most resembles a legal argument. The grounds for Hebrews’ proofs here are drawn, not

⁸⁴ Attridge, "Antithesis." See also DeSilva, "Invention," 307-08.

surprisingly, from the Pentateuch. The key concept of covenant, however, is one of the main contributions of Jer 31 which is then reinforced by Exod 24:8. This is a section that relies heavily on the Pentateuch to work out the significance of Jesus' blood in the new covenant context. The covenant inauguration and purification rites such as that of the red heifer (Num 19) provide the legal-historical backdrop from the Pentateuch.

Sacrifice and Forgiveness in 9:24-10:18

Hebrews transitions from the topic of purification back to sanctuary and sacrifice in 9:23-24. A three-verse summary (9:24-26) of the argument to follow lays out the main proposition the exposition seeks to prove: Christ's one-time sacrifice is legitimate and effective for bringing about forgiveness (under the NC). Hebrews immediately contrasts Jesus to the paradigm of the Aaronic high priest with respect to the nature of the sanctuaries they enter and, more significantly for the argument, the fact that the high priest made sacrifices and went in to the sanctuary once every year, whereas Jesus would not "offer himself again and again" (9:25). Instead, "now, once—at the end of the age—for the removal of sin through his sacrifice, he has appeared" (9:26b). The rest of the passage sets out to prove and expand upon that thesis. This means of atonement by Jesus, differing radically from the paradigm set forth in the Law, is explained and defended mainly through the use of the Psalms and Prophets in a series of five short arguments, each supported by scripture:

9:27-28 Mortals are appointed to die once and face judgment, but Jesus was appointed to die once and return to save sinners. (Isa 53:12)

- 10:1-4 Since the Law has only a shadow of the good things to come (cf. 8:5; Exod 25:40), it cannot perfect the conscience, as is evident in the need for repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats—which are a constant reminder of sin.
- 10:5-10 Since God did not desire those sacrifices and offerings (Ps 40:6-8), Jesus came to do God's will by offering his own body, doing away with the first means of atonement as he established the second.
- 10:11-14 (Aaronic) priests stand every day offering the same sacrifices which can never fully eliminate sins. On the other hand, Jesus offered a single sacrifice and sat down at God's right hand and is waiting [for the end of the age] (Ps 110:1), having perfected those he sanctified forever.
- 10:15-18 Under the new covenant, with the Law in the minds and hearts of the people, God will forgive, no longer remembering sins. Without sin, there is no need for more sacrifices. (Jer 31:33-34)

Whereas the Pentateuch was in the foreground of the expositions of both 9:1-14 and 9:15-23, the Psalms and Prophets are cited and alluded to extensively in 9:24-10:18, the portion of the argument focused on sacrifice and forgiveness. We find allusions to Ps 110:1 (9:24) and Isa 53:12 (9:28) near the beginning of the passage, a quotation and then a rearranged quotation of Ps 40:6-8 occupy the center of this passage (10:5-9), and quotations from Ps 110:1 and Jer 31:33-34 conclude the argument (completing the *inclusio* begun at 8:1).

Pentateuch in 9:24-10:18

The Pentateuchal basis for the exegesis in this passage continues from the paradigms and themes already laid out in 8:1-9:23, for the most part: Priesthood, sanctuary and sacrifice. The sanctuary is prominent again (9:23-24; cf. 8:1-5; 9:1-14), including the annual entry of the High Priest on *Yom Kippur* (9:25; cf. 9:7), and sacrifice becomes a major topic here.

The most significant points with respect to the Pentateuch in this passage are the Law which has only “a shadow of the good things to come” (10:1), and the sacrificial cult and priestly service as paradigms. The priestly service and sacrifice will be discussed in relation to the texts from the P&W immediately below.

In 10:1, Hebrews describes the Law as having only a shadow (*σκιά*) “of the good things to come, not itself [being] the true form (*οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα*) of the things,” and, thus, “not able to perfect those who draw near.” The law here is best seen as what originates or contains the sanctuary and cult—priestly activity, sacrifices, offerings, etc.—as Hebrews leads into the next phase of its argument which is dedicated to the issue of sacrifice. This becomes evident in Hebrews’ gloss on Ps 40:6 (10:8), for instance, the various types of sacrifices and offerings “which are offered according to the law.” The temporal component of the verse refers to “the good things to come.” This law, that of the SC, is just a shadow of what can be expected under the NC. The other use of *σκιά* in the passage refers to the sanctuary as a “copy and shadow” (8:5). Hebrews is not saying that the law itself is a mere shadow so as to denigrate the law.⁸⁵ “Shadow” in this context

⁸⁵ Koester notes the use of similar language to describe law generally by Cicero (*De officiis* 3.17 §69 and Philo with reference to the Mosaic Law (*Mos.* 2.51). He also rightly emphasizes the revelatory

suggests that what the Mosaic law commands has its limitations, even a transient quality.⁸⁶ The forgiveness the Levitical system provides is real, but temporary and limited; it is similar, but not fully equal, to what the NC will bring. Thus, it participates in the lexical cluster of copy, shadow, type, etc.; but not in the same cosmological sense as the sanctuary.

Prophets and Writings in 9:24-10:18

Four texts from the P&W are each employed in distinct parts of the argument. The allusion to Isaiah 53:12 early on (9:28), stating that Christ had been offered once “to bear the sins of many” underlines the overall message of the passage while injecting messianic overtones. Ps 40:6-8 is the dominant text in this passage, its own apparent critique of “sacrifices and offerings” fueling Hebrews’ argument throughout. The topic of a heavenly sanctuary drawn from Ps 110 (in conjunction with Exod 25:40) is present again, but the details of Jesus being seated and waiting are given new significance in 10:11-14. Finally, the forgiveness foreseen at the conclusion of the oracle from Jeremiah concludes this passage. Psalm 40:6-8 and the references to Ps 110 and Jer 31:33-34 require the most attention.

Before citing Ps 40, Hebrews makes a logical argument for the limitation of the sacrificial system in 10:1-4 by asserting that their constant repetition is evidence that they

nature or function of the Law *Hebrews*, 431, 37.. Cockerill and O’Brien are among those emphasizing the Law as *foreshadowing* the New Covenant, not seeing the thrust of Hebrews as directly denigrating the Law itself. Cockerill, *Epistle*, 428-30; O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 344-46. I hasten to add that, different from some, I do not view the *sole purpose* of the Mosaic Law or covenant as being prophetic or to prefigure Christ and his ministry, as do some of the above and Joslin, "Can Hebrews." I reject Caird's language of the "self-confessed inadequacy" of the Law: "Exegetical Method," 47. It was adequate for what it was intended to do, but it was also temporary, intended for a certain epoch.

⁸⁶ On this point, James Thompson’s reminder that Hebrews is “making an eschatological contrast between two ages” is very helpful. Thompson, *Hebrews*, 194.

do not perfect the worshippers. Having begun with its own critique, Hebrews quotes Ps 40:6-8 in 10:5-7, then immediately rearranges the phrases in 10:8-9, inserting a few interpretive comments. It takes two parallel statements—both referencing sacrifices and offerings followed by statements indicating that those were not what God wanted—and strings together the first parts and the second parts, producing a slightly more emphatic restatement and critique of sacrifice and offering as a whole. The famous textual anomaly in which the LXX changes “ear” in the MT to “body”⁸⁷—“a body you have prepared for me”—makes these verses the perfect text for Hebrews’ explanation of Christ’s self-sacrifice. It goes on to use the sequence of the citation, which it treats as an oracle (or divine speech), to argue that, since Christ said that God was not pleased with the offerings and sacrifices made according to the Law and *then* said he had come to do God’s will, he removed the first system, in particular the means of atonement, in order to establish the second (10:9). Thus, Hebrews infers from the psalm that the cult was displeasing to God and that God’s will was ultimately to do away with it, by means of the sacrifice of Jesus, which 10:10 summarizes. With the theological developments of two millennia intervening, it may be difficult to imagine what a challenge that argument would have been to make. Psalm 40 is most useful to Hebrews because of its (1)

⁸⁷ The oldest extant Gk texts translate “ear” (**οὖς**) as “body” (**σῶμα**), as found in Hebrews. Rahlf’s LXX and other ancient Gk mss. correct the Gk text to **ώτια** in conformity to the MT. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 274; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 500; Jobes, “Rhetorical Achievement.”. Hebrews’ use of **σῶμα** most likely came from its manuscript tradition, although it is plausible that Hebrews was aware of the discrepancy and took advantage of its exegetical potential. Jobes’ suggests that Hebrews introduced the variant, “misquoting” the psalm in such a way as to achieve rhetorical results involving assonance without substantially altering the meaning, while Koester and Cockerill (and most) are skeptical that the LXX mss traditions would have followed Hebrews as widely as Jobes’ suggestion demands. More likely is Cockerill’s suggestion that Hebrews’ made *other* changes to the LXX text to achieve the assonance Jobes points out. Cockerill, *Epistle*, 436-37; Koester, *Hebrews*, 432-33; Jobes, “Rhetorical Achievement.”

comprehensive critique of the sacrificial system, (2) the opportunity to use it to show scriptural support for viewing Jesus' body as a sacrifice and (3) the attribution of Christ's act to God's will.

Having claimed that the repetition of the sacrifices of the first covenant pointed to its inherent limitations and that it was God's will for Jesus' single sacrifice to take the place of the first covenant regimen, Hebrews moves to show that Ps 110 supports the idea that Jesus' principal priestly act had indeed been accomplished. Constructing a dual comparison to the priestly paradigm ("every priest"), Hebrews notes that, on one hand, the priests stand every day and offer the same sacrifices over and over (which can never take away sin) while, on the other hand, Christ offered one sacrifice for sin for all time and sat down at God's right hand. Sitting instead of standing is interpreted by most to connote completion.

A further contribution of Ps 110:1 which Hebrews incorporates is the idea that Jesus is waiting (for his enemies to be made his footstool). In this context that probably reinforces the sense of completion but, also, corresponds to temporal language throughout this passage that points to the end of the present age and coming of a new one. In 9:24, Christ "appears now in God's presence," in 9:26 he appeared "at the consummation of the ages," in 9:28 "he will appear a second time" for salvation, and in 10:1 the Law has but a shadow of "the good things to come."

To finish off the argument, Hebrews offers a close paraphrase (or rearranged quotation) of Jer 31:33 and 34b, verses which refer to the "new covenant" "after those days," that "I will give my laws on their hearts, and on their minds I will write them"

(reversing “mind” and “heart,” cf. 8:10, Jer 31:33 LXX, MT) and that “I will remember their sins *and lawless deeds* [added to Jer 31] no more.” The only interpretative comment Hebrews makes is in 10:18, an apt conclusion to the argument which underlines Hebrews’ major concern in 9:24-10:18: “Where [there is] forgiveness for these, [there is] no longer any offering for sin.” The final citation of Jeremiah in the passage includes the final two verses of Jer 31:31-14. In context, it concludes the case for the effectiveness of Jesus’ ministry for the remission of sins, reinforces the idea of a new covenant and sustains an eschatological awareness (“after those days”). It also reiterates the internalization of the law, the switching of “minds” and “hearts” in the citation perhaps done to provoke the attention of the audience. This internalization of the Law is picked up again shortly in 10:22, as “hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience.”

Synthesis—Texts and exegesis in 9:24-10:18

Hebrews contrasts Jesus’ priesthood to the paradigm of priesthood and sacrifice from the Pentateuch in 9:24-10:18. It does this principally to show that the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is legitimate and able to achieve more than the continuous sacrificial system of the SC. Hebrews first makes its own logical argument that the need to repeat the rituals perpetually is a sign of their limited effectiveness, then harnesses the critique of Ps 40 and applies to Christ in its most decisive exegetical move. The prototype/copy motif is used twice—once with regard to the sanctuary (9:24) and once regarding the contents of the Law (10:1), although with different nuances. The repeated temporal and eschatological references suggest that, while Christ has already accomplished atonement

for sin through the sacrifice of his own body, he is expected to appear a second time, when that new covenant will be more fully realized.

Summary and Exhortation in 10:19-22

Concluding this section and leading into a substantial exhortation, one sentence both summarizes important points from the argument and makes direct application to the audience (10:19-22). While there are no citations or direct allusions involved, it merits brief examination as Hebrews' concluding interpretive statement. As it closes this section, Hebrews incorporates the sanctuary, the blood of Christ, Christ as high priest, hearts and consciences as it calls the audience to approach and enter.

The sentence begins with a long participial clause describing the situation of the audience based on the preceding argument—Having (a) boldness to enter the sanctuary...and (b) a great high priest...—before arriving at the main verb of the sentence, the first-person plural προσερχόμεθα, “...let us approach...”

Therefore, brothers and sisters,
having...

...boldness to enter the sanctuary by means of Jesus' blood
which inaugurated for us
a new and living way,
through the veil,
(which is his flesh)

...and a great high priest over the house of God,
let us approach

with a true heart in the fullness of faith
our hearts having been sprinkled [to purify them] from an evil conscience
and our bodies having been washed with pure water...

The audience has already been exhorted to “approach.” With nearly identical language, 4:16 says “let us approach the throne of grace with boldness.”⁸⁸ Hebrews also

⁸⁸ προσερχόμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος

states that Jesus is able to save “those who approach” forever (7:25) and make them “perfect” (10:1). The sanctuary is central (Exod 25:40) and tone is sacramental, even priestly as the audience is told to have boldness in entering the sanctuary and that they have been washed and purified (Exod 24, 29; Lev 8; Num 19). Thus, Hebrews considers the interior/exterior tension to be resolved through the sacrificial blood (Ps 40:6-8) and high priesthood of Christ (Ps 110). The sprinkled, or purified, hearts point to the realization of Jeremiah’s vision of the law internalized.

IV. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OF GRAVITY IN 8:1-10:18

This analysis suggests that the cluster of sanctuary texts represented by the Exodus 25:40 citation⁸⁹ in 8:5, together with the allusion to Exod 15:17 in 8:2, form the Pentateuchal basis and textual starting point in 8:1-10:18. The pairing of the heavenly/earthly sanctuary concept of with an implicit vision of Jesus as a priest in a heavenly sanctuary from Ps 110:1 is one of the main exegetical juxtapositions. Jeremiah 31:31-34 becomes the main exegetical text in the passage as Hebrews looks forward to the internalization of the Law and complete forgiveness of sins under a new covenant mediated by Jesus. Ps 40:6-8 is another significant exegetical text in the section which supports the premise that Jesus’ priestly sacrifice is capable of effecting the permanent forgiveness foreseen in Jer 31:34. Although scholars have often suggested that Ps 110 and/or Jeremiah 31:31-34 are the foundational texts for this section, they are regarded here as exegetical texts that facilitate the explanation of Jesus’ priesthood in relation to the Pentateuch.

⁸⁹ Exod 25:8-9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; 31:6, 11

The exegesis of Heb 8-10 is set in motion by juxtaposing the amplified allusion to Ps 110:1 in 8:1 with the allusion to Exodus 15:17 (8:2) and the citation of Exodus 25:40 (8:5). The concept of a heavenly sanctuary inferred from Ps 110 is quickly supported and expanded upon by those Exodus texts, which lay out the heavenly prototype/earthly copy cosmology that is a recurrent motif. Data and descriptions from Exodus 25-40 and a handful of details gleaned from other passages in the Pentateuch create a paradigm which fills out the concept of a heavenly sanctuary in ways that Ps 110 could not do on its own.

Hebrews built most of its argument in 5-7 on the paradigm of Aaron as the prototypical high priest and progenitor of the priestly line but, here, although Jesus' priesthood remains the key issue, the sanctuary is the paradigm from the Torah that Hebrews uses. The wilderness sanctuary affords Hebrews a literary "place" in which to bring together priesthood, covenant, sacrifice and purification such that the audience can visualize the argument as Hebrews works it out.

Sanctuary in Heb 8-10 is not a narrow category. Sanctuary represents the center of covenant life and sacrament in ways that are both symbolic and tangible. Hebrews' use of the sanctuary as the main paradigm is not *sanctuary as opposed to* the priesthood or the covenant, but *sanctuary as the means to* explain Jesus' high priesthood and the covenant which it mediates, even embodies. We need not make an interpretive choice between these categories to determine if the passage is more about priesthood or covenant or sanctuary; the sanctuary is where we find the confluence of those categories: physically and symbolically, literally and theologically. The sanctuary setting is laden with

meaning and it is known and familiar, despite the fact that none of the audience could ever have seen or entered the wilderness sanctuary. The sanctuary was nucleus of priestly activity, the place where priests fulfilled their role as priests, approaching with offerings to God, making sacrifices, lighting lamps and burning incense in the divine presence, carrying out the rituals that resulted in the atonement for sin. Hebrews makes it the nucleus of this passage, as well.

A prominent aspect of Hebrews' use of the sanctuary as a paradigm is the prototype/copy motif generated from Exod 25:40 and its parallels (Exod 25:8-9, 26:30; 27:8). The fact that the plan for the sanctuary that Moses built was based on a heavenly pattern or prototype doubtless imparted both mystery and majesty to it in the context of Exodus. Hebrews, however, uses the memory of sanctuary built with God's own hands (Exod 15:17), and the idea that the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus resides (Ps 110) was the heavenly pattern for Moses' tabernacle, to subvert the symbolic authority of the tent built with human hands. As the prototype/copy motif runs through the passage, it is applied to the Law, as well (10:1). The net effect is to depict the sanctuary and the Law as limited representations of good things to come—of the Law that will be internalized and the people will be able to boldly approach the true heavenly sanctuary. The prototype/copy motif can by no means account for all that Hebrews does with the sanctuary, but it is an important strategy in persuading the audience to look forward to what the new covenant era will offer.

CHAPTER 6: FROM SINAI TO ZION (HEB 12:1-29)

In chapter 12, the final major exegetical section of the book, Hebrews comes full circle, paradoxically leading the audience back to Sinai and away from Sinai to Zion simultaneously. Hebrews evoked memories of Sinai from the very beginning as it recalled that “God spoke long ago...” In Heb 1-2 Jesus was compared to the angels at Sinai and the audience was called to pay much closer attention to what they had heard than the wilderness generation did at Sinai. Hebrews even dared to compare Jesus to Moses, the faithful leader of the children of God in Heb 2-3. The Sinai event was the greatest theophany of all time and the books of Moses had been the scriptural center of gravity for centuries. In Hebrews 12, Sinai remains the unmistakable landmark by which all other points are reckoned.

Hebrews’ argument now ascends its own summit in 12:1-29, having taken on major elements associated with Sinai and the Sinai Covenant (SC) throughout the book. The first part of Heb 12 reminds the audience that Jesus has already been seated at the right hand of God in heavenly Zion and calls them to persevere in following Jesus. They are called to remain faithful as they endure their own experience of divine discipline as the wilderness generation did (12:1-17). The second part of Heb 12 has them arriving, not to Mount Sinai as the wilderness generation did, but to a heavenly Mount Zion. Hebrews recalls how the divine presence made Sinai fearsome and unapproachable in Exodus.

Zion, on the other hand, promises to be a place in which the presence of God will not only dwell but will be at the center of community (12:18-29).

Even as Hebrews draws its grand distinction between the two mountains, earthly Sinai is Hebrews' paradigm for heavenly Zion. In this passage that leads to Zion, we do not encounter a collection of Zion texts from the Psalms or Prophets in this portrait the heavenly precinct. Hebrews does use several allusions to Isa 35, written to encourage exiles returning to (earthly) Zion in 12:1-14, leading up to the audience's fictive arrival in 12:22-24, but there is no Davidic, Isaianic, or Jeremiad vision of Zion here. Instead, Hebrews describes Zion using elements that parallel Sinai: drawing near, myriads of angels, the divine presence, the assembly of the people, covenant and mediator, even sprinkled blood.

A second striking characteristic of Hebrews' exegesis is that Hebrews piles up an impressive collection of descriptions of Sinai from Exodus and Deuteronomy only to knock them over with part of one verse from Haggai, "Yet once more will I shake not only the earth but the heavens" (Hag 2:6). Formidable Sinai is, without a doubt, the starting point, the generative theme, the exegetical center of this passage. Yet, the exegetical move to view Sinai through the lens of Haggai 2 destabilizes Sinai profoundly. Hebrews implies that the tremors which shook Sinai long ago foreshadowed a more radical shaking of the cosmos still to come, one that would eliminate Sinai in the end.

In this chapter I propose that Hebrews makes its central exegetical point in 12:1-29 by means of the juxtaposition of Sinai and Zion. The first part of the passage, 12:1-17,

appeals to the audience to think of themselves as God's children¹ on a journey together to Zion, encouraging them to persevere through times of suffering as they continue to follow Jesus, the ἀρχηγός.² In 12:1-14 this involves citations and allusions to texts mostly from the P&W (esp. Prov 3:11-12; 4:26-27 and Isa 35), but there is also a connection to the narrative of the wilderness generation via language alluding to Deuteronomy 8:5. Although Zion itself remains implicit until 12:22, it is easily perceived throughout the first part of Heb 12 as multiple allusions are made to Isaiah 35, a passage which poetically describes a return to Zion through the wilderness. Hebrews leaves little doubt that a similar pilgrimage is in view. The argument of 12:1-17 develops a concept found in other Jewish traditions which see the wilderness journey as a time of divine discipline and applies it to the present generation, suggesting that they are also experiencing a time of divine discipline to sanctify them on their own journey.³ Their journey (12:1-17) leads to Hebrews' description of their arrival—not to Sinai (12:18-21), as the wilderness generation did—to Zion (12:22-24).

Jon Levenson describes the complex relationship between Sinai and Zion in Jewish tradition—scriptural and otherwise—providing illuminating points of comparison by which to better understand the relationship of the new to the old, Zion to Sinai, Jesus to Moses, Jesus to Aaron, and so forth, in Hebrews. Levenson shows that the relationship between the two great mountains of Judaism was, and is, complex. Sinai was the

¹ Family language is abundant in this pericope: παιδεία (8 occ.); νιός (6 occurrences); παιδίον, πατήρ (3 occ.); κληρονομέω.

² See discussion in ch. 2, esp. pp. 102-104.

³ See summary of Matthew Thiessen's work below, and that of David M. Allen. Thiessen, "Hebrews 12:5-13."; Allen, *Deuteronomy*

mountain of the covenant, Zion the mountain of the Temple. Sinai came to represent the mountain of history and Zion “the possibility of meaning above history, out of history, through an opening into the realm of the ideal. Mount Zion, the Temple on it and the city around it are a symbol of transcendence...”⁴ Sinai had been the place where the heavens met the earth, quite vividly in Exods 24:9-11 and, of course, amidst the clouds, fire and seismic phenomena of Exodus 19. But Sinai was long ago and far away, utterly inaccessible, sealed away in history and locked out of the geographical realm forever, since no one knew where it was or could ever return to it.⁵ Zion became the site where heaven and earth met. The divine presence came to be found in the Temple, in the holy city—so long as there was a temple and a city. We will see, in the analysis to follow, that much of what Levenson discusses regarding Sinai and Zion traditions within scripture and Judaism resonates remarkably well with Hebrews.

The primary contribution I hope to make in this section is to identify the generative text or theme in Hebrews 12 and explicate the roles of the exegetical texts. Commentators often note the significance of the Sinai-Zion contrast, but less attention is typically payed to the exegetical roles of the texts in the pericope. In order do this, four tasks present themselves. First, it is important to demonstrate the unity of the 12:1-29 in order to then determine the interrelationship of the texts involved. Second, several perspectives on Hebrews’ use of scripture in this passage are summarized to illustrate the scope of debate and the effects on interpretation. Third, an analysis of the passage (in two

⁴ Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 141-42.

⁵ *Sinai*, 85-91.

parts: 12:1-17 and 18-29) explicates the exegetical relationships of the texts Hebrews uses. Finally, a proposal that Exodus is the textual center of gravity of this passage will be offered at the conclusion.

I. UNITY OF 12:1-29

Commentators are about evenly split when it comes to whether they place a major, or first-level, structural break somewhere in Hebrews 12 (whether at, e.g., 12:4, 12:14 or near the end of the chapter)⁶ or consider the chapter together as a unit or part of a larger unit.⁷ Not surprisingly, there are a number of different proposals as to which text(s) or theme(s) are primary or generative in Heb 12 and how that affects interpretation. In 12:1-17, scholars have often identified the importance of the P&W because the citations of Prov 3:11-12 (12:5-6) and 4:26 (12:13) are easily noted and there is a strong allusion to Isa 35:3 in 12:12. The influence of the Pentateuch is less frequently factored into analyses of 12:1-13, although the allusions to the bitter root in Deut 29:17 (12:15) and Esau in Gen 25-27 (12:16) are regularly discussed. The importance of the Pentateuch in the second section (12:18-29) is evident but the significance of the P&W, I will argue below, is often overlooked or underestimated. The determination of whether to treat 12:1-29 as a single unit has implications for understanding of the interrelationships

⁶ Several who place a first-level break somewhere in the chapter: Gelardini (12:4); Attridge, Lane, Mitchell, Vaganay, Vanhoye (12:14); Witherington (12:17); Koester (12:27). Attridge, *Hebrews*; Gelardini, *Verhartet*; Koester, *Hebrews*; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 13; Vaganay, "Le plan de l'pitre aux Hbreux"; Vanhoye, *La structure; Letter*; Witherington, *Letters*.

⁷ Among those who do not place a first-level break within Heb 12: Bruce, *Epistle*; Cockerill, *Epistle*; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*; Grber, *An die Hebrer*; Thompson, *Hebrews*; Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*. More could obviously be added to either list.

of the texts and themes in play from the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, so we begin with an argument for the unity of 12:1-29.

I suggest that the following four reasons make an adequate case for reading 12:1-29 as a unit. First, the most straightforward argument to mark off Heb 12 as a unit is articulated by McCown and echoed by Lane, which is that the literary style and form of address in Heb 12 are distinct from Heb 11 and 13.⁸ The unity of the passage can also be discerned by recognizing that the Zion theme runs through the entire chapter. Although Zion is not explicitly named in the first part of the chapter, both Ps 110 and Isa 35, two of the most prominent texts in that section, are Zion texts (see Ps 110:2 and Isa 35:10). Zion is obvious in 12:18-29. The Zion theme sets Heb 12 apart from 11 and 13. Another reason for reading 12:1-29 as a unit is Hebrews' resumption of comparisons of the audience to the wilderness generation, and Jesus as ἀρχηγός, elements that were prominent in Heb 2-3. This comparison also runs through all of chapter 12 and is distinct from the immediate context. The race or journey imagery, integral to the conceit of 12:1-17, when combined with the emphasis placed on having arrived in 12:18-24, is evidence of unity on a literary level. Finally, the allusion to Ps 110:1 in 12:2 reminds the audience once again of the present status and location of Jesus "at the right hand of the throne of God," which, in Heb 8-10 has cultic significance and points to the existence of a heavenly sanctuary. After 12:2, that concept lies dormant for the balance of 12:1-17 but is a crucial element in 12:22-26 where Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant and cult in

⁸ Wayne Gordon McCown, "O LOGOS TIS PARALISEOS, The Nature and Function of the Hortatory Sections in the Epistle to the Hebrews" (Th.D., Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, 1970), 98-99, 109-10; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 404.

heavenly Jerusalem (12:22-24) and the one who is speaking from heaven (12:25-26).

Other reasons for reading the passage as a coherent unit have been suggested, as well.⁹

Perceiving the consistency of the topics and themes of Zion, the wilderness generation comparison, the journey/arrival motif, and the awareness of a heavenly sanctuary throughout the passage suggest that there is substantial justification for viewing 12:1-29 as a unit.

II. PRIOR PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF SCRIPTURE IN 12:1-29

Hebrews 12 includes a few citations, about five paraphrases and a fair number of allusions. There is some diversity of opinion as to the number of quotations in the passage. The NA28 italicizes five quotations,¹⁰ Pamela Eisenbaum sees four citations¹¹ and George Guthrie notes a combined total of seven quotations and allusions.¹² Figure 6.1 maps out commonly recognized uses of the Jewish scriptures throughout Heb 12, divided into columns according to Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings.¹³

⁹ Cynthia Long Westfall also argues in favor of treating 12:1-29 as one unit on the basis of discourse analysis. She highlights several unifying factors, the most notable of which may be spatial and temporal considerations. She summarizes her argument for the unity of 12:1-29 as follows: "Chapter 12 describes the believer's current activity discipline, location, relationships and service as taking place in the heavenly kingdom, which is an invisible reality." Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 271. Erich Grässer treats the chapter as a unit for thematic and rhetorical reasons, describes it as the paraenetic follow-up to the preceding passage on faith. His title for 12:1-29 is "Die Bewährung des Glaubens," as he sees the entire chapter dealing with believers responding in faith to the tests they face: *An die Hebräer*, 225-226.

¹⁰ Prov 3:11-12 (12:5-6); Deut 29:17 LXX (12:15); Deut 9:19 (12:21); Hag 2:6 (12:26); Deut 4:24; 9:3 (12:29)

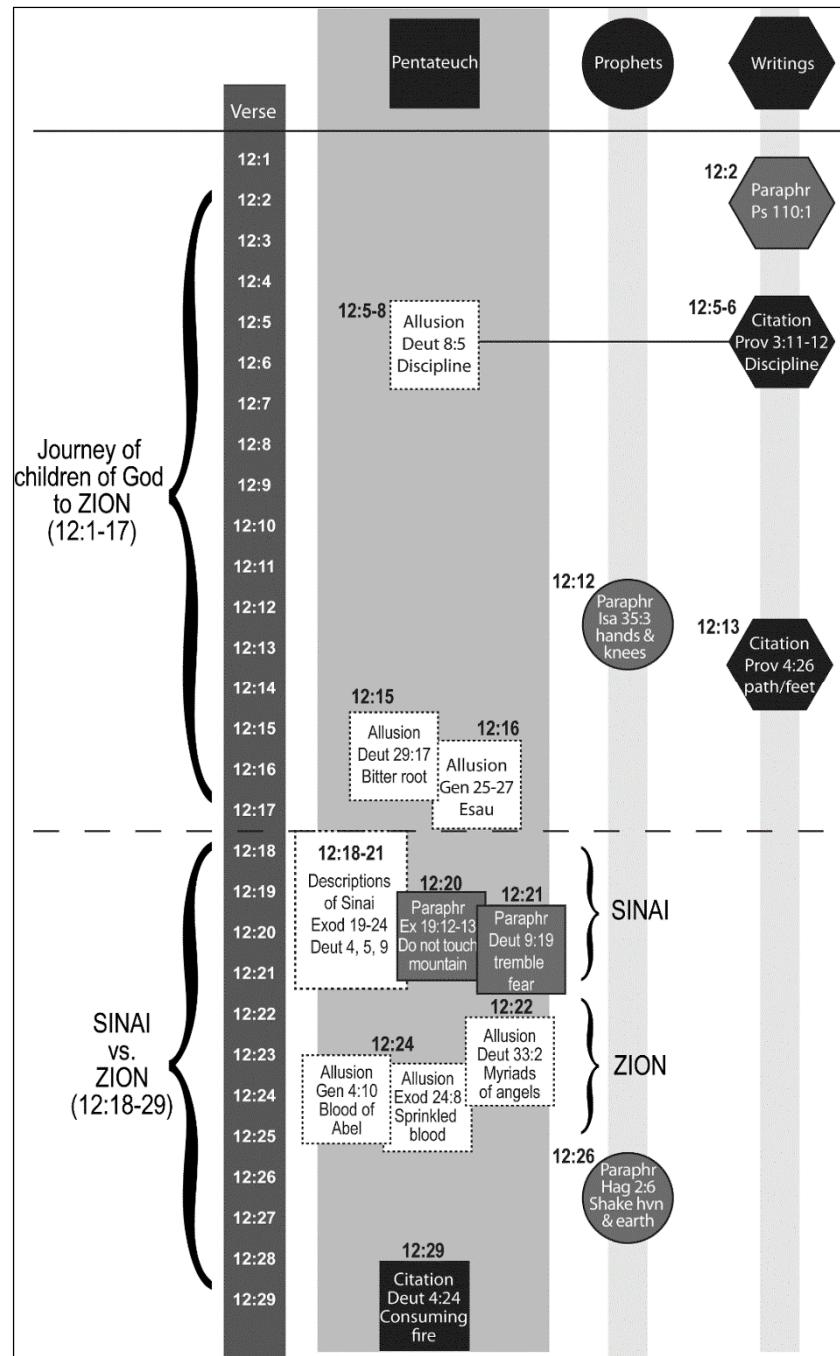
¹¹ Prov. 3:11-12; Deut 9:19; Hag 2:6; Deut 4:24 Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, 92.

¹² Quotations: Prov 3:11-12; Deut 9:19; Hag 2:6. Allusions: Ps 110:1; Is 35:3/Prov 4:26/Job 4:3-4 (12:12-13); Deut 29:18; Ex 19:12-13 George H. Guthrie, "Old Testament in Hebrews," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

¹³ Designations of citation, allusion and paraphrase in the chart are mine.

Figure 6.1 Citations and Allusions in Hebrews 12

By verse/Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in columns



It is most common for those who prioritize Hebrews' use of the Scriptures in their analyses either to point to texts from Deuteronomy as the key texts in Hebrews 12 or to identify Sinai as a governing theme. The following section summarizes the views of five scholars with respect to Hebrews' use of the scriptures in this passage, all of them coming to different conclusions with regard to central texts and the thrust of Hebrews' exegesis.

Three focus on texts from Deuteronomy and two on Sinai.

R.T. France: An exposition on Mount Sinai

Building on the prior work of Caird¹⁴ and Longenecker,¹⁵ R.T. France recognizes three separate scriptural expositions involving parts of Heb 12:

Exposition on Habakkuk 2:3c-4 10:37-12:3¹⁶

Exposition on LXX Prov. 3:11-12 12:7-11¹⁷

Exposition on Mt. Sinai 12:18-29¹⁸

He reads Hebrews from a homiletical perspective as a series of scriptural expositions within a single homily, or word of exhortation.¹⁹ According to France, "Mount Sinai" or "the Sinai theophany" is evoked by means of a "loose summary quotation" of Exod 19:12-13 and a series of allusions to "the terrifying experience of the presence of God

¹⁴ Caird, "Exegetical Method."

¹⁵ Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis*, 156. Whereas Longenecker considered the exhortations of Hebrews to be based on the five expository sections he had outlined through 10:39. France recognizes three further expositions beginning at 10:37, all of which involve parts of Heb 12.

¹⁶ An exhortation to perseverance. France, "Writer," 257.

¹⁷ Concerned with suffering, "a major cause of their inclination to turn back from Christian commitment. "Writer," 258.

¹⁸ "Writer," 267.

¹⁹ "Writer."

and Mt. Sinai and the awed reaction of the people to it as described in Exodus 19:20.”

Highlighting the tension between Sinai and Zion, and the impact of the Deuteronomy citation at the end, he summarizes the passage as follows:

...the impact of the whole dramatic theophany is summed up in the epigram ‘For our God is a consuming fire’...which concludes the warning passage (12:29). But alongside the direct use of the Sinai theophany as a warning example the writer has creatively introduced an alternative mountain, Mount Sion, which stands for all that is lovely and attractive about the new relationship with God which has been opened up by the shedding of the blood of Jesus, the ‘mediator of a new covenant’. Sinai therefore represents the old and frightening covenant, Sion the newly opened access to the presence of God.²⁰

France suggests that Hebrews connects the “theme of the quaking mountain” to “the eschatological shaking of heaven and earth in Haggai 2:6.”²¹

Matthew Thiessen: Prov 3:11-12 and Deut 8:5 in Heb 12

Focused solely Hebrews 12:5-13, Matthew Thiessen argues persuasively that citation of Proverbs 3:11-12 is best understood in light of Deut 8:5 and in a broader context of traditions about the wilderness generation.²² He demonstrates that a close parallel exists between Prov 3:11-12 (cited in Heb 12:5-6) and Deuteronomy 8:5, where Moses tells the Israelites that God led the people into the wilderness to discipline them as children. Several Jewish traditions roughly contemporaneous with Hebrews (i.e., Second Temple through 1st century C.E.) such as *Wisdom 11*, Philo (*Vita Mos, Quaest Gen*) and Josephus (Ant. 1.6; 3. 15, 311), saw the wilderness period as a time of parental discipline for the training of the Israelites in obedience. A very similar perspective is evident in

²⁰ "Writer," 258.

²¹ "Writer," 267.

²² Thiessen, "Hebrews 12:5-13."

Hebrews 12:5-13 as the audience is exhorted to persevere in following Jesus the αρχηγός through the discipline of their divine parent to them as true children. Interestingly, these traditions often included the use of athletic language, as Hebrews does (esp. 12:1-4). Thiessen's proposal, while highlighting Prov 3:11-12 and Deut 8:5, reinforces Hebrews' use of the wilderness generation as an exemplar throughout the epistle.

Gabriella Gelardini: Deut 9:19 as the key citation

Gabriella Gelardini draws attention to the fact that Deut 9:19 (cf. Heb 12:21) refers to Moses' fear and trembling as he interceded for the people immediately following the golden calf incident—an effort which resulted in the renewal of the covenant. While Hebrews' reference to Deut 9:19 may seem out of place in what otherwise appears to be an Exodus 19-20 context (Heb 12:18-20), that observation supports her proposal that Hebrews is a synagogue homily for *Tisha b'Av*²³ and, therefore, is especially focused on covenant breach and renewal. From her perspective, the primary Torah/*haftarah* combination of Exodus 31:18-32:35 and Jeremiah 31 guides Hebrews as a whole; a pairing evident in the exegesis of the central section of Hebrews (7:1-10:18). That central section is then followed by two perorations in Gelardini's outline: 10:19-12:3 (*Glaube der Söhne und Väter*) and 12:4-13:25 (*Erniedrigte und erhöhte Söhne*). Heb 12:1-29 is the first part of her second peroration (or *chatima*), "Humbling and exalting the sons." Most of Heb 12 (12:4-29) is a subsection she entitles "Humbling under fatherly discipline" (*Erniedrigt unter väterliche Zucht*).²⁴ Prov 3:11-12

²³ Gelardini, "Hebrews"; *Verhärtet*.

²⁴ *Verhärtet*, 146-47, 356.

(12:5-6) is viewed as a paraenetic citation and Deut 9:19 (12:21) is considered a text related to the main reading from the Torah (*sidrah*). Haggai 2:6 (12:26) has mostly to do with comparing the present and future earth.²⁵ As Gelardini describes it,

The homily ends on an uplifting note, in which the sons (and daughters) are assured they have regained access to the inherited land (an access lost on *Tisha be-Av* due to the breaking of the covenant), which is a logical consequence of the covenant renewal.²⁶

Her interpretation emphasizes the fatherly discipline that prepares the children of God to enter the (eschatological) land of the NC. The breach of the first covenant is recalled by the citation of Deut 9:19, but covenant renewal in Christ (and godly discipline) allows for their entry, ultimately. Thus, Deuteronomy 9:19 as the key text from the Pentateuch in this section and the citation of Haggai 2:6 concludes the peroration.

David M. Allen: Deuteronomy in Hebrews 12

David M. Allen argues that Hebrews does not simply incorporate material from Deuteronomy, it is *like* Deuteronomy—from its homiletical style and rhetoric to its “position,” speaking to an audience who is seen as standing at the threshold of entering their “promised inheritance.”²⁷ He calls attention to the fact that Hebrews frequently cites and alludes to Deuteronomy, particularly the Song of Moses (Deut 32), and that Hebrews’ use of Deuteronomy is especially common in paraenetic passages. Allen advocates a “Deuteronomic”²⁸ reading of Hebrews, suggesting that Hebrews “does not

²⁵ "Hebrews," 147.

²⁶ "Hebrews," 123.

²⁷ Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 198, 203.

²⁸ Distinct from “Deuteronomistic,” see discussion on Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 200.

just use Deuteronomy, it becomes a new Deuteronomy...”²⁹ Like Deuteronomy, Allen suggests, Hebrews *re-presents* Sinai in ways that support its paraenetic thrust.³⁰

In Heb 12, Allen points to several frequently-identified uses of Deuteronomy:

1. Allusion to Deut 8:5 (12:7) on discipline ($\pi\alpha\iota\delta\epsilon\iota\alpha$) in conjunction with Prov. 3:11-12 (cf. Thiessen)
2. Allusion to Deut 29:18b (12:15b), the “bitter root,” warning of the ill-effects of apostates on the community
3. Allusive use of Sinai/Horeb re-presentations in Deut 4:11-12; 5:22-27 (12:18-21)
4. Quotation of Deut 9:19 (12:21), Moses’ expression of fear
5. Quotation of Deut 4:24 and/or 9:3 (12:29), “...God is a consuming fire.”

According to Allen, Hebrews “re-presents the Sinai narrative as the experience of the NC community assembled before Mount Zion”³¹ and “bids farewell to the Mosaic era of the Sinai covenant.”³² Allen’s proposal has a great deal to commend it with regard to Hebrews use of Deuteronomy in exhortation. Whether Deuteronomy (or texts from Deut)

²⁹ Allen, *Deuteronomy* 225. He continues: “The frequent textual citation of Deuteronomy, the replication of key themes such as covenant and land, the adoption of the Song [of Moses] and its association with the end of the Mosaic era all point to an over-arching representation of the Deuteronomic choice between life and death, apostasy and faithfulness, blessing and curse. Deuteronomy’s paraenesis becomes Hebrews’ paraenesis.”

³⁰ One of the most notable aspects of Allen’s study is this idea of Deuteronomy (and Hebrews) as “re-presentation” of Mosaic traditions. Here, he taps into Hindy Najman’s work on “Mosaic discourse,” descriptive of texts (biblical or extrabiblical) that rework prior traditions, assuming for themselves the “authority and status of Torah,” that are represented as associated with or in some way mediated by Moses, and that “re-present” the Sinai revelation. *Deuteronomy* 207. See Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosaic Discourse in Second Temple Judaism*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 16-17.

³¹ Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 216.

³² *Deuteronomy*, 225.

might best be considered the generative text(s) from the Pentateuch for this section or whether the quotations and allusions from Deuteronomy are used exegetically, will be considered as this chapter proceeds.

Kiwoong Son: Zion and Sinai Symbolism

In response to the claims by other scholars that Hebrews lacks a coherent theme or structure as a whole, Kiwoong Son proposes that the contrast between Zion and Sinai—most directly evident in 12:18-24—provides coherence throughout the epistle in multiple ways. Son sees basically two sets of scriptural citations: those related to Zion and those related to Sinai.³³ He connects the symbolic use of Zion and Sinai to two predominant “literary genres” within Hebrews: Sinai being associated with the so-called “warning passages” and Zion associated with the material that encourages the audience to remain faithful. According to Son, “the antithesis of Sinai and Zion functions as the conceptual principle” of the Hebrews.³⁴ While Son applies the Sinai/Zion contrast more extensively and comprehensively than most other commentators would, he offers a number of valuable insights. One of those is his observation that rhetorical and theological contrasts of Sinai and Zion, and an associated eschatological Zion, were by no means unique to Hebrews or Christianity in the Second Temple period or beyond. The

³³ Son, *Zion*. He summarizes key aspects of his argument in the following paragraph: “The account of Sinai and Zion could be considered in three different categories: the description about God himself, about his people and about the mediators. (1) The symbolism of Sinai and Zion represents the different significance of God’s presence on Sinai and Zion. (2) Sinai and Zion represent the different quality of God’s relationship with this people under the old and new religious systems. (3) Sinai and Zion represent the different quality of the mediatorial roles played by Moses and Jesus. The consideration of these issues will reveal that the theological symbols of Sinai and Zion provide the contents of all the issues for the superior motif of Jesus” (pp. 88-89).

³⁴ *Zion*, 77.

concept of Zion as a transcendent symbol of the divine presence was developed in the scriptures³⁵ as well as *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* and the *Testament of Levi*, for instance. Imagery of a transcendent Zion, safe from destruction or defilement, became increasingly common over time in post-exilic and apocalyptic literature.³⁶ His study suggests that Hebrews taps into existing Jewish theological and eschatological constructs of Sinai and Zion and that Hebrews' contrast of Sinai and Zion, with their respective covenants, is not necessarily innovative or radical in and of itself. Rather, Hebrews likely appropriated and interpreted existing Sinai/Zion constructs, applying them to Jesus.³⁷

The examples above represent five different textual or thematic perspectives on Hebrews 12. France's approach identifies one exposition on Prov 3:11-12 followed by another based on the Mount Sinai theme (derived largely from Exodus). Agreeing that Prov 3:11-12 is essential to 12:5-13, Thiessen shows that reading Prov 3:11-12 with Deut 8:5 brings additional context on the topic of the discipline of God's people. Gelardini and Allen emphasize the role of texts from Deuteronomy in 12:18-29, although both of them see a close relationship between the texts from Deuteronomy and Exodus. Son highlights the Sinai vs. Zion contrast as a dynamic that runs throughout Hebrews, symbolic of a contrast reflective of themes and concepts found widely in Second Temple literature, on the other. Of these, Gelardini's is the only one to differentiate between the roles of texts from the Pentateuch and the P&W.

³⁵ See *Zion*, 42-45. An emphasis on Zion and divine presence is perhaps most prominent in the Psalms, e.g. 132; 99; 87; 24; 9:11; and 74:2. Isaiah 6 is another example.

³⁶ *Zion*, 51-59.

³⁷ Here I may be taking Son's argument and extending it somewhat, but I think his work sets the trajectory.

III. ANALYSIS OF 12:1-17: THE JOURNEY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

Hebrews 12:1-17 implicitly compares the experience of the audience to that of the Exodus generation in an exposition on living and journeying as children of God. There are at least eighteen uses of filial terms in this section:

12:5-8 *υἱός* (6 occurrences)

12:5-11 *παιδίον, παιδεία* (8 occ.)

12:7, 9 *πατήρ* (3 occ.)

12:17 *κληρονομέω* (inherit salvation)

The first part of the chapter (12:1-17) describes a journey, the second part (12:18-29) depicts their arrival. With respect to Hebrews' use of texts from Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in its exegesis, there are two main considerations with regard to 12:1-17. First, there are several points of contact³⁸ in 12:1-17 with Isaiah 35, a passage describing a group of pilgrims or returnees in a new exodus, journeying through the wilderness on the way to Zion. Like Isaiah 35, Hebrews encourages its readers not to grow weary or lose heart. The Isaiah 35 allusions clearly anticipate the juxtaposition of Sinai and Zion that begins in 12:18. Second, Hebrews implicitly compares the experience of the audience to that of the Exodus generation throughout Heb 12, a continuation of that motif from earlier in the book.³⁹ Like the Exodus generation, the audience is enduring their own time of divine-parental discipline. That discipline shows that they are, indeed, true children of

³⁸ I suggest five allusions and one paraphrase below. The paraphrase of Isa 35:3 is consistently noted in texts and commentaries. Some allusions are more direct or specific than others some of which are rarely noted.

³⁹ Cf. esp. the deliverance language of Heb 2 and the Ps 95 exposition in Heb 3-4.

God (Prov 3:11-12 with Deut 8:5).⁴⁰ Rather than a separate exposition from 12:18-29, as some see it, the journey motif and the comparison to the wilderness generation suggest that the exegesis in 12:1-17 leads directly to the Sinai/Zion juxtaposition in 12:18-29, best understood as the first of two units comprising Heb 12.

Proverbs 3:11-12 is the main interpretive text Hebrews cites in 12:1-17, combined with citations and allusions to Ps 110, Deut 8:5, Isa 35, Prov 4:26; Deut 29:18 and Gen 25-27. Figure 6.2 maps out citations, paraphrases and allusions⁴¹ throughout the passage, divided into columns according to Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings. The most notable difference between this list and the NA28 margin notes or Guthrie's list⁴² is the addition of several allusions to Isa 35 (as explained below). The analysis of the section begins with the texts from the P&W, since they are more obvious and more numerous, followed by texts from the Pentateuch.

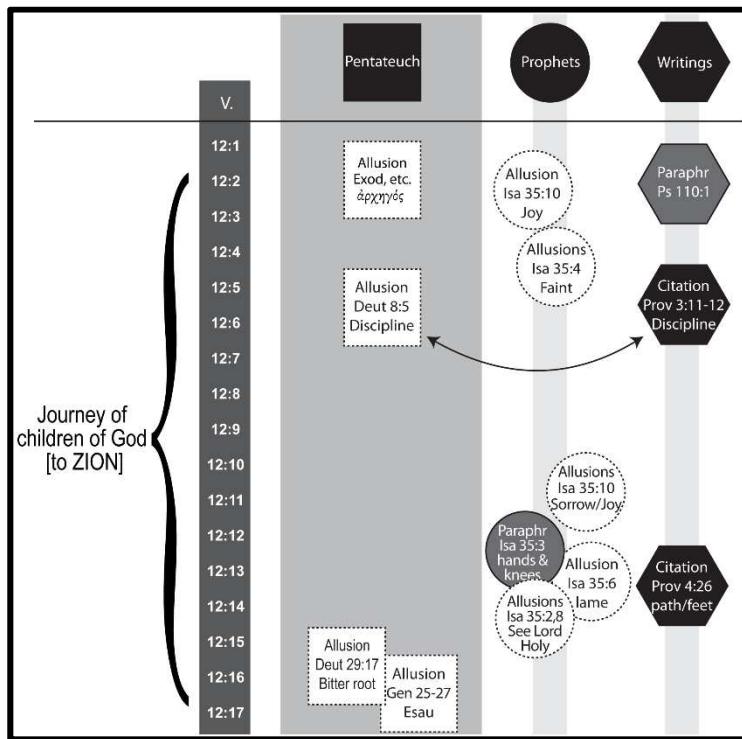
⁴⁰ As argued by Thiessen, "Hebrews 12.5-13."(see above).

⁴¹ For definitions of citation, paraphrase and allusion as used in this study, see pp. 71-72.

⁴² Guthrie, "Old Testament."

Figure 6.2 Citations and Allusions in 12:1-17 featuring allusions to Isaiah 35

By verse/Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in Columns



The Prophets and Writings in 12:1-17

Psalm 110. As it transitions from Heb 11 to this exposition on being faithful in the midst of discipline, Hebrews alludes to Psalm 110:1 in 12:2, declaring that Jesus “has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God,” which demonstrates Jesus’ own perseverance through suffering and underlines his transcendent authority from the outset. While Ps 110 has been cited and alluded to many times by this point, one element that may be more relevant here than in other sections is the fact that it is a Zion psalm (Ps 110:2) starting off an exposition where Zion imagery is strongly implied throughout.

Prov 3:11-12. The citation of Proverbs 3:11-12 is the main exegetical text of 12:1-17. As Thiessen⁴³ has shown (above), Hebrews explains the idea of parental (or paternal) discipline experienced by the audience in their own period of divine discipline and purification in preparation for entering the land, which parallels the experience of the wilderness generation. Allen suggests that “Hebrews exegetes the [Prov 3:11-12] quotation on the basis of Deut 8:2-5,” pointing out the optimistic and encouraging sense of the exhortation.⁴⁴

Isaiah 35. Hebrews alludes to Isa 35 at several points in this passage. It calls those who are journeying to Zion to rejoice and be strong, not becoming faint of heart (12:12-23; Isa 35:1-4). Isaiah 35 encourages travelers (returning exiles) on the way to Zion (Isa 35:10): “Be strong, you weak hands and feeble knees! Give comfort, you who are faint of heart and mind! Be strong and do not fear...he himself will come and save us! (Isa 35:3-4, NETS). The journey motif is strengthened as the passage progresses by language and allusions that evoke Isaiah 35 and imagery of a new exodus, a journey through the wilderness toward Zion. The connection to Isaiah 35 is most evident in 12:12, which paraphrases Isa 35:3:

Διὸ τὰς παρειμένας χεῖρας καὶ τὰ παραλελυμένα γόνατα ὄνορθώσατε
Hebrews 12:12

ἰσχύσατε χεῖρες ἀνειμέναι καὶ γόνατα παραλελυμένα
Isaiah 35:3

⁴³ Thiessen, "Hebrews 12.5-13."

⁴⁴ Allen, *Deuteronomy* 82.

The language of strength and endurance versus weakness and weariness is the main point of connection between the texts from Proverbs and Isaiah that Hebrews uses. The exhortation to “not become weary (κάμητε) in your souls, becoming faint (ἐκλυόμενοι)” (12:3) precedes the Proverbs quotation, then the cited text directly urges against “becoming faint” (ἐκλύουν) under discipline (12:5; Prov 3:11). In addition to the call to strengthen weak hands and feeble knees (Isa 35:3), Isaiah 35 urges the people to comfort the faint of heart (οἱ ὀλιγόψυχοι), to be strong and not to fear (Isa 35:4). Other resonances between Isa 35 and Heb 12 include the anticipation of joy at journey’s end—by Jesus (12:2) and his followers (12:11; cf. Isa 35:10), the alleviation of sorrow (λύπη, 12:11; Isa 35:10), healing of the lame (12:13; Isa 35:6) and, importantly, the promise that those who have been made holy (12:10-11; Isa 35:8-10) will see God (12:14; Isa 35:2).

Proverbs 4:26. The citation of Prov 4:26, “make straight paths for your feet” is one of the least rearranged quotations in the chapter.⁴⁵ Making straight paths for one’s feet reinforces themes of faithfulness, righteousness and healing. In contrast, a play on the word ἐκτρέπω, to “turn,” “turn away,” or “be dislocated” (limbs)⁴⁶ refers to those who have become lame. As a conclusion to the exhortation of 12:1-14, this text resonates with the language of choice,⁴⁷ journeying and the numerous references to the physical body.

Summary. By alluding to Isaiah 35, this subsection not only encourages its audience to persevere, it evokes thoughts of Zion as their future destination, which is

⁴⁵ Rearranged only slightly, to τροχιὰς ὁρθὰς ποιεῖτε τοῖς ποσὶν ὑμῶν from ὁρθὰς τροχιὰς ποίει σοῖς ποσὶν.

⁴⁶ BDAG, “ἐκτρέπω”. Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 398, 403, 26-27.

⁴⁷ Guthrie, "Hebrews," 988.

shortly to be juxtaposed with Sinai and the past. In the first thirteen or fourteen verses of the passage, the people are exhorted to follow Jesus through suffering and discipline. The passage prepares for the introduction of heavenly Zion in 12:22, hinting at it with the allusion to Ps 110:1 (Zion in Ps 110:2) and more strongly via allusions to and language from the new exodus/pilgrimage passage of Isaiah 35. The other function, perhaps the main function, is to interpret their present experience against the backdrop of the divine discipline tradition of the wilderness narrative.

The Pentateuch and Exegesis in 12:1-17

The first section implicitly compares the wilderness generation in their period of discipline (cf. Deut 8:5) to the present generation in *their* time of discipline (Prov 3:11-12). It does so subtly through the use again of the title ἀρχηγός for Jesus, and more directly by tapping into traditions concerning the divine discipline of the wilderness generation based on Deut 8:5.⁴⁸ Hebrews cites Prov 3:11-12 (in 12:5-6) in order to both convince the audience that they are God's children⁴⁹ (akin to the argument in 2:10-3:6) and to explain the ramifications. The contributions of each passage to Hebrews is evident here:

⁴⁸ Both Thiessen and Allen make strong cases for this: Allen, *Deuteronomy* 79-82; Thiessen, "Hebrews 12.5-13." See also Spicq, *L'Epître*, II, 391.

⁴⁹ Making frequent use of family language (νιός, παιδίον, παιδεία, πατήρ, κληρονομέω), as noted above.

Combination of Deut 8:5 and Prov 3:11-12 in Heb 12:5-7

Deut 8:5

Prov 3:11-12

Heb 12:5-7

καὶ ἐκλέλησθε τῆς
παρακλήσεως, ἥτις ὑμῖν ὡς
νίοῖς διαλέγεται·

νιέ μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας
κυρίου μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ'
αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος
ὅν γὰρ ἄγαπᾶ κύριος παιδεύει
μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα νιὸν ὃν
παραδέχεται

νιέ μου, μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας
κυρίου μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ'
αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος·
ὅν γὰρ ἄγαπᾶ κύριος
παιδεύει, μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα
νιὸν ὃν παραδέχεται.

καὶ γνώσῃ τῇ καρδίᾳ σου
ὅτι ὡς εἴ τις παιδεύσαι
ἄνθρωπος τὸν νιὸν αὐτοῦ,
οὗτος κύριος ὁ θεός σου
παιδεύσει σε.⁵⁰

εἰς παιδείαν ὑπομένετε, ὡς
νίοῖς ὑμῖν προσφέρεται οὐ
θεός, τίς γὰρ νιὸς ὃν οὐ
παιδεύει πατήρ;

Deuteronomy 8 has Moses speaking to the people in advance of crossing the Jordan.

Looking back over the years in the wilderness, Moses explains that “as any human being disciplines their son, so the Lord disciplines⁵¹ you,” which may well have inspired Proverbs 3:11-12: “[Son,] do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.”⁵² Hebrews probably cites Proverbs 3:11-12 instead of Deut 8:5, because it works so well as direct exhortation to his readers.⁵³

⁵⁰ Deut 8:5 [Gött]; John William Wevers, *Deuteronomium*, Vetus Testamentum Graecum: Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

⁵¹ In the LXX *παιδεύσει*, probably a gnomic future; several variants in Gött.

⁵² LXX, my translation.

⁵³ Thiessen, "Hebrews 12.5-13," 374 n 33.

As Thiessen demonstrates, Wisdom of Solomon 11:9-10,⁵⁴ Philo,⁵⁵ and Josephus⁵⁶ all explain the wilderness experience at points as being a time of divine discipline, of testing, formation and/or sanctification, in preparation to enter the Promised Land. With regard to those traditions, Allen writes,

The wilderness years (if not the wilderness generation) are viewed with high regard. Just as that generation were upheld and proven as ‘sons’ through testing, so the Hebrews audience are similarly reminded of their filial status and the formative value of divine discipline.⁵⁷

The comparison to wilderness generation, while somewhat muted in 12:1-17, seems to be implied by the use again of ἀρχηγός in 12:2, parallels with other traditions related to divine discipline and the wilderness generation, and perhaps the journey motif itself, it becomes overt in 12:18-29. As further support for the connection, Thiessen writes that “the narrative world in which the author has placed himself and his readers in Heb 3.7-4.11 and 11.8-40 has been clearly defined as Israel’s wilderness period; therefore the author does not need to make *explicit* reference to the wilderness in 12.5-13 since the underlying narrative of the letter has already located the readers in this period.”⁵⁸ While I am less inclined to see the audience situated *in* a fictive wilderness period—it is sufficient to see Hebrews drawing parallels—I agree that the Hebrews “narrative world” has

⁵⁴ “For when they were tried, though they were being disciplined (*παιδευόμενοι ἔγνωσαν*) in mercy, they learned how the ungodly were tormented when judged in wrath. For you tested them as a parent (*πατήρ*) does in warning, but you examined the ungodly as a stern king does in condemnation.” (Wis 11:9-10 NRSV)

⁵⁵ Philo, *Prelim. Studies* 132. Thiessen, “Hebrews 12.5-13,” 374-75.

⁵⁶ Jos. *Ant.* 3:13-16. “Hebrews 12.5-13,” 374-75.

⁵⁷ Allen, *Deuteronomy* 82.

⁵⁸ Thiessen, “Hebrews 12.5-13,” 378.

engaged the wilderness generation enough by this point to support the proposals of Thiessen and Allen.

The exposition of 12:1-17 concludes with references to two texts from the Pentateuch which supplement the paraenesis: the bitter root of Deut 29:18 and Esau's loss of his inheritance from Gen 25. Perhaps they carry added weight because they are from the Books of Moses, but they are clearly meant to reinforce the exhortations of 12:1-14, not to introduce a new topic.⁵⁹

IV. ANALYSIS OF 12:18-29: QUAKING SINAI AND THE UNSHAKABLE KINGDOM

Hebrews 12:18-29, the final major exegetical passage of the book,⁶⁰ is where the children of God following the ἀρχηγός to Zion catch a glimpse of their final destination. Hebrews evokes Sinai extensively in this section, creating a composite description of the Sinai experience with language drawn from both Exodus and Deuteronomy, as well as Psalms 18 and 77 (12:18-21). It creates an image of the Sinai theophany with a pastiche of texts and moves on to describe heavenly Zion in comparison to Sinai (12:22-24). Then, in conjunction with Haggai 2:6, it predicts that Sinai will be shaken to bits at the dawn of

⁵⁹ The first is a paraphrase of a short phrase from Deut 29:18(17 LXX), which urges them not to be a bitter root (<ρίζα πικρίας) that springs up, causes trouble and defiles others (12:15). Coming from the final section of Deuteronomy, it is an exhortation directed at those on the verge of entering the land. The second reference is the famously puzzling command to avoid being immoral or ungodly (<πόρνος ή βέβηλος) like Esau. Thiessen and others are surely correct in suggesting that Hebrews has in mind traditions similar to those Philo uses which expanded on the unsavory character of Esau (*Preliminary Studies* 163-77; Thiessen, "Heb 12.5-13," 371-375). The result of Esau's actions is more significant than the description of him, in any case, in that this is a warning of the danger of forfeiting one's inheritance, a fitting conclusion to the series of exhortations addressed to the children of God.

⁶⁰ Hebrews 13 is mostly paraenesis, although there are some brief exegetical sections. It is not a sustained exegesis of any particular idea, passage or theme; rather it seems to be a recapitulation of points from throughout the entire book.

the eschatological age (12:25-27). That image supports the strongest of Hebrews' *qal wahomer* exhortations: a climactic warning urging the audience once again to avoid following in the footsteps of the wilderness generation by rejecting "the One speaking from heaven" (12:25-29). All of this sets up a strong exhortation that the audience avoid going the way of the wilderness generation and look forward instead to a heavenly kingdom with an attitude of gratitude and worship.

The exegesis in this section is multidimensional as Hebrews brings together themes and ideas that have been developed throughout the epistle, including Sinai and the covenant, Jesus and Moses, approaching God, and heeding the voice of God. The two main elements of the exegesis in 12:18-29 are, (1) a comparison of Sinai to Zion, followed by (2) the bold claim of Sinai's destruction using Haggai 2:6 as an exegetical text. The continuation of the ongoing comparison of the audience to the wilderness generation is behind the closing exhortation.

Scripture saturates this section but, as seen in the examples at the beginning of this chapter, scholars concerned with the respective roles of the scriptures used in this passage have not agreed on which text or texts are primary or generative in this passage, one highlighting Sinai and Exodus, for example, while others focus on Deuteronomy. In an effort to explain to the role of Exodus and the relation of the Pentateuch to the P&W in this section, we will look first at the texts involved and then at four dominant lexical and thematic "threads" that Hebrews weaves together within the argument of this section. After having laid out the main textual and lexical components of the passage, the

development of the argument in the passage will be analyzed from the perspective of the Pentateuch as the foundation and the P&W as exegetical texts.

Textual Composition of 12:18-29

Hebrews' exegesis in 12:18-29 cuts a very wide swath through the Jewish scriptures. For that reason, it will be helpful to identify and enumerate the texts involved before moving to the analysis. After identifying the texts involved, we will look specifically at the role of Exodus in 12:18-29.

Summary of texts used in 12:18-29

Hebrews' use of scripture in 12:18-29 has been viewed in a number of ways, but recognizing six texts, or groups of texts, sequentially is practical for our purposes (see diagram below). First, in 12:18-19 there is a description of Sinai—more specifically the Sinai theophany—essentially a composite description drawing from Sinai accounts in both Exodus 19-24 and Deuteronomy 4,5 and 9. Second is a pair of texts, a paraphrase of Exodus 19:12-13 (“If even a beast touches the mountain...” etc.) and a brief citation of Deut 9:19 (“...Moses said ‘I am terrified (ἐκφοβός εἰμι) and trembling.’”),⁶¹ which supplements the description of Sinai and initiates two of the main exegetical threads (see below). Some of the descriptive language related to shaking or trembling is also probably drawn from Psalms 18(17 LXX) and 77(76 LXX). Third, within the description of Zion (12:22-24) are several allusions, including “sprinkled blood” (cf. Exod 24:8) and a reference to “the blood of Abel” (Gen 4:10) in 12:24. Interestingly, none of the allusions

⁶¹ Most, including the NA28, identify ἐκφοβός εἰμι in 12:21 a quotation of Deut 9:19. It consists of two very recognizable words (ἐκφοβός being a NT *hapax legomenon*) in their original order. The quotation, as Hebrews represents it, puts new words into the context, altering Moses' speech as found in Deut 9:19, so it could just as accurately be considered a paraphrase, in that sense.

in the Zion description in 12:22-24 seem to be direct citations or allusions to Zion *texts*. However, if we consider 12:1-29 as a unit, the allusion to Ps. 110 (a Zion text) in 12:2 and the allusions to Isa 35 (a Zion text, 35:10) in 12:1-14 can be seen to exert continuing influence in 12:18-29.⁶² Fourth, given the context, the phrase “the one warning from heaven”⁶³ in 12:25 alludes to Exodus 20:22, “...I have spoken to you from heaven.”⁶⁴ There is a certain irony there, since Hebrews recalls the Sinai experience as “the one who warned them on earth” (12:25) and the present situation as responding to “the one warning from heaven” (12:25), being that the declaration in Exod 20:22 that God was speaking from heaven at Sinai can hardly have escaped the author’s attention. Fifth, in 12:25-28, Hebrews paraphrases Haggai 2:6 (“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens”). The sixth and final notable use of a text in the passage comes in the last verse, 12:29, in the form of what most consider to be a citation (with minimal changes) of either Deut 4:24 or 9:3, or both (“For our God is a consuming fire”).

Quantitatively, the number of allusions, paraphrases and/or citations of the Pentateuch in the passage far outnumber references to the P&W in 12:18-29. Table 6.1 shows the distribution of the use of texts from the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in 12:18-29:

⁶² On 110(109):2 as an influence in 12:18-29, see Westfall, *Discourse Analysis*, 331, 36.

⁶³ οἱ τὸν ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν ἀποστρεφόμενοι; Heb 12:25. See also the retelling in Deut 4:36, “From the sky [τοῦ οὐρανοῦ] his voice became audible to discipline you, and on the earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words coming from the midst of the fire” (NETS).

⁶⁴ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λελάληκα πρὸς ὑμᾶς Exo 20:22 LXX

Table 6.1 Use of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings in 12:18-29

	Hebrews	Pentateuch	Prophets	Writings
12:18	You have not come to something that can be touched a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest	Exod 19:12, 13, 21, 23 Exod 19:9, 16, 18, 19; 20:18, 20; Deut 4:11, 12, 15, 33; 5:4-5, 22- 26; 9:10, 15		
12:19	and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them	Exod 19:13, 16, 19; 20:18, 19 Deut 5:25		
12:20	For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death."	Exod 19:12-13 (paraphr)		
12:21	Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am afraid and tremble"	Deut 9:19 (2-word citation)		Ps 18:7(17:8) Ps 77:16(76:17)
12:22	...Mount Zion, city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem...		Isa 35 [Heb 12:10-14]	Ps 110(109):2 [Heb 12:2]
12:23	...myriads of angels...	Deut 33:2 [Exod 19; Deut 4]		Ps 68
12:24	...congregation... ...new covenant... ...sprinkled blood... ... [blood of] Abel...		Jer 31:31-34	
12:25	...do not refuse the one who is speaking...(from heaven)	Exod 24:8 Gen 4:10 Exod 19:16-19; 20:18-19; Exod 20:22 (allusion)		
12:26	At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." (Heb 12:26 NRS)	Deut 5:23-31 Exod 19:18 (MT)	Jdg 5:4-5	Ps 96:4; 98:1
12:27	"Yet once more..." shaken			Hag 2:6 (paraphr)
12:29	for our God is a consuming fire	(cf. Exod 19:18) Deut 4:24; 9:3 (paraphr); cf. Deut 5:25	cf. Heb 10:26-31 (Isa 26:11)	Hag 2:6

Exodus and the composition of the Sinai description in 12:18-29

The depiction of Sinai in this passage is a textual amalgam, a composite description using carefully chosen language from Exodus, Deuteronomy and elsewhere.

It would be easiest to classify this as a thematic exposition on Sinai (or Sinai and Zion), but that should not obscure the fact that there are artful and intentional verbal threads connected to Exodus which are integral to the exegesis. At least partially for that reason, even though the Sinai event from Exodus 19-20 forms the thematic foundation of the exegesis, Hebrews also cites and alludes to other texts that make needed or creative lexical contributions to the argument. The other texts may not seem to quite fit the context at first, like the citation of Deut 9:19 (after the golden calf incident) in what seems to be an Exodus 19-20 narrative context. However, Hebrews is building on the idea of fear and trembling—to make an important verbal-exegetical connection with Haggai 2:6—but, although fear and trembling are clearly a part of the narrative, Exod 19-20, does not use that specific language. So, as we will see below, Hebrews creatively involves other texts to help make its point.

Thematically, Hebrews' argument and exhortation are built around the interpretation and dialogue with Sinai as a concept, symbol and/or theological construct. Hebrews does not stay as tightly focused on keywords here as does Mekilta Bahodesh 1 on a single phrase (“they encamped in the wilderness”) from a specific verse (Exod 19:2). That exegesis was also related to the Sinai event, but the exegetical strategy is much different. Closer to what we find here is the creation of the Jubilee paradigm in 11QMELCH, which begins with Leviticus 25:13 and supplements that with Deuteronomy 15:2 to define the concept of Jubilee such that it opens the way to its eschatological interpretation via Isaiah 61.⁶⁵ The theophany of Exodus 19-20 serves as a foundation and

⁶⁵ See above, pages 42-47.

Hebrews supplements the Exodus narrative with vocabulary from elsewhere that fits the narrative perfectly well—fear, trembling, shaking—to set up the connection with Haggai 2:6, the shaking of the earth and the heavens once more.

Exodus serves as the seminal canonical account of the Sinai theophany in all its glory, with all of Exodus 19-40 in the narrative setting of the vicinity of Sinai and the Sinai theophany prominent in 19-24. Moses retells the story to the next generation in Deut 4-5 and part of 9. The Deuteronomistic accounts are sometimes more vivid than Exodus, which is certainly one of the reasons Hebrews draws on both.

Hebrews' description of Sinai is a true composite. As indicated in the chart below, the lexical basis of four of the items in the description is found in relevant sections of both Exodus and Deuteronomy (approach, fire, darkness and the sound of a voice), one (*σάλπιγγος ἥχω*, the trumpet blast) occurs only in Exodus, another (*θυέλλῃ*, storm/tempest/whirlwind) only in Deuteronomy, and two are not to be found in either Exodus or Deuteronomy.

Table 6.2 Parallel use of specific vocabulary in the Sinai description

Heb 12:18-19	Exod	Deut	Comments
Οὐ γὰρ προσεληνύθατε	19:15	4:11; 5:23	
ψηλαφωμένῳ			<i>Synonyms in Exod 19:12-13</i>
καὶ κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ	19:18; 24:17	Chs 4, 5, 9	
καὶ γνόφῳ	20:21	4:11; 5:22	
καὶ ζόφῳ			<i>No occurrence in LXX</i>
καὶ θυέλλῃ		4:11; 5:22	
καὶ σάλπιγγος ἥχῳ	19:13, 16, 18; 20:8		
καὶ φωνῇ ὥημάτων,	19:5, 6, 9, 13, 16, 19; 20:18	4:11-12, 30, 33; 5:5, 22-26, 28	
ἥσ οἱ ἀκούσαντες παρηγήσαντο	Listening/hearing is common in both accounts. Both Exod and Deut refer to the people's desire that the Lord not continue to speak to them directly, but neither Exod nor Deut uses <i>παραιτέομαι</i> to describe that reaction.		
μὴ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς λόγον			

Both Deuteronomy and Hebrews retell, or “re-present” the Sinai event.⁶⁶ In both cases, since the audience was already familiar with the original narrative, using lists as concise summaries of memorable narrative elements from the Exodus account works well. Hebrews’ list-description of the theophany is similar to two such lists in Deuteronomy (see Table 6.3), but Hebrews does not choose to simply cite either of those lists. Instead, Hebrews composes its own descriptive list using items common to Exodus and Deuteronomy, some distinct to Exodus, some distinct to Deuteronomy and some from elsewhere. Hebrews’ list begins and ends with strategic terms for its own two-pronged exegesis—coming to the mountain and the people’s terrified reaction to hearing the sound of the voice of the Lord. Both Hebrews and Deuteronomy collect, select and condense material from broader swaths of Exodus.

Table 6.3 Sinai Description Vocabulary from Deut 4 & 5 in Heb 12:18-19

Hebrews 12:18-19	Deut 4:11-12	Deut 5:23
<p>Οὐ γὰρ προσεληνύθατε ψηλαφωμένῳ (something ‘touchable’) καὶ κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ (burning with fire) καὶ γνόφῳ (darkness) καὶ ζόρῳ (gloom) καὶ θυέλλῃ (storm/tempest) καὶ σάλπιγγος ἡχῷ (trumpet sound) καὶ φωνῇ ὥρμάτων, (voice speaking words) ἥς οἱ <u>ἀκούσαντες παρητήσαντο</u> μὴ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς λόγον</p>	<p>καὶ προστίλθετε καὶ ἔστητε ὑπὸ τὸ ὄρος καὶ τὸ ὄρος ἐκαίετο πυρὶ ἐως τοῦ οὐρανοῦ σκότος γνόφος θύελλα <u>φωνῇ</u> μεγάλῃ καὶ ἐλάλησεν κύριος πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐκ μέσου τοῦ πυρός <u>φωνὴν ὥρμάτων</u> ὑμεῖς <u>ἡκούσατε</u> καὶ ὅμοιώμα σὺν εἰδετε ἀλλ᾽ ἡ <u>φωνὴν</u></p>	<p>καὶ ἐγένετο ὡς ἡκούσατε τὴν φωνὴν ἐκ μέσου τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τὸ ὄρος ἐκαίετο πυρὶ^r καὶ προστίλθετε πρὸς με πάντες οἱ ἡγούμενοι τῶν φυλῶν ὑμῶν καὶ ἡ γερουσία ὑμῶν</p>

Hebrews presents its descriptions of Sinai and Zion using the language of *approach*. As seen in the previous chapter related to the sanctuary, the tension of

⁶⁶ Again, See Allen, *Deuteronomy* 199-223.

approach and avoidance is important to Hebrews and central to the Exodus narrative. The Israelites arrive at Sinai in Exodus 19 and most of the rest of the text between the arrival and the Decalogue is occupied with the preparations for approaching the mountain, setting boundaries around the mountain, stipulations as to who and what may or may not approach and dire penalties for transgression. The Deuteronomic re-presentation of the Sinai experience is generally much less concerned with issues of approach and avoidance—especially avoidance—than Exodus is.

Themes and lexical clusters related to Exodus

Levenson reflects on the spectacular and fearsome nature of the Sinai theophany as follows:

Whatever the experience of the people of Israel on Mount Sinai was, it was so overwhelming that the texts about it seem to be groping for an adequate metaphor through which to convey the awesomeness of the event....Fear pervades the spectacle, a fear that infects nature as much as humanity. At the same time, the sight exerts an eerie appeal which tempts the people to “break through” to catch a glimpse [Exod 19:21], but to yield to this temptation is to risk YHWH’s displeasure....It is as though God beckons with one hand and repels with the other.⁶⁷

Levenson’s perception coincides with that of Hebrews. There are four lexical clusters in this passage that are integral to the exegesis: (1) language of approach and avoidance, (2) fear and trembling, (3) shaking and (4) words related to speech and response. There is some overlap between these categories—especially 2 and 3—and that overlap can be exegetically significant. As already stated, it is difficult to draw a definite boundary between the categories of thematic verbal exegesis. Hebrews integrates the following

⁶⁷ Levenson, *Sinai*, 15.

verbal dynamics into its Sinai-centered thematic exegesis using synonyms or near synonyms instead of repeating specific catchwords over and over.

Approach and avoidance: Sinai vs. Zion.

The comparison of Sinai to Zion is structured around the repetition of one perfect active indicative verb: “For you have not come (*Oὐ…προσεληνύθατε*) [to Sinai] …, but you have come (*ἀλλὰ προσεληνύθατε*) [to Zion] …” (12:18-24). This language of approach connects with multiple points in narrative accounts of the Sinai experience as found in Exodus 19-24 and Deut 4-5, including the use of *ἔρχομαι* (Exod 19:1,2; Deut 9:7) and *προσέρχομαι* (Deut 4:11; 5:23, 27). It also echoes Hebrews’ emphatic declaration in 10:19-22 that, because of Jesus, believers can now enter the holy place, urging them, “Let us approach” (*προσερχόμεθα*; 10:22). A strong sense of danger, boundary and prohibition comes with the foreboding description of Sinai in 12:18-19 and the explicit recollection of the fact that “If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned” (12:21; Exod 19:12-13). Recalling Moses’ fear, still at Sinai although after the golden calf incident, adds to the sense that Sinai was unwelcoming, inaccessible and a place to be avoided. Of course, Moses was given unprecedented (post-Eden) access to the divine presence at Sinai, as was the high priest to the sanctuary in the previous section, but Hebrews is interested in contrasting extremely limited access with approachability.

Hebrews dramatically condenses the rather involved commands that call for setting and observing boundaries around the mountain to avoid suffering dire consequences. The multi-purpose paraphrase retains just enough of the Exodus text to

remind the audience that Sinai was unapproachable, that the people “could not bear” the command of the Lord and that transgression at Sinai was a deadly proposition.⁶⁸

Fear and trembling

A second lexical cluster and thematic thread that runs through the entire pericope includes words related to fear and trembling. The foreboding description of Sinai in 12:18-19 implicitly calls to mind the fear of the Israelites when faced with the divine presence and divine voice and the consequences associated with transgressing the boundaries set. The *vocabulary* of fear and trembling begins in 12:21 as Hebrews describes the very sight of Sinai as so fearsome or terrifying (φοβερὸν) that Moses himself declared “I am terrified and trembling” (ἔκφοβός εἰμι καὶ ἔντρομος).⁶⁹ The adjective ᔁκφοβός is a *hapax legomenon* in the LXX of the canonical Jewish scriptures.⁷⁰ Turning the narrative phrase into the words of Moses, Hebrews also enhances the phrase from Deut 9:19 by adding the adjective “trembling” (ἔντρομος), which is relatively rare

⁶⁸ A condensed paraphrase of Exod 19:12-13.

Heb 12:21: οὐκ ἔφερον γὰρ τὸ διαστελλόμενον· καὶ θηρίον θίγη τοῦ ὄρους, λιθοβοληθήσεται.

Exod 19:12-23: καὶ ἀφοριεῖς τὸν λαὸν κύκλῳ λέγων προσέχετε ἑαυτοῖς τοῦ ἀναβῆναι εἰς τὸ ὄρος καὶ θίγειν τι αὐτοῦ πᾶς ὁ ἀψάμενος τοῦ ὄρους θανάτῳ τελευτήσει οὐχ ἄγεται αὐτοῦ χείρ ἐν γὰρ λίθοις λιθοβοληθήσεται ἡ βολίδι κατατοξευθήσεται ἐάν τε κτῆνος ἐάν τε ἄνθρωπος οὐ ζήσεται ὅταν αἱ φωναὶ καὶ αἱ σάλπιγγες καὶ ἡ νεφέλῃ ἀπέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἐκεῖνοι ἀναβήσονται ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος.

⁶⁹ The issue of Moses’ fear and the quotation of Deut 9:19 has raised eyebrows of many commentators because of its apparent stretching of context. Deut 9:19 refers to Moses’ fear of divine judgment upon the Israelites resulting from the golden calf episode, which some consider to be long after and of a different sort than the fear of the people when confronted with the voice of God in Exod 19-20 (more below).

⁷⁰ Only occurring one other time in the LXX/Deuterocanonical 1 Macc 13:2. This is thus an unambiguous reference to the two most recognizable words from Deut 9:19: καὶ ᔁκφοβός εἰμι διὰ τὴν ὄργὴν καὶ τὸν θυμόν ὅτι παρωξύνθη κύριος ἐφ' ὑμῖν ἐξολεθρεῦσαι ὑμᾶς καὶ εἰσήκουσεν κύριος ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ.

and is not found in either Exod or Deut. Its appropriateness and exegetical value become apparent when we note that two of its five LXX occurrences are in psalms which apply ἔντρομος to the earth and mountains quaking at the sound of God's voice (18:7[17:8 LXX]; 77:18[76:19 LXX]).⁷¹ Fear and trembling are critical—and explicative—thematic elements, connecting the fear of the Israelites at hearing the voice of God with Moses' fear and then later associating fear again with the One who warns from heaven and language of “escape” (12:25). Fear of judgment hovers over the final warning as they are reminded that “our God is a consuming fire” (12:29).

Shaking the cosmos

Closely associated with fear and trembling is language of shaking and quaking. The Sinai description is clearly violent, described as it is, in terms of fire and tempest. However, as Guthrie points out, the language of trembling, shaking and quaking is not included in the Sinai accounts of Exodus or Deuteronomy.⁷² Rather, that language finds its way into the passage via the description of *Moses'* fear and “trembling” or “quaking” (ἔντρομος), not that of Sinai, in 12:21. When we get to 12:26-28, Hebrews itself recalls the one whose “voice shook (ἐσάλευσεν) the earth” at Sinai in conjunction with Haggai 2:6, where the Lord vows “Yet once more I will shake (σείσω)⁷³ not only the earth but the heavens.” Hebrews then goes on to explain that “that which can be shaken” ($\tauῶν σαλευομένων$) and “that which is unshakeable” ($\tauὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα$; 12:27) will remain.

⁷¹ The only other LXX occurrences are in Dan 10:11 (Th); Wis 17:9 and 1 Macc 13:2.

⁷² Guthrie, "Hebrews," 990.

⁷³ Shared root with σεισμός, the noun indicating an earthquake or shaking, the verb indicating shaking, causing to quake or trembling. R. Kratz, "σεισμός, οῦ, ὁ & σείω," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990).

The verb σαλεύω (used 4 times in 12:26-27) and the adjective ἀσάλευτος are effectively synonymous with σείω, the verb in Hag 2:6. Interestingly, σαλεύω is not found in the LXX of Exod or Deut, and seems more likely drawn from other scriptural descriptions of Sinai, such as Judges 5:5 and/or Psalm 77:18[76:19 LXX]). Both Psalms 18:7(17:8 LXX) and 77:18[76:19 LXX] pair up ἔντρομος and σαλεύω⁷⁴ in their depictions of the Lord shaking mountains. Hebrews draws on this cluster of terms and texts to make the critical point that even untouchable Sinai can, and will, be shaken apart.

Speech and response

The fourth and final verbal cluster of note in 12:18-29 reflects the important theme of divine speech and the people’s response, an important theme throughout this passage and Hebrews as a whole.⁷⁵ Divine speech is mentioned specifically in four of the twelve verses (12:19, 24, 25, 26), responses to divine speech—mostly those of the people at Sinai—are pivotal and are mentioned in 12:19, 20, 25 and the desired response of the audience to “the One who is speaking” is the topic of 12:25-29. Divine speech is described as “a trumpet blast and sound of words” (12:19),⁷⁶ Jesus’ sprinkled blood that speaks (λαλοῦντι;12:24), as the One who is speaking (τὸν λαλοῦντα) and warning (τὸν

⁷⁴ Ps 17:8 LXX: καὶ ἐσαλεύθη καὶ ἔντρομος ἐγενήθη ἡ γῆ καὶ τὰ θεμέλια τῶν ὁρέων ἐταράχθησαν καὶ ἐσαλεύθησαν ὅτι ὥργισθη ἀντοῖς ὁ θεός. Ps 76:19 LXX: φωνὴ τῆς βροντῆς σου ἐν τῷ τροχῷ ἔφαναν αἱ ἀστραπαὶ σου τῇ οἰκουμένῃ ἐσαλεύθη καὶ ἔντρομος ἐγενήθη ἡ γῆ

⁷⁵ On the significance of divine speech in Hebrews see the recent treatment of the topic by Griffiths, *Hebrews*. and Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, 90-100.

⁷⁶ σάλπιγγος ἦχῳ καὶ φωνῇ ὥρμάτων, 12:19. The concepts of the trumpet blast and the voice or sound of the Lord on the mountain are ambiguously entangled in the Exodus account. For a thorough exploration of several ambiguities surrounding the Sinai account—what was heard and what was not, or what might have been heard—and a consideration of the theological implications and interpretive debates, see Benjamin D. Sommer, *Revelation and Authority: Sinai in Jewish Scripture and Tradition*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), esp. 27-45.

χρηματίζοντα) from heaven (12:25), whose voice (φωνή) shook the earth (at Sinai) and has promised (ἐπίγγελται) to do so again (12:26).

One of the key lexical elements of this passage is the verb *παραιτέομαι*, usually translated in 12:19 as “begged” (not to hear) and then as “reject” or “refuse” twice in 12:25—always with reference to the human response to divine speech. While *παραιτέομαι* is not found in the LXX, Hebrews uses it to allude to the people’s terrified reaction to hearing the voice of the Lord at Sinai (esp. Exod 19:16; 20:18-21; cf. Deut 5:22, 25-27). The language of speech, voice and response in 12:18-29 comes from both the Pentateuch and Haggai 2:6, with the Sinai theophany being the key connection between them.

Exegetical Juxtapositions

There are two main exegetical juxtapositions in 12:18-29 which drive most of the exegesis and one more that continues from 12:1-17. First, as most commentators have noted, the Sinai vs. Zion comparison dominates the pericope, running more or less continuously from 12:18 to 12:28. As in much of Hebrews, the elements from the Pentateuch in 12:18-29 relate mainly to the Sinai covenant, Moses, and the Exodus generation. The second major exegetical juxtaposition is that of Haggai 2:6 with Sinai. Hebrews anticipates specific language from Haggai 2:6 and its immediate context throughout 12:18-25 in preparation for the exegetical move in verses 26-29. In 12:18-29, the promised heavenly Zion is understood in relation to Sinai. Sinai, in turn, is viewed in light of Haggai 2:6. These juxtapositions will be examined here in detail.

The Juxtaposition of Sinai and Zion

At the beginning of Hebrews, Sinai, angels and Moses combined to form a paradigm by which to describe Jesus and his ministry. Later, Aaron's perpetual priesthood illuminated Jesus as "a priest forever" and then the earthly tabernacle was used to explain the heavenly counterpart. In each case, there were common aspects and contrasts between the Pentateuchal paradigms and corresponding elements related to Jesus and the New Covenant. In this final exegetical section, Hebrews comes full circle, returning to Sinai, even as it lays out a vision of an eschatological Zion, a heavenly Jerusalem. In so doing, it brings together a number of the New Covenant elements it has explained along the way. We also see that Zion is, in a sense, built on a Sinai template, as strong as the contrast may be. Put another way, Zion is not explained in terms unique to Zion, but in ways that show some continuity from Sinai—even in the face of dramatic discontinuity. We will look first at the contrast—Sinai vs. Zion—and then ways in which Sinai serves as the literary and theological template for Zion.

Sinai vs. Zion. The Sinai/Zion contrast in 12:18-24 is often summed up by pointing to the fearsome description of Sinai, while Zion, as Harold Attridge describes it, "is not a place of terror but of joyous festivity."⁷⁷ The contrasting descriptions of Sinai and Zion do not reflect a tight, one-to-one correspondence.⁷⁸ There is no correspondence in the Zion description to the list of the meteorological phenomena that so dominates the Sinai description, for instance. Sinai and Zion are contrasted fairly directly in four

⁷⁷ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 372.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

respects, however. First, as noted above, the prominence of the language of approach (and avoidance) is the most obvious contrast initially. The double use of *προσεληνθατε* (12:18, 22) signals Hebrews' emphasis on approach and avoidance, contrasting the foreboding nature of Sinai versus the welcoming heavenly city. Second, Hebrews describes Zion as an inhabited city with community and permanence. The covenant given at Sinai had a degree of permanence, but the site was, and remained, a stop in the wilderness. And, as we shall see, even Mt. Sinai itself is not permanent (12:26-28)! Third, the frequent references to "heaven" (12:22, 23, 25, 26) and "earth" (12:25-26) show Hebrews' intentional cosmological contrast of the two mountains. Closely related is the fourth contrast, which remains implicit until the Haggai passage comes into play in 12:26-27: instability versus stability. The scriptural memory of Sinai is one of shaking and quaking, along with thunder and lightning and fire, and Hebrews waits until 12:26 to bring that to the fore in conjunction with Haggai's oracle. The combined effect of these four contrasts is to describe Sinai as inaccessible, inhospitable, earthly and impermanent; whereas Zion is approachable, a place to dwell, heavenly and permanent.

Hebrews does use the P&W exegetically in specific ways in this passage. The clearest case of that is the impact of Haggai 2:6, which will be examined shortly. But, in light of the fact that throughout the chapter Hebrews has been on its way to Zion, so to speak, Ps 110, as a Zion psalm, contributes the idea of a heavenly sanctuary where Jesus ministers, or mediates (cf. 12:22-24) and God will mete out judgment (12:23). Isaiah 35 concludes with famously festive imagery of the purified redeemed pilgrims celebrating joyfully in Zion (35:10), which correlates well with the Zion imagery in 12:22-24. Joel

3:16-17 describes the Lord crying out from Jerusalem with a voice that causes the heavens and earth to shake (*σεισθήσεται*) and God dwelling on the holy mountain, Zion.⁷⁹

Sinai as the paradigm for Zion. There are a number of aspects of Sinai which, one way or another, are relevant to Hebrew's representation of Zion—whether as similarities or differences. Some of these are obvious: both are mountains, the divine presence is encountered in both places, “myriads” (*μυριάσιν*) of angels are present (Deut 33:2; Heb 12:22) at both, the people assemble (e.g. Deut 4:10; Heb 12:23), God judges, a covenant is in effect, the people are sanctified (cf. Exod 19:10-15), a mediator is involved, there is a sprinkling of blood (Exod 24:8, Heb 12:24, cf. Heb 9:20-21), and there is divine speech (12:24, 25-28). Zion is, therefore, enough like Sinai to parallel its significance, while being different enough to be seen as a better place with a better covenant, etc.

Within the Hebrew Bible, Levenson points out, Sinai is also paradigmatic for Zion. Psalm 97, for instance, speaks of clouds and darkness around God's throne, fire, lightning and the trembling of the earth. The mountain on which God's presence is found, is Zion, not Sinai, however. Similarly, Psalm 59 refers to God's arrival amidst devouring fire and tempest, speaking and summoning the earth. Again, as reminiscent as the language is of Sinai, Zion is the mountain of God's presence in Ps 50.⁸⁰ Although Hebrews reserves the pyrotechnics for Sinai and transfers different elements from Sinai to Zion, Hebrews' Zion sits on the literary foundation of Sinai, nonetheless.

⁷⁹ The language is very similar to much in this passage but it is hard to discern whether the Joel text was somehow in mind.

⁸⁰ Levenson, *Sinai*, 90-91.

Sinai through the lens of Haggai 2:6

The only direct use of a text from the P&W in 12:18-29 is Haggai 2:6 in 12:26-27. The immediate context (12:25-29) is often referred to as the final warning passage in Hebrews.⁸¹ Haggai 2:6 is the key exegetical text from the P&W in this passage. It makes the final exegetical statement about the future of Sinai and the Sinai Covenant.

Hebrews cites the first four words of the oracle verbatim and rearranges the second part, slightly shortening it:

διότι τάδε λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ
ἔτι ἄπαξ ἐγώ σείσω τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηράν

Hag 2:6 LXX

ἔτι ἄπαξ ἐγώ σείσω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν.

Heb 12:26b

Although Haggai 2, overall, is concerned with a greater future restoration of the Temple than was realized in the time of Haggai and Zerubbabel, the immediate context (e.g. Hag 2:5)—especially in the MT⁸²—makes clear that the first “shaking” in 2:6 alludes to the exodus event and Sinai:

⁸¹ Attridge, *Hebrews*, 378-83; Bruce, *Epistle*, 362-63; Guthrie, *Structure*, 73, 133; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 448; Alan C. Mitchell, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation," *Religious Studies Review* 37, no. 2 (2011): 287-91; O'Brien, *Letter*, 491-501. For an informative and recent survey of the so-called “warning passages,” see B. J. Oropeza, “The Warning Passages in Hebrews: Revised Theologies and New Methods of Interpretation,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 10, no. 1 (2011).

⁸² Many early extant LXX mss do not include the reference to coming out of Egypt, so the Göttingen critical text, for example, does not include it. There are plenty of textual variants, however, to indicate that scribes either added the reference, being familiar with the Hebrew text of Hag 2:5 or perhaps some of them worked with a different recension that had not dropped the reference to begin with. LXX mss which refer to Egypt include C-68-538-613; AchSyh^{mg}; Cyr.^F; V; Sa; Bo. The connection with the exodus and Sinai seems to have been readily made by others, so it is not surprising that the author of Hebrews would have made that connection either through familiarity with the Hebrew text, a version of the Greek that included it, or simply understood the allusion even without the reference to Egypt.

Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt.

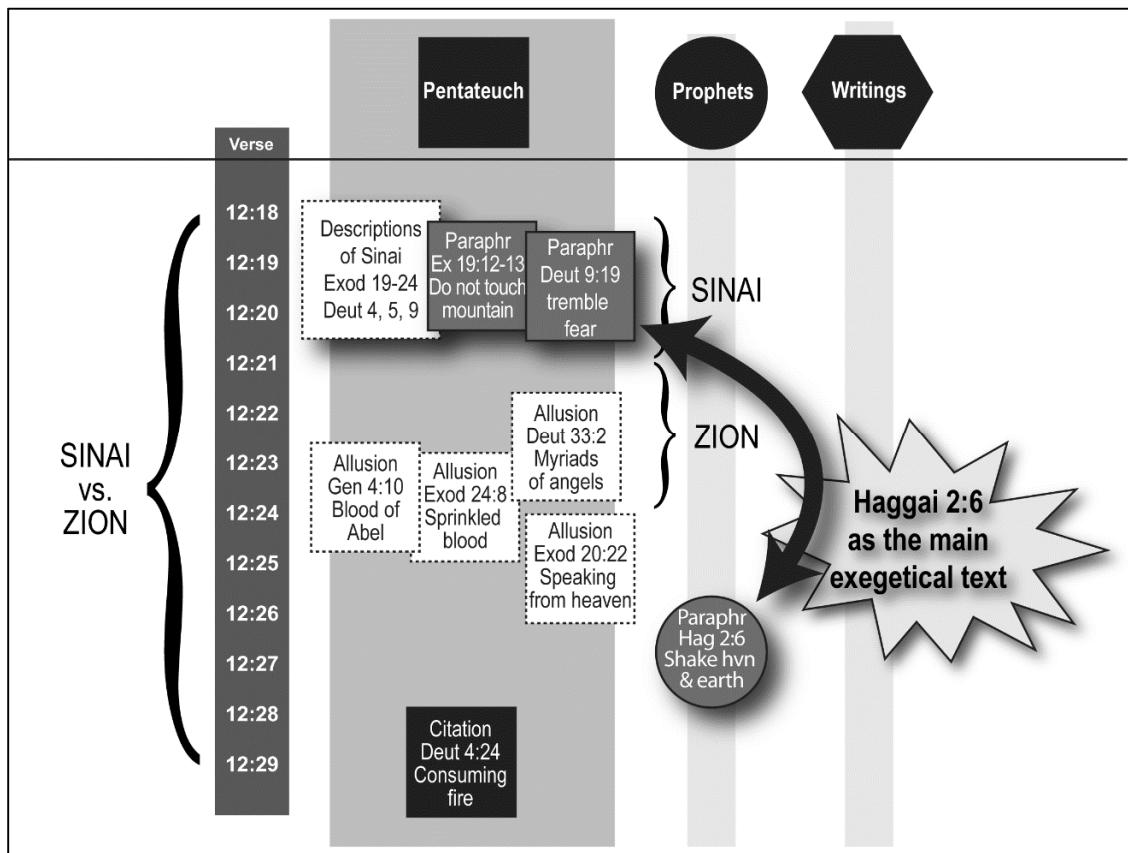
My spirit abides among you; do not fear.

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land;

and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. (Hag 2:4-7)

Hebrews understands the past shaking of the heavens and earth to have been at Sinai and views the future shaking ($\sigma\epsilon\iota\sigma\omega$) in the oracle as a prophetic indication that even Sinai is part of earthly, transitory, “shakeable” creation, which will someday “be removed (12:27) and yield to an “unshakeable” heavenly kingdom. Hebrew’s paraphrase of the verse rearranges “earth” and “heaven” and adds “not only...but also” in such a way as to suggest that just the earth that was shaken before, but soon everything will be shaken: “...I will shake *not only* the earth, *but also* the heaven.” The future event will not be a repetition but a transformation.

Figure 6.3 Citations and Allusions in 12:18-29 (with Hag 2:6 as main exegetical text)



The use of the verb *σείω*, “to shake,” is essential to this final exegetical move; so much so, that we can assume the author incorporated the “shaking and quaking” lexical cluster into the passage so prominently in order to set up the final, climactic point. Sinai is depicted as violent and unstable (12:18-19); Moses “trembles” as mountains do at the sound of God’s voice. God’s voice becomes prominent again in 12:25 just prior to the citation of Haggai 2:6. Gelardini observes that *both* the events associated with Sinai and those to precede entry to Zion involve terrifying natural phenomena. As terrifying as

Sinai was, the eschatological conclusion the present age is expected to be even more terrifying, especially for those who do not enjoy divine protection.⁸³

Hebrews reinterprets Sinai with Haggai 2:6 in such a way as to show it to have been temporary. The words recorded by the prophet are understood to be authoritative enough, not to overturn Sinai and all it stood for, but to suggest that the end of an era was coming and God would speak again with such force that the cosmos would be destroyed and reconstituted. Hebrews takes Sinai as a paradigm of divine revelation and, by destabilizing the mountain itself (literarily and prophetically), it destabilizes the covenant it stood for, in favor of the new covenant. The use here of Haggai 2:6 to put the SC in eschatological perspective is not unlike the way 11QMelch uses texts from Isaiah to explain a future (eschatological) year of Jubilee which would be radically different. Both the covenant in Hebrews and the jubilee in 11QMelch are familiar paradigms from the Pentateuch that texts from the Prophets show will continue in a different form in a future eschatological time.⁸⁴

The Wilderness Generation and the Audience in 12:18-29

The ongoing comparison of the situation of the audience to that of the wilderness generation continues in 12:18-29 from the previous pericope. In 12:1-3 the audience was encouraged to continue following Jesus the ἀρχηγός, then Proverbs 3:11-12 was cited in an effort to have them view their own experience through the lens the wilderness generation and the discipline (*παιδεία*) they experienced, reminiscent of Deut 8:5 (12:5-

⁸³ Gelardini, *Verhärtet* 375.

⁸⁴ See pp. 42-47.

13). In 12:18-29, they have arrived (*προσεληνύθατε*). While they have not come to Sinai, but to Zion, they still face the same essential choice that the wilderness generation did: whether to listen to or refuse the voice of God (12:19; 25-29).

The warning here is similar to 2:1-4. In that case, if the wilderness generation had received a just penalty for disobeying the word spoken through angels, Hebrews asks “how will we escape (*ἐκφευξόμεθα*), if we neglect so great a salvation?” (2:3). Here, the audience is warned, “See that you do not refuse the One who is speaking, for they did not escape (*ἐξέφυγον*) when they refused the One who spoke to them on earth, how much less will we if we refuse the One who warns from heaven?” (12:25).⁸⁵ Instead of rejecting the word of the Lord, the audience is called to give thanks and worship God because they are receiving the unshakeable kingdom (heavenly Zion).

The final scriptural citation in this passage, “For our God is a consuming fire,” was drawn from one of two possible passages in Deuteronomy:

καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκον. Heb 12:29

ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου πῦρ καταναλίσκον ἐστίν θεὸς ζηλωτής Deut 4:24

καὶ γνώσῃ σήμερον ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου οὗτος προπορεύεται πρὸ προσώπου σου πῦρ καταναλίσκον ἐστίν Deut 9:3

In either case, *σου* is exchanged for *ἡμῶν* in order to adapt the quotation and apply it to Hebrews’ audience. The context of Deut 4:24 is far more apt for Hebrew’s use in that Moses has just urged the audience in one of his parting exhortations, “Take care, lest you forget the covenant of your God...” (4:24a NETS); the warning about God as a consuming fire being directed at the people of the covenant. In Deut 9:3, the consuming

⁸⁵ Gelardini, *Verhärtet*, 356-58.

fire descriptor is used with regard to the destruction of the enemies in the land. Given Hebrews' emphasis on faithfulness and covenant, evoking the context of Deut 4:24 was surely Hebrews' aim (vs. Deut 9:3).⁸⁶ The term “fire” (*πῦρ*) here also forms an *inclusio* with the “burning fire” (*κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ*) in 12:18, signaling the end of the section and sustaining the Sinai theme.

The overall movement of exegesis of 12:18-29 is (1) to recall Sinai in all its fearsome and fiery glory, as if with “No Trespassing” signs and razor wire around about it, (2) to lay out a contrasting view of Zion that is communal and hospitable, with a new covenant that has its own cult and mediator and offers the possibility of drawing near to the divine presence and (3) to use the oracular words of Haggai (Hag 2:6) to show that, as the scriptures have predicted, Sinai itself, and what it represents, will one day be undone. We have seen that, somewhat ironically, Sinai is *still* the scriptural paradigm for Zion and the foundation of the exegesis, even if one of the exegetical conclusions is that fissures in the great mountain can already be detected. Much of the evidence Hebrews mounts in 12:18-29 is in support of the assertion that, if the wilderness generation did not escape judgment when disregarding a covenant spoken to them by a voice *on earth*, how much less would it be possible for the present generation to escape if they were to disregard an

⁸⁶ The debate as to which text Hebrews cites is regularly mentioned, but Deut 4:24 is clearly the more likely candidate in terms of context and the proximity of the identical words in the text:

καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκον. Heb 12:29;

ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου πῦρ καταναλίσκον ἐστίν θεὸς ζηλωτής Deut 4:24;

ὅτι κύριος ὁ θεός σου οὗτος προπορεύεται πρὸ προσώπου σου πῦρ καταναλίσκον ἐστίν 9:3.

In favor of reading the reference as a citation of Deut 4:24 over Deut 9:3 (among others): Cockerill, *Epistle*, 672-72; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 691; Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 487-88; O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 500-01.

even greater voice—the one who speaks *from heaven* (12:25). The exhortation to heed the voice from heaven reinforces the urgency of recognizing the authority of the New Covenant and the idea that the New Covenant is comparable to—or superior to—the covenant given at Sinai.

V. PERCEIVING THE TEXTUAL CENTER OR GRAVITY IN 12:1-29

Hebrews develops its exegesis in this passage with citations, paraphrases and allusions to Exodus, Deuteronomy, Psalms and Haggai. While Gelardini and Allen focused more often on the prominent use of texts from Deuteronomy 12:18-29,⁸⁷ the above analysis has emphasized the role of Exodus and Sinai at several points. We now turn to further assess the generative roles of the text of Exodus and the theme of Sinai in this passage.

With the above analysis in view, I propose that there are three key components to Hebrews' exegesis in 12:18-29: (1) The *theme* of Sinai rather than the exegesis of one specific text, (2) the juxtaposition of Sinai and Zion and (3), the exegesis of Sinai and its significance through the use of Haggai 2:6. It is evident from Hebrews' use of texts here that the Sinai event—including the theophany, the people's response, and the covenant—can hardly be recalled apart from the retellings in Deuteronomy and the Psalms (not to mention Jer 31 and Hag 2, etc.). Hebrews engages in a robust re-presentation and exegesis of Sinai, centered on Exodus and drawing on various parts of Deuteronomy and other scriptures.

⁸⁷ Gelardini contends that the near or partial citation of Deut 9:19 (12:21) that mentions Moses' fear is the key text of the passage and that the citation of Haggai 2:6 (12:26, 27) serves as the eschatological peroration. Allen's project highlights the use of Deuteronomy throughout Hebrews and this passage, suggesting that Hebrews "re-presents" Sinai "Deuteronomically." Allen, *Deuteronomy* 199-223.

Four concise supporting arguments can be made for the primary and generative role of Exodus in 12:18-29, which can be extended to Heb 12 generally. First, with the principle in mind that the P&W typically interpret the Pentateuch, the Sinai/Zion juxtaposition is central to the exegesis here—Sinai from the Pentateuch and Zion from the P&W. Exodus is indisputably the generative text when it comes to Sinai and the beginning of the wilderness narrative.

Second, the complex of ideas related to divine speech—specifically the startling, disruptive, fearsome, earth-shattering, transcendent voice of the Lord—is central in Hebrews 12, as is the response of the people as a corollary. The Exodus narrative is intensely focused on those dynamics of divine speech, from Moses' early encounters with YHWH through the event of the exodus itself and in even more concentrated fashion at Sinai. Exodus itself records chapters and chapters of material from the perspective of the divine first person (most of 19-31, 33-34, 40). Deuteronomy is, above all, *Moses'* speech, although it records segments of first-person divine speech (e.g. Deut 5:6-21), they are always framed as Moses' recollections and re-proclamations. The direct concern with God's voice, as opposed to Moses' voice, is more characteristic of Exodus.

Third, Sinai remains prominent throughout the passage and, although we know the people are to look forward to entering Zion, Hebrews never seems to transfer its imagined, analogous setting from the foot of Sinai to the plains of Moab or the banks of the Jordan (Deut 1:1-5; 34:8). The use of Haggai 2:6 to interpret the future of Sinai is further evidence of this. The focus remains on Sinai and the covenant and Sinai in the

future, not on crossing over. It is about establishing and reinforcing the covenant, although it does indeed include warnings that have a Deuteronomic feel to them, as well.

Fourth, and finally, the journey motif that runs through Heb 12 is reminiscent of the exodus, whether we consider the narrative imagination of Hebrews to place the audience in the wilderness of Exodus-Deuteronomy or in their own new exodus.

It is difficult to know to what extent Exodus and Deuteronomy could or should be untangled in the mind Hebrews' author. Regardless of the degree to which Exodus and Deuteronomy are woven together in this final exegetical passage, Exodus is—at the very least—*as* significant as Deuteronomy, although I consider it to be more fundamental than Deuteronomy. If Exodus has been the consistent generative text to this point in Hebrews, there is no reason to see a shift here.

In assessing other proposals related to Hebrews' use of texts in this passage; first, I agree with France that 12:18-29 is an exposition based on Mt. Sinai, or the Sinai theophany, but would modify that to suggest that it is Sinai interpreted in light of Zion traditions; notably Ps 110:2, Isa 33-35 and perhaps others.⁸⁸ France is correct in identifying Exod 19:12-13 and 19:20 as key texts,⁸⁹ although texts from Deuteronomy are clearly integrated as well. France's sense of Hebrews' view of the scriptures in the following statement, is somewhat problematic however:

Whereas in other expositions the Old Testament text has provided a positive promise or exhortation for the readers to take hold of, in this case the Old Testament image represents the terrifying past which they have left behind, while all that is new and positive is taken up in the contrasting image of Mount Sion,

⁸⁸ Possibly including Psalms 2, 50(49); 69(68); Jeremiah 30-33; and even perhaps traditions common to 4 Ezra.

⁸⁹ France, "Writer."

which, despite its Old Testament name, is described in terms which, where they relate to the Old Testament at all, do so more by contrast than by continuity.

While Zion is presented in a more positive light than Sinai—and this is precisely the point of the exegesis—France’s connection, or equivalence, of the Old Testament with fearsome Sinai, is overdrawn. Zion was certainly a concept drawn from the Jewish Scriptures, so the claim that Zion is more in contrast than continuity with the Hebrew Bible is difficult to understand.

Son identifies the Sinai/Zion tension as the driving force in this passage and explicates various dimensions of it well. Importantly, he puts the eschatological vision of Zion into a broader perspective, which suggests that Hebrews is tapping into existing Zion traditions rather than creating them. Hebrews’ portrayal of Sinai representing the past and Zion as a preferable future—connected with the new covenant—does not seem to be a Christian innovation. I would not stretch the Sinai/Zion umbrella over all of Hebrews as Son does because the interpretive benefits of the “Zion” part of the dyad diminish at many points. While not strictly a textual analysis or approach, Son’s perception of the tension is helpful and does not clash with the perspective on the use of scripture in the present study.

Gelardini’s reading of this section is consistent with her overall perspective that Hebrews is based on Exodus 31:18-32:35 (breaking of the covenant/golden calf) and Jer 31:31-34 as Torah and *haftarah* readings, and the theme of covenant renewal. Her reading of 12:1-17 with an emphasis on discipline against the backdrop of the wilderness generation coincides with the reading proposed here. She also considers Heb 1-2 to be the

Schwesterperikope to 12:4-24, with which I generally agree. Her observation that Deut 9:19 (in 12:21) is part of Moses' recounting of the broken covenant supports her thesis.

There are various points of contrast between our analyses, however. The greatest difference is that, since the overall emphasis of 12:18-29 seems to me to be centered on the fearsome and unapproachable nature of Sinai, I consider the citation of Deut 9:19 (which speaks of Moses' fear) to be a supporting citation rather than the central text of the periscope. Sinai and the theophany form the thematic basis for this passage, which Deut 9:19 supplements. Both Gelardini and I read the use of Haggai 2:6 as part of a concluding exhortation that has an eschatological dimension to it, although we see the interrelationship of the texts differently. I see Haggai 2:6 as the lens through which Sinai is viewed, and that Haggai's oracle is employed to destabilize or subvert the dominance of Sinai in the present, pointing ahead to a radical eschatological transition. Haggai points toward a new epoch and a new cosmos, which explains the violent, unstable description of Sinai. Therefore, Haggai 2:6 is both an important *theological* text, which turns the argument at the last moment, and an exhortation with an eschatological basis. My preference is to place greater emphasis on the significance of the exegetical role of Haggai 2:6, rather than viewing it mainly as the concluding eschatological and hortatory verse, although I do not see a major difference between us on this point.

From my point of view, this study largely complements Allen's work rather than conflicting with it. I agree that Hebrew does *re-present* Sinai to its audience for paraenetic purposes and, in the process, that it both *uses* Deuteronomy and *imitates* Deuteronomy to a certain extent. I do not see Deuteronomy as the primary generative text

for Hebrews 12 or 12:18-29 but, as Allen asserts, texts from Deuteronomy 4, 5 and 9 are integral to Hebrews’ “re-presentation” of Sinai here. I suggest that continuing to view 12:18-29 as being based on a composite, thematic “re-presentation” of Sinai that relies both on Exodus and Deuteronomy is the best course (and is not direct conflict with Allen’s view, as I see it). There is a significant contrast between our views, however, in that I do not see Hebrews imagining a “plains of Moab” Deuteronomic setting in the way that Allen does, but a different setting, heavenly Mt. Zion, where the New Covenant will be take effect. This is not to say that Hebrews does not use hortatory rhetoric reminiscent of Deuteronomy however, as Allen demonstrates well.

Zion is the heir to Sinai in scripture and Jewish tradition, as Levenson describes it.⁹⁰ He suggests that “Mount Zion fell heir to the legacy of Mount Sinai.” He avers that, although Zion in some ways succeeded Sinai, it never fully replaced it or surpassed it. Canon and scripture play a role in that perception. Citing Deut 34:10, “Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,” Levenson describes all subsequent prophecy as of a lower order than that of Moses, “the great hero of Sinai.”⁹¹ He goes on to state that, in tradition and scripture,

God’s continuing availability is at Zion, not at Sinai, but the canonical division of the Pentateuch from the rest of the Hebrew Bible, adumbrated by Deut 34:10, insures that the heir will be eternally subordinate to the testator, Zion to Sinai, David to Moses. By limiting the concept of Torah proper to the Pentateuch, the canonical process speaks more directly to an Israel on the move, its promises of the land and rest as yet unrealized, than to the Israel of the Zionistic traditions,

⁹⁰ Levenson, *Sinai*, 187.

⁹¹ *Sinai*, 187-88.

which is “planted” in the land, secure and inviolable (e.g., 2 Sam 7:10)...The presence is the presence of Zion, but the voice is the voice of Sinai.⁹²

Recalling the examples of Psalms 50 and 97 transferring qualities of Sinai to Zion, we see that Sinai is never fully eclipsed by prominence of Zion; rather, “Sinai has not so much been forgotten but absorbed.”⁹³ In Hebrews’ case, it is very clear that Zion has not fully eclipsed Sinai, either. Hebrews looks forward to a Zion that is the eschatological heir of Sinai.

⁹² *Sinai*, 188.

⁹³ *Sinai*, 91.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to productively reimagine the habit of mind of an ancient exegete, the author of Hebrews. The thesis has been that the Sinai pericope of Exodus (Exod 19-40) serves as the principal generative text of the book and that Hebrews uses citations of texts from the Prophets and Writings exegetically and dialogically in direct relation to themes and texts from Exodus to make its arguments. Ultimately, Hebrews' message emerges from a series of hermeneutical dialogues between Exodus as the primary generative text and exegetical texts from the Prophets and Writings.¹

I. EVIDENCE FOR HEBREWS' USE OF EXODUS

This study has offered five main types of evidence to show that Exodus is the primary generative text for Hebrews. First, themes, topics and/or verses from Exodus are featured in every major section of the book: Sinai, angels and Moses (1:1-3:6), the exodus generation and the promise of rest (3:7-4:13), the priesthood of Aaron (4:14-

¹ Summarizing key points about generative and exegetical texts made earlier: A “generative text” is a text which serves as the basis and/or starting point for another composition, whether that new composition be homiletical, exegetical, a commentary, a revision, an adaptation, or a parody, etc. An “exegetical text” is one used in the interpretation (very broadly defined) of the generative text or theme. A primary generative text is the basis and starting point for another composition, be that homiletical, exegetical, commentary, revision, adaptation, or parody, for example. That generative text can also be the source of a major theme (Genesis/creation, Exodus/Sinai) in a new text. Exegetical texts are selected on the basis of thematic and/or verbal connections to the generative text. They have a broad range of functions, including filling gaps and resolving exegetical issues in generative texts, contemporizing laws or principles, showing the paraenetic significance of scriptural narratives, transforming existing paradigms theologically or eschatologically and, often, imparting hope to an audience.

7:28), the sanctuary, covenant and sacrificial system (8:1-10:18), the exodus generation again (12:1-17) and the Sinai theophany (12:18-29).²

Second, the major topics and themes of Hebrews are all characteristic of Exodus among the books of the Pentateuch, while they are not characteristic, or not *as* characteristic, of each of the remaining books of the Pentateuch. For example, in Exodus we find the premiere example of divine speech at Sinai, a theme that is prominent throughout Hebrews. Divine speech is a prominent theme at points in Genesis, but it is much less so in Leviticus, Numbers or Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy recalls Sinai but, as noted in chapter 6, it is primarily Moses' speech, not God's, in contrast to an unmistakable emphasis on divine speech in Exodus. In a similar vein, the priesthood is a major topic in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, but Deuteronomy hardly mentions the priesthood. The tabernacle, or sanctuary, dominates several chapters of Exodus and is of some concern in Leviticus and Numbers (though quite a bit less), but is essentially absent from Deuteronomy, as well. Mentions of Sinai are limited in Leviticus and Numbers (the people departing from Sinai in Num 10), and most references look back to Exodus. Deuteronomy mentions Sinai only once and Horeb just less than ten times, all of which are backward-looking, re-presenting the Exodus narrative. The topic of the covenant is dominant in Deuteronomy and Exodus, but muted in Leviticus and Numbers. Angels are a significant topic only in Genesis and Exodus, aside from the angel of the Lord in the

² Hebrews 13 is regarded as a final, mostly paraenetic section, as opposed to the longer exegetical sections in Heb 1-12. While there are short exegetical components in that section (which do involve Exodus), the attention of this study has been directed at the longer exegetical sections. Hebrews 11 is distinct both in its genre and in the vast amount of the biblical text/narrative which it engages. It is not an exegetical section in the same way as the other sections examined in this study. Nevertheless, both the Pentateuch, generally, and Moses and the Exodus, specifically, are prominent in Heb 11.

Balaam story in Num 22. Sabbath rest is a major theme throughout the Pentateuch, but rest as a destination or a state of peace, as Hebrews discusses the promise of rest, is addressed only in Exodus and Deuteronomy. To summarize the data, all of the major topics and themes are significant in Exodus but none of the other Books of Moses are concerned with all of them nearly to the same degree as Exodus is.

Table C.5 Pentateuchal topics and themes in Hebrews (by book)

Topics and Themes	GEN	EXOD	LEV	NUM	DEUT
Sinai		●●●	●	●	●●
Angels	●●	●●		●	●
Moses		●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
Divine speech	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●
Rest (peace/state of being)		●			●●
Priesthood		●●●	●●●	●●●	●
Covenant		●●●	●●	●●	●●●
Sanctuary/tabernacle		●●●	●●●	●●●	
Sacrifice & atonement	●	●●●	●●●	●●	●

●●● = Major theme or frequently mentioned

●● = More limited theme, focus only in certain parts

● = Minor theme or receiving brief/isolated mention

A third type of evidence that Exodus is the primary generative text in Hebrews is the fact that citations or allusions to verses from Exodus are strategic in several of Hebrews' expositions. In 1:1-3:6, the exhortation in the center of the passage to "heed even more what we have heard" compared to the word spoken by angels resonates with the commands to obey God's voice in Exod 19:5 and even more with the command to pay attention and not disobey the angel of the presence in Exod 23:21.³ Hebrews' allusions to the appointment of Aaron in 5:1, 4 clearly recall Exod 28:1. Hebrews cites Exodus 25:40 which refers to the pattern for the sanctuary in 8:5 and alludes to the

³ Exod 23:21 (LXX) πρόσεχε σεαυτῷ καὶ εἰσάκουε αὐτοῦ καὶ μὴ ἀπείθει αὐτῷ οὐ γὰρ μὴ ὑποστείληται σε τὸ γὰρ ὄνομά μού ἔστιν ἐπ' αὐτῷ. See pp. 83-85.

sanctuary built by God's own hands in 8:2 (Exod 15:17), which are the key texts for the exposition in 8:1-10:18. The citation of Exod 24:8 also plays a role in that section, related to both the covenant and purification by blood. The paraphrase of Exod 19:12-13 in 12:20 is integral to Hebrews' description of the Sinai theophany in 12:18-21. In each of these examples, citations, close allusions or paraphrases of texts from Exodus are essential to Hebrews' exegesis.

Fourth, we have seen that Hebrews uses several exegetical texts from the Prophets and Writings that directly recall Exodus themselves. Psalm 95:7-11 interprets the experience and fate of the exodus generation, including a call to listen to the voice of God, reminiscent of Sinai in Ps 95:7. Jeremiah 31 recalls not only the covenant but the ancestors being led by the hand out of Egypt (Jer 31:32; cf. Heb 8:9). In the immediate context of Haggai 2:6, the crucial exegetical text for Heb 12:18-29, the prophet refers to "the promise I made you when you came out of Egypt" (Hag 2:5) and, of course, the great shaking of the heavens and earth that alludes to the Sinai theophany (Hag 2:6), which is precisely why Hebrews uses that text. Hebrews often draws on texts from the P&W in its exegesis that themselves already interpret Sinai and the exodus.

A final point that suggests the significance of Sinai for Hebrews is the recognition that the book begins and ends with Sinai. Hebrews 1-2 is concerned with Jesus as God's spokesperson over against the angels at Sinai, then Heb 2-3 sets Jesus' role as leader-deliverer next to Moses. Hebrews 12, the final full-blown exegetical section of the book, is unequivocally oriented around Sinai. Between Hebrews' Sinai "bookends," the text never departs from topics or themes related to Exodus for very long. The great list of

Hebrews 11 is, debatably, an exception to the rule but, even there, Moses and the exodus occupy the final major slot in the narrative portion of the chapter (11:23-29), followed only by a brief mention of Jericho and Rahab (11:30-31).

II. THE INFLUENCE OF EXODUS IN HEBREWS

If it has been sufficiently demonstrated that Exodus is the primary generative text for Hebrews, that Hebrews rests on the Pentateuchal foundation of Exodus, we turn our attention to *how* Hebrews uses Exodus. What does Exodus contribute to Hebrews' argument that the Psalms, Jeremiah, or Haggai do not? Exodus' influence in Hebrews can be fairly well summarized in the following categories: Authority and legitimization, explanation, coherence, and exhortation.

Authority and Legitimation. Exodus is the most authoritative scripture that Hebrews uses in its argument, contrary to claims others have made to the effect that the Psalms or Prophets assumed greater authority than the Torah. This is apparent, not just in Hebrews' frequent use of Exodus material, but in Hebrews' clear sense that the audience would regard the "word spoken through angels" as something inherently authoritative. Again, in Hebrews 12, if the exodus generation did not escape when they refused to obey the Lord's warning at Sinai, Hebrew warns that the present generation should fear to refuse God's word to them even more. In that example, the high level of authority of *both* the word at Sinai *and* the word of Christ is necessary for the argument to work.

In another case, Hebrews does not simply claim that Jesus is a great high priest based on a verse in a psalm. Rather, it develops a detailed set of proofs related to several characteristics of Aaron's priesthood from the Pentateuch. In fact, it even enlists the help

of another figure from the Torah, Melchizedek, in so doing. If Jesus' self-sacrifice was to be understood as effective for atonement, it had to be explained in light of the Law.

Hebrews regards the Pentateuch as authoritative even as it declares that the Sinai Covenant is growing old and is about to disappear. Similar to the impulse we see in Mek. Bah. 1 and 11QMelch, whether one wants to argue that, contrary to appearances, the Torah was given to all the nations or that the jubilee concept will take on a whole new meaning in the coming age, the Torah must be involved in its own reinterpretation and the new interpretation must somehow square with the Books of Moses. The claim that the Torah was given to everyone, not just Israel, is most convincing when found in the Pentateuch itself. The assertion that jubilee can mean liberation, not just the forgiveness of debt, should fit with the law—should come *from* the law—not bypass it. Likewise, the claim that Jesus presides in a heavenly sanctuary carries far more weight when the Pentateuch itself testifies to the existence of such a sanctuary. Hebrews sees that it must reckon with Exodus—Sinai, Moses, the law, the covenant—with when making assertions regarding a new covenant, new priesthood, new law, etc., because scriptural authority has always rested there. For a priesthood to be legitimate, it must somehow be legitimate according to the Torah, *even if* the new priesthood brings with it a new law.

Explanation. Exodus, because it is so well known, had tremendous explanatory power for Hebrews. Everyone in the audience knew what happened at Sinai, and what the “word spoken through angels” was. Everyone knew what happened to the wilderness generation without any need for explanation. Everyone knew, even if they had never seen it with their own eyes, what the wilderness sanctuary was like. Whether they knew

precisely what would have been sprinkled with blood or how exactly the rites involving the red heifer worked is debatable; but Hebrews had the broad contours and many particulars of both the Sinai narrative and the legal and ritual material to work with as a common and familiar base. For that reason, the nuances of Hebrews' listing of the contents of the sanctuary, inner and outer, may well have carried far more significance and had greater explanatory value to a member of his ideal audience than it does to many readers today.

Coherence. Since Exodus was so well known, its narrative and text provided a remarkable degree of coherence and continuity in Hebrews, even if often implicitly.⁴ The logical and rhetorical movement from Sinai to the tribulation and failure of the exodus generation to the priesthood and mediation to the sanctuary to sacrifice and back to Sinai all happens comfortably and coherently within a known narrative world. That world is centered in Exodus 19-40 and, even where other familiar stories come into play, such as the deliverance from Egypt, or Kadesh-Barnea, readers can understand the relationship of those episodes to the core narrative setting without any effort. While Hebrews does use a more substantial section of Exodus than one synagogue reading could have encompassed, Exodus 19-40 provides a unified, bounded, coherent literary foundation to its argument.

Exhortation. Finally, in this “word of exhortation” (13:22), Hebrews uses Exodus to exhort its readers to persevere in their faith in Jesus as the messiah. While Exodus grounds Hebrews’ theological arguments, it also provides the power behind much of its paraenesis and warnings. Readers learn from the Sinai experience that they should obey

⁴ In fact, the implicit nature of many of the references to Exodus testifies all the more to its familiarity.

the voice of God. They know that they should honor the high priest. They know that they should persevere through abuse and difficulty, as did Moses. They know that they must be sanctified if they are ever to enter the holy precinct.

III. COMPARISON TO OTHER APPROACHES

In the course of this study, various proposals as to the best way to understand Hebrews' use of scripture and its scriptural center of gravity have been examined. Most of those have fallen into two groups: (1) those that see Ps 110 as the dominant text throughout and (2) those that treat Hebrews as a series of expositions on texts from the P&W. A third proposal oriented around Hebrew's use of scripture is Gelardini's synagogue homily hypothesis. The following is a brief response to each of those three approaches to summarize and supplement the conclusions presented in the preceding chapters.

With respect to the first group, there can be little doubt that Ps 110 was a crucial text for the author of Hebrews. Hebrews draws two key concepts from the psalm, two of the most essential planks in its exegetical platform: (1) Jesus seated in heaven at the right hand of God from Ps 110:1 and (2) the declaration of Jesus to be a priest forever via Ps 110:4. The fact that the psalm is a Zion psalm (Ps 110:2) also fits well with Hebrews' Zion vision. There are two major disadvantages to describing Hebrews as a "midrash on Ps 110," however. First, and foremost, there can be an attendant distortion of Hebrews' theology of scripture. Although Hebrews does use Ps 110 exegetically throughout the book and Ps 110:4 shapes the exegesis throughout 4:14-7:28, the characterization of Hebrews as a midrash *on* Ps 110 suggests that the psalm carries more weight than the

Pentateuch in Hebrews—or at least it obscures the foundational role of the Pentateuch. There are, indeed, points at which Hebrews explains a phrase from a psalm, “according to the order of Melchizedek,” for example. The larger goal is not to understand the psalm, however, but to use the psalm to explain how Jesus’ non-conforming and invisible priesthood could be real and withstand inevitable scrutiny in relation to the Torah. A second weakness in proposing that Hebrews is a midrash on Psalm 110 is that the psalm comes into play throughout much of Hebrews, but not all of it. Psalm 110 has little or no role in 3:7-4:13 or 10:26-11:40, and only a minimal role in Heb 12.⁵ Hebrews’ use of Ps 110 is somewhat comparable to Wisdom’s literary/theological use of the figure of *Sophia* from Proverbs 8 in relation to the Pentateuchal narrative. *Sophia* provides literary unity in Wis 10-12 as well as a particular theological slant on the workings of divine providence. Like Proverbs 8 in Wisdom, Psalm 110 serves as a thread that unifies much of the book and makes key theological contributions.

The second group of proposals views Hebrews as a series of expositions on texts from the Prophets and Writings (Caird, Longenecker, France, Kistemaker, etc.). As a reminder, R.T. France outlined Hebrews in the following manner:

⁵ Contrary to the claims of Jordaan and Nels that Hebrews is structured around Ps 110 as a whole as they attempt to link every verse of Ps 110 sequentially with sections of Hebrews. Their results are unconvincing. Jordaan and Nel, "From Priest-King."

Heb 2:15-18	on Ps 8:4-6
Heb 3:7-4:13	on Ps 95:7-11
Heb 5:5-7:28	on Ps 110
Heb 8:1-10:18	on Jer 31:31-34
Heb 10:32-12:3	on Hab 2:3-4
Heb 12:4-13	on Prov 3:11-12/Isa 26:11/Hag 2:6
Heb 12:18-29	on "Mt. Sinai motif" ⁶

I have suggested, instead, that all of those texts (Ps 110, 2, 95; Jer 31, etc.) are exegetical texts, texts in orbit around Exodus as the Pentateuchal center of gravity. Much like the Mekilta does in individual units or expositions on Exodus, Hebrews digs into these exegetical texts and often weaves multiple phrases or verses into its exegesis. But, especially when Hebrews is viewed as a whole, we see that Hebrews' goal is not to explain or exegete those texts as centers of scriptural authority, but to use them to juxtapose Jesus or aspects of his ministry with corresponding elements from Exodus (angels, Moses, priesthood, sacrifice, etc.). A pair of fortuitous exegetical problems posed by Ps 2, for example, gives Hebrews the opportunity to show that Jesus is, indeed, greater than the angels. The exegesis involving Psalm 95 does not explain the psalm because that psalm is crucial; it uses the psalm to explain both the fate of the exodus generation and the promise of rest originating in Exod 33:14. The target text of Hebrews' exegesis in Heb 8-10 is not Jer 31:31-34; rather, it uses covenant, the internalization of the Law and the forgiveness of sins from Jer 31 to explain what the New Covenant involves and, more importantly, to legitimize Jesus as the mediator of that covenant and show that he provides an effective means of atonement. As already noted, in several cases Hebrews

⁶ France, "Writer."

uses texts which already interpret Exodus in its own juxtapositions of Jesus and the audience with aspects of Exodus.

With regard to Gelardini's proposal, I am indebted to the connection she has made between Jeremiah 31 and Exodus 31:18-32:35 and the reflection that has brought about although I have come to different conclusions about the exegetical interrelationships of the texts in Hebrews. To make a definitive judgment regarding the formal aspects of her synagogue homily argument falls outside the scope of this study, but I will note that I am not convinced that the evidence is sufficient to make such a judgment conclusively in either direction.⁷ The most significant differences between my approach and Gelardini's are evident in our assessments of (1) the structure of Hebrews (2) the relative importance of Exod 19-20 and Exod 31:18-32:35, and (3) the perceived emphasis on the topic of covenant and priesthood.

⁷ Many scholars have expressed concern or skepticism that Gelardini's formal analysis related to synagogue homily is, or may be, anachronistic, citing a lack of early evidence to compare with later examples of synagogue homilies. In my opinion, there may not be sufficient early evidence to support proposals of this type in detail, but neither do we have definitive evidence to the contrary. For that reason, I consider the vigor of Carl Mosser's scathing review ("Review of Gabriella Gelardini, 'Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht': Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenghomilie zu Tischa be-Aw.") of Gelardini's work to be unwarranted. It is not as though we have a raft of early examples of synagogue homilies that are radically different from or contradictory to what Gelardini proposes; we simply have very little written evidence of the genre, which was inherently an oral genre at that time. Both Boyarin and Flusser (among others) see in Hebrews a valuable example of pre-rabbinic midrash or Jewish exegesis. In the face of a dearth of definitive evidence, I am open to the possibility that formal characteristics of later homilies could feasibly have been present in Hebrews, or other NT or early 2nd C. Jewish and Christian literature. I continue to see the connection Gelardini has drawn between Jeremiah 31 and Exodus as very insightful, as are many of her structural and exegetical observations related to Hebrews. The differences between our conclusions have mainly to do with seeing the various texts functioning differently in relation to each other; I have intentionally set aside the issues of form and homily in order to focus more on the operative theology of scripture and broader exegetical perspectives related to the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings.

First, I tend to see the units of Hebrews as closely-related but more independent, with each section having its own set of texts—Pentateuchal and exegetical—whereas Gelardini sees the following homiletical structure:

Torah reading (*sidrah*) upon which Hebrews-as-homily is based: Exodus 31:17b/18-32:35

Reading from the Prophets (*haftarah*): Jeremiah 31:31-34

Proem (*peticha*) section—Heb 1-6: Focus on breaking of Sinai Covenant;
Texts from Hagiographa

Proem 1. 1:1-2:18 *Erhöhter und erniedrigter Sohn*
(*Ex 32-34 Bundesbruch und erneuerung am Sinai*)
Proem 2. 3:1-6:20 *Unglaube der Väter und Söhne*
(*Num 13-14 Bundesbruch in Kadesch-Barnea*)

Haftarah section—Heb 7-10: Focus on covenant renewal; *haftarah* Jer 31:31-34

Central section 7:1-10:18 *Neuer Bund und Kultinstitution*
(*Ex 32-34 Bundeserneuerung am Sinai*)

Perorations Heb 10-13—Exhortations with eschatological and messianic themes

Peroration 1. 10:19-12:3 *Glaube der Söhne und Väter*
Peroration 2. 12:4-13:25 *Erniedrigte und erhöhte Söhne*
(*Ex 32-34 Bundesbruch und erneuerung am Sinai*)

Gelardini sees one Torah/*haftarah* combination governing the whole epistle, whereas I tend to see the expositions grounded individually on texts and themes from Exodus. That leads to the second point of contrast.

For Gelardini, Hebrews is built on the Torah/*haftarah* foundation of Exodus 31:18-32:35 (with an important reference to 31:17 on the Sabbath in 4:4). It is reasonable to think that Hebrews' author could have begun with the pairing of 31:18-32:35 and Jer 31:31-34 in mind and extended the context of Exodus to draw in the Sinai theophany, appointment of Aaron and sanctuary texts—all are in close context with each other. As shown throughout this study, however, the Sinai theophany is very significant to Hebrews, enough so that Hebrews begins and ends there. Granted, Gelardini and others see a chiastic structure to Hebrews and the central position in a chiastic structure is

considered crucial, which is where we find Jer 31:31-34 in her analysis. But, Hebrews' concern with the giving of the Covenant at Sinai juxtaposed with Jesus' role as a divine spokesperson and, later, the future of Sinai as it relates to Zion is very prominent; so prominent, in fact, that I am not inclined to see the sections related to the Sinai theophany as subordinate to the topic of covenant renewal. Rather, they are all part of a series of proofs and explanations that Jesus and his covenant stack up well against the Sinai Covenant. Therefore, I take Exodus 19-20 as having at least equal importance to Exod 32. The narrative of the golden calf episode in Exod 32, I would also note, is not addressed directly by Hebrews at all, which raises further questions about its centrality.

Finally, if it were necessary to designate one of the two major themes in the central section (Heb 5-10 or 7-10)—priesthood and covenant—as more important than the other, I am inclined to say that the amount of text dedicated to the priesthood suggests that it is more important than covenant (although this is admittedly subjective). Covenant and priesthood are, any rate, very much entangled. It seems to me that the central section is about priesthood and covenant together, rather than dealing with priesthood only insofar as it relates to covenant renewal. In the end, my approach of viewing the exegetical units more independently, more as individual homiletical units, makes this approach less compatible with Gelardini's. Although I see Hebrews as a unified sermon or word of exhortation, I see it more as a series of units, slightly closer to the way the Mekilta functions than to a synagogue homily in the form she presents. That leads to the next stage of evaluation and some observations on the genre of Hebrews and how that relates to Exodus.

IV. PERCEIVING EXODUS AS THE PRIMARY GENERATIVE TEXT IN HEBREWS

Hebrews is very interested in demonstrating to its audience that Jesus is a trustworthy agent of divine revelation, a great high priest and the mediator of a new covenant, and that they can trust in his mediation on their behalf. From Sinai to Moses to Aaron to the Tabernacle...and back to Sinai, Exodus provides Hebrews with a consistent narrative and authoritative basis for its argument. In every argument, Hebrews pursues the establishment of Jesus' credentials and effectiveness and some element from the Sinai experience or the Sinai Covenant stands as a paradigm. Jesus is examined in relation to those paradigms and, in every case, is found to be sufficient and superior to a particular Sinai counterpart.

Table C.2 Major Contrasts between Sinai/Exodus & Jesus/minstry

Exodus/Sinai Covenant	Jesus/New Covenant
Angels as servants/messengers (1:4-2:9)	Jesus as divine Son/messenger (1:1-3:1)
Moses as deliverer and leader of God's household (2:10-3:6)	Jesus as deliverer and leader of God's household (2:10-3:6; 12:1-6)
Aaron as priest (4:14-5:10; 7:1-28)	Jesus as priest (2:10-18, 4:14-5:10; 7:1-28)
Levitical priests ministering in the tabernacle (8:1-10:18)	Jesus ministering in a heavenly sanctuary (8:1-10:18)
Sacrificial system (9:1-10:23)	Jesus' sacrifice (9:1-10:18)
Moses as mediator of the Sinai Covenant (3:1-6; 12:18-29)	Jesus as mediator of the New Covenant (2:9-3:6; 8:1-13; 9:15-23; 12:18-29)

As to assertions by some, notably Kistemaker and Buchanan, that the Prophets and Writings had become more authoritative scripture than the Pentateuch, I do not see that to be the case with Hebrews. In every case where Hebrews makes a major assertion about Jesus from a psalm or a passage from the Prophets, it inevitably brings that

assertion into dialogue with an analogue from the Pentateuch. The psalms Hebrews cites might be enough to show Jesus to be superior to angels, but the *significance* of that assertion is found in its juxtaposition with Sinai. Psalm 110:4 is understood as declaring Jesus to be a priest, but the rank or status of his priesthood “according to Melchizedek” requires further explanation, for which Hebrew draws on Exodus and Gen 14. One of the boldest assertions Hebrews makes is that Jesus is the Son *over* God’s house, whereas Moses is merely a servant *in* God’s house. Jesus’ sonship is claimed based on a few psalms and 2 Sam 7:14 but, to reframe Moses’ authority as being less than that of Jesus, Hebrews must do some creative exegesis using a verse from Moses’ own books, Num 12:7. To make such an audacious claim in relation to Moses, Hebrews found it best to appeal to the Pentateuch itself. In summary, all of the major expositions and assertions Hebrews makes are somehow in dialogue with the Pentateuch, whether on the level of a verse, a narrative or a theme. Even the most striking verses or passages from the Prophets and Writings do not function independently.

With regard to Hebrews’ theology of Scripture, then, Hebrews maintains a high regard for the Pentateuch, characteristic of ancient Jewish exegesis. Two statements are often interpreted as suggesting otherwise: Hebrews’ description that the Sinai covenant is growing old and ready to pass away (8:13) and the statement that the Law has but a shadow of the good things to come (10:1). Both of those statements are forward-looking and eschatological, however. Hebrews sees Jesus as already a great high priest in the heavens, but it also awaits the coming end of the age. I do not find evidence that Hebrews had made much of an adjustment to traditional Jewish concepts of scripture, if any.

It may be that the significance of Exodus as a generative text in Hebrews is not often (or fully) perceived because scholarship assumes Hebrew's theology of scripture to have changed as quickly and radically as its theology related to Jesus as messiah. But, given the indisputable importance of the Pentateuch in ancient Jewish exegesis, the burden of proof for the suggestion that Hebrews' theology of scripture has shifted from Torah-centric to something else should rest with those who make that assertion. The development of Christology—or a revised and augmented understanding of messiah—does not necessarily entail a simultaneous revision of one's theology of scripture. The Psalms and Prophets were read messianically, but that was not an innovation by Hebrews, or even Christian writers, for that matter. Hebrews clearly sensed a need to reckon with the Pentateuch—Sinai no less—at every stage of its argument, which suggests that there had been no great shift in its perception of a scriptural center of gravity. Hebrews' author still thought about scripture—what it is and what it does—from a Jewish perspective, as is evident in his exegetical approach.

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