PROS HEBRAIOUS: THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

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ABSTRACT

"*Pros Hebraious*: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Its Relationship to Second Temple Judaism"

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The relationship between the Epistle to the Hebrews and Second Temple Judaism has long been a subject of debate within biblical scholarship. For most of the history of New Testament interpretation, Hebrews has been understood to be a Christian text written for the purpose of deterring Christians from relapsing back into their former religion, Judaism. Recently, however, scholars have argued for a variety of alternative proposals, and some have attempted to situate Hebrews as a text within Judaism. Consensus regarding Hebrews's relationship to Judaism remains elusive, however, suggesting that a different way of approaching this issue is necessary.

This dissertation argues that Hebrews is best understood as addressing the pastoral needs of a Jewish-Christian community facing a crisis related to issues of Jewish socio-religious identity. Using frameworks of social-historical description, theories of Jewish identity, and thematic analysis assisted by semantic domain theory, this research assesses Hebrews's relationship to Judaism by examining the author's treatment of themes related to the Law, the Temple, and the Promised Land, cultural frameworks which were significant for Jewish social and religious identity in the first century CE. This research finds that the writer of Hebrews textually constructs for himself and his audience an unmistakably Jewish identity. However, it will also be demonstrated that Hebrews evinces patterns of, as Steve Moyise says, "both tradition and innovation" in how the writer appropriates vital identity-forming traditions from Judaism for his own pastoral purposes. This study, therefore, further contends that Hebrews evinces a community with an emerging Jewish-Christian identity as theirs is an expression of Judaism which has become largely defined by their devotion to Jesus. The context of looming crisis which permeates Hebrews and the writer's treatment of traditions from common Judaism further suggests this community also has likely become estranged from Jerusalem and its temple system. This research thus contends that the traditional "relapse theory" interpretation which historically has interpreted Hebrews as taking a polemical stance against Judaism is without adequate support. Conversely, this research also suggests that some of the various "within Judaism" approaches which have become more popular in recent New Testament scholarship, while promising, require further nuancing when applied to Hebrews.

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY PAGE ii

SIGNATURE PAGE iii

ABSTRACT iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

TABLE OF CONTENTS viii

LIST OF TABLES ix

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS x

LIST OF PRIMARY SOURCES xiv

CHAPTER 1: THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND ANTI-JUDAISM: A BRIEF HISTORY OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH 1

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF HEBREWS 37

CHAPTER 3: THE LAW IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND IN HEBREWS 78

CHAPTER 4: THE TEMPLE IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND IN HEBREWS 138

CHAPTER 5: THE LAND IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND IN HEBREWS 210

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: HEBREWS AND SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM 249

BIBLIOGRAPHY 260

TABLES

Table 1: The Tabernacle's "Zones of Holiness" 142

Table 2: Sinai and the Tabernacle 145

Table 3: Levitical Sacrifices and Offerings 160

Table 4: The Law in Common Judaism and in Hebrews 251

Table 5: The Temple in Common Judaism and in Hebrews 252

Table 6: The Land in Common Judaism and in Hebrews. 253

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Freedman, David Noel, ed. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ACCSNT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament
AIL	Ancient Israel and its Literature
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
ASRMS	Applied Social Research Methods Series
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. Danker, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibSem	Biblical Seminar
BRLA	The Brill Reference Library of Judaism
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
ConBNT	Coniectanea Biblica: New Testament Series
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
COQG	Christian Origins and the Question of God

CTBW	*Conversations with The Biblical World*
DCLS	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
EC	*Early Christianity*
EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FN	*Filología Neotestamentaria*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
JAJSup	Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JC	*Jews' College*
JCP	Jewish and Christian Perspectives
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JGRChJ	*Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	Lectio Divina

LEC	Library of Early Christianity
LEH	Lust, Johan, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Rev. ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003.
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LN	Louw, J. P., and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains.* 2nd ed. 2 vols. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989.
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LPS	Library of Pauline Studies
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon.* 9th ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, Willem A., ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*. 5 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
Neot	*Neotestamentica*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF	Schaff, Philip, ed. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956.
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTP	Charlesworth, James H., ed. *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha.* 2 vols. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983–1985.
PAST	Pauline Studies
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
RB	*Revue biblique*

RelSRev	*Religious Studies Review*
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBG	Studies in Biblical Greek
SBS	Sources for Biblical Study
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SCJ	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
SEÅ	*Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SMRT	Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
STDJ	Studies on the Texts from the Desert of Judah
SubBi	Subsidia Biblica
SwJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TDNT	Kittel, G., and G. Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary Series
TRu	*Theologische Rundschau*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WAWSup	Writings from the Ancient World Supplement Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift fur Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

ANCIENT JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCOURCES

Old Testament

LXX	Septuagint	Jdg	Judges	Ezek	Ezekiel
MT	Masoretic Text	1–2 Kgs	1–2 Kings	Dan	Daniel
Gen	Genesis	1–2 Chr	1–2 Chronicles	Hos	Hosea
Exod	Exodus	Ezra	Ezra	Joel	Joel
Lev	Leviticus	Neh	Nehemiah	Hab	Habakkuk
Num	Numbers	Ps(s)	Psalms	Zeph	Zephaniah
Deut	Deuteronomy	Isa	Isaiah	Zech	Zechariah
Josh	Joshua	Jer	Jeremiah	Mal	Malachi

New Testament

Matt	Matthew	1–2 Cor	1–2 Corinthians	1–2 Pet	1–2 Peter
Mark	Mark	Gal	Galatians	Rev	Revelation
Luke	Luke	Eph	Ephesians		
John	John	Phil	Philippians		
Acts	Acts	Col	Colossians		
Rom	Romans	Heb	Hebrews		

Apocrypha

1–4 Macc	1–4 Maccabees	Tob	Tobit
Bar	Baruch	Sir	Sirach
Bel	Bel and the Dragon (Additions to Daniel)	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Jdt	Judith		

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

1–2 En	1–2 Enoch	*Ps. Sol.*	Psalms of Solomon
2 Bar	2 Baruch	*T. Abr.*	Testament of Abraham
4 Bar	4 Baruch	*T. Dan*	Testament of Dan
4 Ezra	4 Ezra	*T. Judah*	Testament of Judah
LAE	Life of Adam and Eve	*T. Levi*	Testament of Levi
Apoc. Abr.	Apocalypse of Abraham	*T. Mos.*	Testament of Moses
Jub	Jubilees	*T. Naph.*	Testament of Naphtali
Let. Arist.	Letter of Aristeas	*Sib. Or.*	Sibylline Oracles

Dead Sea Scrolls

1QM	War Scroll	4QShirShabb^{a}	Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice
1QpHab	Pesher Habakkuk	11QMelch	Melchizedek Apocalypse
1QS	The Community Rule	11QT	Temple Scroll
4QFlor	Florilegium	CD	Damascus Document
4QMMT	Miqsat Maʿaśe ha-Torah		

Rabbinic Sources (Mishnah and Talmud)

m. Ber.	Berekoth	*m. Mid.*	Middot
b Sanh.	Sanhedrin	*m. Tamid*	Tamid
b B. Bat.	Baba Batra	*m. Yoma*	Yoma

Philo of Alexandria

Abr.	On Abraham	*Leg.*	On Allegory
Cher.	On the Cherubim	*Legat.*	Embassy to Gaius
Conf.	On the Confusion of Languages	*Mig.*	Migration of Abraham
Deca.	On the Decalogue	*Mos.*	Life of Moses
Flacc	Against Flaccus	*Mut.*	On Changing Names
Fug.	On Flight and Finding	*Opif.*	On the Creation
Hypoth.	Hypothetica	*Virt.*	On the Virtues

Flavius Josephus

Ant.	Antiquities of the Jews	*War*	Jewish War
Apion	Against Apion		

Apostolic Fathers

1 Clem.	1 Clement	Ign. *Magn.*	Ignatius, *To the Magnesians*
Barn.	Epistle of Barnabas	Pol. *Phil.*	Polycarp, *To the Philippians*

Other Ancient Classical and Christian Works

Clement of Alexandria

Ep. Ad.	Adumbrations on the Catholic Epistles

Diodorus Siculus

Lib. Hist.	Library of History

Epiphanius of Salamis

Weights	On Weights and Measures

Eusebius of Caesarea

Hist. ecc.	Ecclesiastical History

Hecateus of Abdera

Hec. Ab.	History of Egypt

Irenaeus of Lyons

Adv. Haer.	Against Heresies

John Chrysostom

Adv. Jud.	Against the Jews
Hom. Hebr.	Commentary on Hebrews

Lucian

Peregr.	On the Passing of Peregrinus

Lucius Cassius Dio

Hist. Rom.	Roman History

Origen

Cels.	Against Celsus

Seneca

Ep. Moral.	Moral Letters

Seutonius

Claud.	Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Claudius
Tiber.	Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Tiberius

Tacitus

Ann.	Annals
Hist.	History

Tertullian

Marc.	Against Marcion

CHAPTER ONE

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND ANTI-JUDAISM: A BRIEF HISTORY OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH

There has always been a great deal of mystery surrounding the Epistle to the Hebrews.[1] Its authorship and specific provenance remain unknown, and in all likelihood are unknowable.[2] Given the unique voice Hebrews provides with its sermonic quality, its priestly emphasis, and its midrashic approach to the Jewish Scriptures, most scholars have been content to regard it as *sui generis* among the writings of the New Testament.[3] However, in spite of the lack of specific information Hebrews provides regarding the details of its historical situation, scholars have not been hesitant to suggest various authors[4] or ideal audiences[5] with whom to associate this Christian homiletic epistle.[6]

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[1] William Wrede's apt description of Hebrews as a literary "riddle" or "mystery" is cited often in studies of Hebrews. See Wrede, *Das literarische Rätsel des Hebräerbriefes*.

[2] Origen's famous words bear repeating: "Who wrote the epistle is known to God alone" (quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. ecc.* 6:25.14 [Williamson's translation]).

[3] For instance, Franz Delitzsch opined that Hebrews "has not its like among the epistles of the New Testament . . ." (Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:3). Most published research on Hebrews continues to echo this sentiment.

[4] Several theories of authorship have been advanced regarding the identity of the mysterious author of Hebrews. Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Apollos, Silas, Priscilla, and even the Virgin Mary have all been suggested at one point or another. See Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3–21.

[5] As will be shown, most modern interpreters have argued that Hebrews was addressed to a group of Hellenized Jewish Christians, possibly living in Rome. Minority proposals include: mixed or indeterminate readership (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 9–12; Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21–27; Koester, *Hebrews*, 46–48) and Gentile Christian readership (Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xvi–xvii; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 398–401).

[6] In Heb 13:22, the writer refers to his message simply as a "word of exhortation" which he has "briefly written" to his congregation [τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως . . . βραχέων ἐπέστειλα]. While Hebrews evinces the literary form of an epistle in Heb 13:22–25 and was circulated along with Paul's epistles early

One of the primary questions contributing to the riddle of Hebrews—and the question which serves as the impetus for this dissertation—concerns its relationship to Judaism and whether Hebrews should be regarded as a text "within Judaism" or a text that stands against Judaism in some way. Indeed, this issue has long been a source of consternation for modern interpreters because while the text addresses Jewish themes and purports to be a work addressed "to the Hebrews," the writer yet depicts the covenant of Moses as having been succeeded by the new covenant of Jesus Christ.[7] However, while there is no established consensus on this issue among modern scholars, most interpreters throughout the history of biblical interpretation have argued that Hebrews was probably written in order to deter Christians from returning to their former religion, Judaism.[8] As Andrei Orlov has observed, it has long been assumed that the author of Hebrews, in his[9] attempts to dissuade his congregation from falling away, "engages in consistent polemic

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within the history of the church (e.g., $\mathfrak{P}^{46}$), there is now general agreement among scholars that Hebrews was probably originally a homily or sermon that was afterwards turned into a letter, though there is disagreement over whether the epistolary ending was originally part of the earliest published text of Hebrews as a creation of its author (e.g., Filson, *Hebrews in the Light of Chapter 13*, 15–21) or whether it was added later by a subsequent redactor (e.g., Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 267–68). For discussions of the issues of Hebrews's literary genre, see Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, 243–44; Wills, "The Form of the Sermon," 277–99; Aune, *Literary Environment*, 212–14; Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 9–22. Hebrews thus defies easy literary categorization. For this reason, the terms "homily," "sermon," and "epistle" will be used in reference to Hebrews throughout this dissertation. This research takes the position that Hebrews, as a composition, was intended to be delivered to a particular community in order to address issues specific to that community.

[7] Craig Koester asserts, "Many have tried to locate Hebrews within either the Pauline or a Jewish Christian tradition, but Hebrews resists easy placement, calling the adequacy of existing categories into question" (Koester, *Hebrews*, 54).

[8] For instance, see Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxv–xlii; Davies, *Hebrews*, 1–5; Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 11–16; Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxiii–xxxv; Guthrie, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 22–31; Hagner, *Hebrews*, xiii–xviii; Lindars, *Theology*, 7–15; Aune, *Literary Environment*, 212; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 55–56; Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 22–24, 37; Lehne, *New Covenant*, 16–17, 119; Salevao, *Legitimation*, 170–249. Interestingly, while the Roman provenance has been favored by many modern commentators, several ancient interpreters believed the recipients were living in Jerusalem (see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 9–10).

[9] In this dissertation, I will not offer any speculation regarding the identity of the author. However, periodically I will refer to the author using masculine pronouns, because the masculine participle in Heb 11:32 suggests a male author.

against the figure of Moses and the Mosaic regulations about the sanctuary and the sacerdotal prescriptions, depicting animal sacrifices as inferior, temporary offerings as compared with the eternal sacrifice of Jesus."[10] Given the lack of details preserved in Hebrews regarding its historical situation, scholars have long speculated over what kind of situation might have elicited this type of apostasy. Some have theorized that there existed a pernicious longing to return to the rituals of Judaism, while others have averred that these persecuted Christians were seeking legal protections that in the Empire were available under Judaism but not Christianity.[11] Although this reading of Hebrews (hereon referred to as the "relapse theory") has not gone uncontested,[12] it has gained many adherents throughout the history of biblical interpretation going back as far as St. Chrysostom,[13] and continues to influence much of biblical scholarship on Hebrews today.

At issue for those who have debated the merits of the relapse theory interpretation is the writer's supersessionist theology and the allegedly adversarial stance he takes in relation to Judaism. During the last sixty years, several scholars have claimed to find theological anti-Judaism, or even anti-Semitism, in the New Testament writings.[14] Some have claimed to find it in the Gospels, especially Matthew and John,[15] while others have seen it in Paul's writings, the byproduct of an increasingly Gentile missionary church.[16]

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[10] Orlov, "The Heir of Righteousness," 45.

[11] For a few of the better articulations of these theories, see Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxvi–xxxviii; Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxx; Guthrie, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 32–33; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:lxvi, lxi–lxii; Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways*, 115–21.

[12] See, for instance, Grässer, "Der Hebräerbrief," 138–236; Klassen, "To the Hebrews or Against the Hebrews?" 1–16. As will be shown below, the relapse theory does not command quite the hegemony in scholarship it once did. However, it remains the dominant reading.

[13] Chrysostom, *Hom. Hebr.* Argument 1 [NPNF 14:363].

[14] E.g., see Baum, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?*; Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism.*

[15] E.g., see Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament*, 19–119; Buck, "Anti-Judaic Sentiments," 165–80; Bieringer et al., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel.*

[16] E.g., Freudmann, *Antisemitism in the New Testament*, 138–224.

More recently, others have turned their attention to Hebrews.[17] This can only be expected since Hebrews, more than any other New Testament writing, is seen to epitomize the problematic issue of continuity and discontinuity between Judaism and Christianity, and because so many interpreters historically have understood Hebrews as a polemical writing intended to deter Jewish Christians from returning to Judaism. This issue poses challenges on a number of fronts. First, there is the problem of defining slippery terms. Some scholars find "anti-Semitism" in the New Testament, while others would say that the question really centers on whether or not one finds theological "anti-Judaism" in the New Testament. Also, recognizing and defining "supersessionism" can be tricky since there is some disagreement among scholars over whether this is an appropriate descriptor for Hebrews's perspective on the old and new covenants.[18] Regardless of what position one might take on the issue of whether or not there is anything like anti-Judaism to be found in the New Testament, or what that entails, the debate over whether one finds it in Hebrews stems from wide acceptance of the traditional reading of Hebrews as a polemical writing directed, in some sense, against Judaism.

In the paragraphs that follow, we will discuss the development of the relapse theory throughout the history of biblical interpretation, with a special focus on the Western commentary tradition. The historical survey below is not intended to be comprehensive (since this would be impossible), but merely illustrative of how the relapse theory has come to have a life of its own in biblical studies.

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[17] See Kim, *Polemic in the Book of Hebrews*; Barnard, "Anti-Jewish Interpretations of Hebrews," 25–52.

[18] E.g., see Hays, "No Lasting City," 154. Cf. Longenecker, "Supersessionism in Paul," 26–44; Porter and Pearson, "Christian-Jewish Split," 40–45.

The Relapse Theory in Pre-Modern Biblical Interpretation

John Chrysostom

In discussing the history of the relapse theory, we must begin with Saint John Chrysostom (347–407 CE), since his writings are the earliest known example of this way of interpreting Hebrews. His commentary *On the Epistle to the Hebrews*, a series of homilies compiled by Constantius of Antioch following St. Chrysostom's death, is the most influential commentary on Hebrews preserved from antiquity.[19] As Heen and Krey have noted, "Indeed, of all the Fathers' work on Hebrews, it is Chrysostom's that was held in the highest regard through the Reformation in the East and the West"; and it was his commentary, later translated into Latin, which became the prototype for many subsequent commentaries written on Hebrews.[20]

Regarding the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chrysostom believed that it was one of the last of Paul's letters, and that it was addressed to Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem who were living under threat of persecution by other non-Christian Jews.[21] As a Pauline letter, Chrysostom believed Hebrews had been written while the temple was still standing, and that the letter criticized that institution. Regarding the author of Hebrews, Chrysostom states:

> But he speaks much of both the New and the Old Covenant; for this was useful to him for the proof of the Resurrection. Lest they should disbelieve that [Christ] rose on account of the things which He suffered, he confirms it from the Prophets, and shows that not the Jewish, but ours are the sacred [institutions]. For the temple yet stood and the sacrificial rites; therefore he says, "Let us go forth therefore without, bearing His reproach."[22]

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[19] See Heen and Krey, *Hebrews*, xx–xxiii; Kannengiesser, "'Clothed with Spiritual Fire'," 74–83.

[20] Heen and Krey, *Hebrews*, xxi.

[21] See Chrysostom, *Hom. Hebr.* 363–65 (NPNF 14:363–65).

[22] Chrysostom, *Hom. Hebr.* 365 (NPNF 14:365).

It should be noted that Chrysostom's views on Jews and Judaism are complex and are also relevant for our understanding of how he interpreted Hebrews. While he preached sermons "Against the Jews," Chrysostom seems to have been mostly concerned with addressing Gentile Judaizing Christians.[23] Yet it is also true that Chrysostom saw both non-Christian Jews, and even Jewish Christians who had been part of the church since its inception, as inspirational to Gentile Judaizers and thus as a threat to orthodoxy.[24] Patristic evidence from the fourth century shows that in many places, especially in prominent cities with significant Jewish populations like Antioch, Gentile Christians sometimes became attracted to Judaism.[25] In response to this, Chrysostom forcefully preached against Christians adopting Jewish practices, and the Epistle to the Hebrews became instrumental for him as a means of undercutting the credibility of Judaism.[26]

Thomas Aquinas

The Dominican friar, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who is mostly remembered for his contributions to medieval philosophy and theology, also composed a series of lectures that were later turned into a commentary on Hebrews.[27] Following the Western tradition, Aquinas regarded Hebrews as a letter written by Paul to demonstrate the superiority of Christ and his high priestly office. Aquinas also argued that Paul wrote this letter in order to persuade Jewish Christians to submit to Christ's priesthood and leave behind the Law and its practices. For instance, in his second lecture, Aquinas says,

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[23] See Wilken, *Chrysostom and the Jews*, 67.

[24] E.g. see Harkin's translation of Chrysostom's *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians*.

[25] For an overview of the early patristic evidence for the continuation of Jewish and Judaizing Christianity in both Palestine and in the Mediterranean Diaspora, see Wilken, *Chrysostom and the Jews*, 66–94.

[26] E.g., see Chrysostom, *Adv. Jud.* 1:844–845; 4:875–877. See also the comments in Heen and Krey, *Hebrews*, xxii.

[27] Aquinas's lectures were recorded and compiled by Reginald of Piperno.

> After the Apostle showed the manifold excellence of the priesthood of Christ over the priesthood of the Law, he concludes here according to his custom, admonishing that they must adhere faithfully to this priesthood. For he always did this above, that after his praise he places an admonition, since he undertook to commend the grace of Christ in order to attract them to obey Christ and to leave the ceremonies of the Law.[28]

Martin Luther

Martin Luther (1483–1546) delivered several lectures on Hebrews early in his career as a professor at the University of Wittenberg.[29] While Luther famously deviated from standard opinion which held Paul to be the author of Hebrews (Apollos was Luther's candidate of choice), he nevertheless believed Hebrews to be a letter from the Pauline circle addressed to Jewish Christians living in the Diaspora who were dealing with similarly Pauline issues. Because Hebrews does not discuss the doctrine of justification, Luther did not regard it as on par with Paul's letters, and argued that the epistle contained a mixture of "wood, straw or hay."[30] However, Luther still believed Hebrews should be accepted as authoritative Scripture and even called it "a marvelously fine epistle."[31] As with other reformers, Luther's exegesis was heavily influenced by his own controversies with the Papacy. Regarding the message of Hebrews, for example, Luther argued that the author "set out to prove that apart from Christ neither the law nor the priesthood, neither prophecy not even the ministry of angels in the last resort, are sufficient to salvation."[32] Luther thus believed Hebrews to be a polemical text intended to undercut "confidence in a humanistic and legalistic righteousness" which was manifesting itself in some kind of inappropriate devotion to the Law.[33]

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[28] Aquinas, *Hebrews*, 2.501 (Chrysostom Baer's translation).

[29] On the collection and transmission of Luther's lectures on Hebrews, see Hagen, *A Theology of Testament*, 5–8.

[30] See the comments in Luther's preface to Hebrews.

[31] Luther, *Lectures*, preface.

John Calvin

John Calvin (1509–1564), who also wrote a significant and influential commentary on Hebrews, likewise argued for the relapse theory interpretation. Calvin, like many of his predecessors in the Western commentary tradition, believed Hebrews was written by Paul; thus, he interpreted Hebrews through the lens of the Pauline Law/Grace dichotomy. For Calvin, the centerpiece of Hebrews was the argument that the high priesthood of Jesus "abolishes all the ceremonies of the Law."[34] He thus believed the author of Hebrews was writing to combat the community's misplaced desire to return to Torah obedience. This reading, for Calvin, was especially reinforced by his own desire to deal with contemporary issues regarding the Papacy and the Protestant Reformation. For example, in the preface to his commentary, Calvin discusses the problems the author addresses in writing Hebrews:

> But the design of the writer was to prove what the office of Christ is. And it hence appears evident, that by his coming an end was put to ceremonies. It is necessary to draw this distinction; for as it would have been a superfluous labour for the Apostle to prove to those who were already convinced that he was the Christ who had appeared, so it was necessary for him to show what he was for they did not as yet clearly understand the end, the effect, and the advantages of his coming; but being taken up with a false view of the Law, they laid hold on the shadow instead of the substance. Our business with the Papists is similar in the present day; for

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[32] Luther, *Lectures*, comment on Heb 1:1 (translation quoted from Isaak, *Hebrews in Early Christian History*, 27).

[33] Luther, *Lectures*, comment on Heb 1:1. See also Isaak, *Hebrews in Early Christian History*, 27.

[34] Calvin, *Hebrews*, xxix.

> they confess with us that Christ is the Son of God, the Redeemer who had been promised to the world: but when we come to the reality, we find that they rob him of more than one-half of his power.[35]

The Relapse Theory in Modern Biblical Interpretation

What we can gather from the preceding review of pre-modern interpreters is that there was a consistent tradition that associated Hebrews with Paul or the Pauline circle, and that this tradition interpreted Hebrews in light of Pauline issues, especially those related to either the Law/Gospel or Faith/Works dichotomies. All of the interpreters surveyed above believed the original recipients were being seduced by the prospect of living under the Law instead of grace and that Paul or a close associate was writing specifically to counter this heresy with a message about the supremacy of Christ. While modern interpreters would eventually come to reject the idea of Pauline authorship,[36] this same line of interpreting Hebrews through the lens of Pauline issues, as we shall see, would continue virtually unbroken throughout much of modern biblical scholarship as well.

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[35] Calvin, *Hebrews*, xxviii.

[36] See the discussion in Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 7–13. Two main facts about the text of Hebrews have led most scholars to side against Pauline authorship: the identification of the writer as a second-generation follower of Jesus in Heb 2:3 and differences in the styles of Hebrews and Paul's letters. For example, regarding the first point, Attridge avers, "It is quite inconceivable that Paul, who so emphatically affirms his status as an apostle and eye-witness of the risen Christ, could have put himself in the subordinate position of a secondhand recipient of tradition as does our author at 2:3" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 2). Regarding stylistic arguments militating against Pauline authorship, deSilva says, "None of Paul's other writings come close to the rhetorical finesse and stylistic polish of Hebrews" (deSilva, *Introduction*, 787). A recent defense of traditional claims of Pauline authorship can be found in D. A. Black, *The Authorship of Hebrews* (2013). Prior to this, the last monograph written in support of Pauline authorship (of which I am aware anyway) was William Leonard, *The Authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1939). Recently, however, Pauline influence via Luke has been asserted both in a monograph by David Allen and an essay by Andrew Pitts and Joshua Walker (see Allen, *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*; Pitts and Walker, "Authorship of Hebrews," 143–84). For a response, cf. Strickland, "Le style, c'est l'homme," 3–28.

Franz Delitzsch

The prolific nineteenth-century German biblical scholar Franz Delitzsch, who produced commentaries on both the Old and New Testaments, also wrote a significant work on Hebrews in 1857, later translated into English by Thomas Kingsbury and published in two volumes by 1872.[37] Delitzsch followed ancient commentators by attributing Hebrews to Paul's influence through Luke and by assuming the recipients were Jewish Christians living in Palestine, and probably even members of the Jerusalem church.[38] While many other German commentators held to the relapse theory of Hebrews, Delitzsch at times expressed skepticism about some versions of this interpretation as being "unsupported by any historical evidence, or by the tone of the epistle itself."[39] However, Delitzsch would likewise come to support the relapse theory, arguing that Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who were at risk of being drawn once again to the Levitical sacrifices. He also follows much of nineteenth-century German scholarship when he describes Judaism as an arid religion of ritualistic and legalistic works and Christianity as a religion of simple piety without ritual. For example, in commenting on Heb 8:13, Delitzsch asserts:

> That a religion of outward works, without that inward life of the heart which the law assumes and requires, but is unable to give, is utterly worthless . . . The old covenant is virtually dead, and the new occupies its place. The temple service, though to continue it may be a few years longer in outward splendor, is only a bed of state, on which a lifeless corpse is lying; the humble forms of worship of the New Testament church enshrine a vigorous, heaven-aspiring life. All this notwithstanding, the first readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews were sorely

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[37] Delitzsch, *Hebrews*. References are to Kingsbury's translation.

[38] See Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:21; Delitzsch also notes that the Jerusalem church is sometimes referred to in early patristic literature as "the church of the Hebrews" and cites Clement of Alexandria (*Ep. Ad.* 11:35) and Eusebius (*Hist. ecc.* 4:5.2) in support.

[39] Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:390.

> tempted to suffer themselves to be dazzled by the pomp of the Levitical forms of worship, and to take offence at the humilities of the religion of the cross.[40]

B. F. Westcott

In what perhaps may be regarded as the first truly modern commentary on Hebrews, B. F. Westcott (1825–1901) offered his own version of the relapse theory.[41] Westcott has argued that the title "To the Hebrews" designated a specific Jewish Christian audience living in or near Jerusalem at a time when the Church was beginning to separate from Judaism. He argues, "The widening breach between the Church and the Synagogue rendered it necessary at last to make a choice between them, and 'the Hebrews's were in danger of apostasy . . ."[42] Westcott also links this parting of the ways to the growth of the Gentile mission under Paul:

> For a time this fellowship of the Church and Synagogue was allowed on both sides. Little by little the growth of the Gentile element in the Church excited the active hostility of the Jews against the whole body of Christians, as it troubled the Jewish converts themselves . . . Meanwhile the Jewish converts had had ample time for realising the true relations of Christianity and Judaism. Devotion to Levitical ritual was no longer innocent, if it obscured the characteristic teaching of the Gospel.[43]

Westcott further theorizes that these Jewish Christians longed for the temple rituals, and that this longing led some to relapse back into Judaism.[44] Though most commentators coming after Westcott would favor a Roman provenance over Jerusalem, his basic argument has remained influential for subsequent studies on Hebrews.

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[40] Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 2:46.

[41] Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxv–xlii.

[42] Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxvi.

[43] Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxviii.

[44] Westcott, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xl.

F. F. Bruce

The commentary on Hebrews written by F. F. Bruce (1910–1990) remains one of the best and most influential modern studies of our epistle. In his introduction, Bruce argues that the unknown author has addressed Hebrews to a group of Jewish Christians living in Rome. Concerning their religious background, he theorizes that they were "probably Jewish believers in Jesus whose background was not so much the normative Judaism represented by rabbinical tradition as the nonconformist Judaism of which the Essenes and the Qumran community are outstanding representatives, but not the only representatives."[45] Bruce further contends that while they had not yet faced martyrdom, these Jewish Christians were experiencing intense persecution for their faith. This, he argues, led some to want to leave Christianity and return to Judaism since Judaism was a religion with legal protection under Roman law and Christianity was not.[46]

Bruce notably departs from many other commentators before him by not arguing that these Jewish Christians were relapsing because of some misplaced desire for Torah obedience. Rather, the Pauline influence comes into Bruce's interpretation indirectly through his choice of a Roman provenance and his decision to interpret Hebrews in light of the legal issues early Roman Christians, including Paul, allegedly faced in that region.

Barnabas Lindars

Barnabas Lindars (1923–1991) has written a short book, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (1991), which has been widely influential in modern scholarship on Hebrews.

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[45] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 3–35, 8.

[46] Bruce, *Hebrews*, 9.

Lindars argues that the references to "strange teachings" and "unprofitable foods" in Hebrews 13 constitute a polemical argument against the Levitical sacrifices and synagogue meals.[47] He also asserts that the author was concerned to draw Diaspora Jewish Christians away from the synagogue and back to the church by demonstrating for them the lasting efficacy of Christ's atonement. Concerning the main argument the author of Hebrews is making, Lindars surmises:

> If so, the whole point at issue is a felt need on the part of the readers to resort to Jewish customs in order to come to terms with their sense of sin against God and need for atonement. Thus the central argument of the letter is precisely a compelling case for the complete and abiding efficacy of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice . . . The sacrifice of Christ is proclaimed in every meeting of Christians for worship, especially in the eucharist (cf. 1 Cor 11.26). The readers then should not be frequenting synagogue worship in order to feel the benefit of the sacrificial system (which is any case illusory, verse 9), but should gladly participate in the Christian worship in which the sacrifice of Christ is celebrated.[48]

Lindars further argues that the real dilemma with Hebrews's audience was that, while they believed Christ's death delivered them from pre-baptismal sin, they were uncertain of its efficacy for sins committed after baptism.[49] Lindars's reconstruction of Hebrews's audience thus bears some resemblance to the "Lutheran" perspective on Paul, being essentially psychological in nature as he argues that the author was dealing with a crisis of his readers' collective guilty conscience.[50]

Paul Ellingworth

In addition to numerous articles on Hebrews, Paul Ellingworth has written three major works on the epistle: a translator's handbook published with Eugene Nida for the United

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[47] Lindars, *Theology*, 7–15.

[48] Lindars, *Theology*, 10–11.

[49] Lindars, *Theology*, 13–14.

[50] Cf. Stendahl, "Paul and the Introspective Conscience," 199–215.

Bible Societies in 1983, a commentary on Hebrews published in 1991, and a second commentary—really a significantly expanded version of his original commentary—published in 1993 as part of the New International Greek Testament Commentary series.[51] Ellingworth has provided some of the most rigorous, in-depth textual analysis of Hebrews to be found in any modern study and his 1993 work in particular remains one of the most significant and oft-consulted commentaries on Hebrews. Ellingworth states that Hebrews is "consistently unpolemical in its discussion of Jewish matters."[52] However, like F. F. Bruce, Ellingworth also opts for the theory that Hebrews addresses Jewish Christians living in Rome who were tempted to leave their Christian confession behind because of social and legal pressure. He thus argues that since the majority of congregants were Jews who believed in Jesus, and that "Judaism (but not Christianity) was well established"[53] in Rome, the readers were tempted to retain their Jewish identity while seeking "to deemphasize, conceal, neglect, abandon, and thus in a crisis reject and deny the distinctively Christian dimension of their faith."[54]

Hugh Montefiore

In his commentary, which is one of the more interesting commentaries written in the modern era on Hebrews, Hugh Montefiore (1920–2005) follows Martin Luther in contending for Apollos as the author and argues that the letter was written from Ephesus to Corinth in the early 50's while Paul was journeying through Caesarea, Antioch, and

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[51] Ellingworth, *Handbook*; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*; Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*. Citations of Ellingworth will be from his 1993 commentary unless otherwise noted.

[52] Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21.

[53] Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 80.

[54] Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 80.

Galatia.[55] Montefiore thus fully situates Hebrews within the matrix of the Pauline mission and Pauline issues. For instance, he argues that the title Πρὸς῾Εβραίους should be understood as referring to "Jewish Christian members who were causing trouble," the very same group in Corinth to whom Paul indirectly refers when he mentions the term "Hebrews" in 2 Cor 11:22.[56] Regarding the purpose of the letter, he offers:

> Apollos' letter was intended to stir up the enthusiasm of his Christian readers, to show them the superiority of Christianity over the Judaism into which they were in danger of lapsing, and to rally them behind their leaders . . . He succeeded also in raising the morale of the Corinthian Christians. No more is heard of the danger of the Jewish Christians among them lapsing into Judaism. Their deviations took another turn.[57]

Montefiore also theorized that Hebrews had been misused by some of the Corinthian Christians, leading to the creation of the Apollos faction within that church in 2 Cor 11:22.[58] He further argues that 1 and 2 Corinthians were written in part as a response to how these Jewish Christians were abusing the message of Hebrews.[59]

Ben Witherington III

Ben Witherington, in his 2007 commentary, goes out of his way to assert forcefully that Hebrews "is not some polemic against Judaism, nor is it part of a feud with one or more synagogues."[60] He further contends that Hebrews has often been misconstrued as a polemical text because later interpreters have often misunderstood the author's use of *synkrisis* or rhetorical comparison.[61] However, in his introduction to Hebrews,

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[55] Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 11–16.

[56] Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 16–20.

[57] Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 20.

[58] Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21–22.

[59] Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 23–27.

[60] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 54.

[61] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 54.

Witherington contradicts himself when he compares the epistle with polemical literature from Qumran and asserts, "This is the rhetoric of an intramural squabble, and our author is using it to make sure his converts do not become 'reverts' who annul the benefits they have already received in Christ (Heb 6:1–4)." [62] Witherington thus contends that this group is being tempted to leave Christianity and return to "elementary Jewish teaching, a more elementary covenant, and less than eternal or permanent mediators . . ." [63] Witherington essentially combines the theories of Westcott and Bruce when he argues that the cause of the potential relapse was either an internal "schism" of some sort, or that these Christians, faced with persecution, were seeking legal protections afforded to Judaism in the Roman Empire.[64]

Iutisone Salevao

One of the most significant recent defenses of the relapse-theory reading of Hebrews is to be found in Iutisone Salevao's monograph, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews* (2009). Salevao uses an eclectic methodology and draws extensively from John H. Elliott's sociological exegesis, Peter Berger's and Thomas Luckmann's work on religious legitimation, studies on sect formation, and Francis Watson's model of the parting of the ways between Judaism and Pauline Christianity.[65] Interestingly, while Salevao's monograph attempts to use social-scientific models and frameworks to offer a new way of reading Hebrews, his conclusions about the text nevertheless support the traditional perspective. Throughout his work, Salevao attempts to shore up the case that Hebrews was a sermon delivered to Jewish Christians in Rome who were tempted to return to Judaism. According to Salevao, Hebrews was written to encourage these Christians to separate fully from the synagogue and establish a distinctive Christian identity apart from Judaism, an interpretation which mirrors Watson's interpretation of Romans.[66]

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[62] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 55.

[63] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 55.

[64] Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 55–56.

[65] Salevao, *Legitimation*, 11–86. Cf. Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*; Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*; Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*.

Gareth Lee Cockerill

In his 2012 commentary which replaced F. F. Bruce's commentary in the New International Commentary on the New Testament series, Gareth Cockerill draws on the social-scientific approaches of David deSilva and others in emphasizing the role of honor and shame in Hebrews. Cockerill is also careful to note that Hebrews "*never* compares Christianity with Judaism," and he eschews several previous interpretations that have understood Hebrews that way.[67] Following Richard Johnson and Iutisone Salevao, however, Cockerill ultimately adopts the relapse theory, arguing that the reference to "those who serve at the tent" in Heb 13:9–10 refers to "contemporaries who lived according to the old order after the coming of Christ."[68] He thus agrees with Salevao's conclusions when he avers that the Hebrews writer encourages his audience "to distinguish themselves from those who still live by the provisions of the former order."[69]

Cockerill believes the Hebrews writer wants his congregants to separate themselves fully from the synagogue and the priestly system of the old covenant. Regarding their motivation for apostasy, Cockerill argues that these Jewish Christians did not fully trust Christ, but were hanging on to vestiges of the old faith like "converts from animism or other religions in various parts of the world who keep a charm or talisman hidden away 'just in case'."[70] Hebrews's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ, therefore, is interpreted by Cockerill as a vigorous response to this error.

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[66] Salevao, *Legitimation*, 217–18, 246–49; cf. Watson, *Paul, Judaism and the Gentiles*, 163. Also, see the critiques in Mosser, Review of *Legitimation*, 545–47.

[67] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 23, italics original.

[68] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 21, 688–703. Cf. Johnson, *Going Outside the Camp*.

[69] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 21.

Challenges to the Relapse Theory

Socio-Historical Issues

Despite the relapse theory's hegemony in biblical studies, this reconstruction of Hebrews's social context has engendered several problematic interpretive and historical questions. For instance, how can one be sure that a return to Judaism was a serious threat when this is never explicitly said to be the problem anywhere in Hebrews? If Hebrews was written after the destruction of the temple—dating, of course, being a major point of contention—then one wonders how Judaism's ritual could have been enticing for the Christian community when sacrifices could no longer be offered at the temple and the daily priestly rites had ceased.[71] Additionally, if the accounts of the earliest Christians recorded by Luke in Acts are to be believed, it appears that before the Jewish Revolt of 66–70 CE, Jewish Christians had not stopped worshipping at the temple or participating in Judaism's rituals and institutions, a fact which makes this reconstruction problematic even for those who believe that Hebrews was written prior to the temple's destruction (cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42; 20:16; 21:26; 22:17).[72] The view that Christians were enticed by the ritual of Judaism also seems to be predicated on the assumption that their faith was a simple, pietistic religion devoid of ritual, an anachronism which finds its origins in older German scholarship on Judaism and Christianity which, in light of subsequent research, should no longer be seen as credible as most scholars today recognize that Christianity, even in its earliest stages of development, was a ritualistic religion.[73]

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[70] Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 22, n. 86.

[71] We do, of course, have the vivid example of Jews living in Babylon longing for Jerusalem and the temple during the Exilic period (cf. Ps 137; Dan 9:1–19). The exile created a profound crisis of national and religious identity for Jews, because much of their symbolic world was forcibly taken from them (the land, the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, etc.). This, in fact, is similar to the type of situation I will argue is being addressed by the author of Hebrews—a Jewish-Christian community facing a crisis of socio-religious identity— rather than some misplaced desire to return to Judaism simply because it supposedly had a ritual opulence that Christianity did not.

Several modern scholars have interpreted the references to oppression in Hebrews as alluding to persecutions under either Claudius or Nero.[74] However, this theory largely assumes that Hebrews's recipients lived in Rome, which, even given the vague reference to "those from Italy" in Heb 13:24, cannot be substantiated. Thus, the possibility of a more localized persecution like those faced by the some of the earliest Jewish-Christian communities should not be ruled out.[75] The related theory which says that Christians were going back to Judaism because they were seeking legal protection from persecution also finds little historical support. The extremely volatile status of Judean and Diaspora Jewish communities before and after 70 CE, and the ensuing wars between Rome and the Jews, seriously undermines the notion that Christians would somehow have felt any safer identifying as Jews. Pamela Eisenbaum's comments on this historical issue are especially poignant, and bear repeating here:

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[72] Also, see Bruce, *New Testament History*, 265–78. Some scholars maintain that the "parting of the ways" began prior to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Evidence from the New Testament such as Jesus's rejection by the religious leadership in Jerusalem and the Apostle Paul's conversion and universalizing mission to the Gentiles provides support for this position. Indeed, it should be acknowledged that, at the very least, the seeds for this parting had been planted before 70 as "the Jesus Movement was still negotiating its relationship to Jews and Judaism, both inside and outside the (still fluid) boundaries of its own communities" (Reed and Becker, "Traditional Models and New Directions," 4).

[73] The portrayal of the religion of Jesus and his earliest followers as a pietistic faith distinctive from a legalistic and ritualistic Judaism was stock-in-trade for scholars like Wilhelm Bousset and others associated with the History of Religions School in Germany (e.g., see Bousset, *Jesu Predigt*, 71–165). Cf. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 140–48; Lawrence, "Ritual and the First Urban Christians," 99–115.

[74] E.g., see the discussion in Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:lxiii–lxvi. The writer makes reference to an earlier persecution (Heb 10:32–34) and several scholars have identified this as the controversy surrounding the edict of Claudius and the expulsion of Jews from Rome (ca. 49 CE; cf. Acts 18:2). Given this assumption, the audience's current crisis is often assumed to be the persecution by Nero (ca. 64 CE; see Tacitus, *Ann.* 15.44). The Claudian expulsion is often read as the background for Heb 10:32–34 because this prior persecution apparently did not result in martyrdom (12:4). However, this seems not to be the case for the impending crisis (cf. Heb 11:32—12:7). A few scholars have instead identified 10:32–34 with the persecution of Nero and the current crisis with that of Domitian (r. 81–96 CE). However, this is usually rejected because it is unlikely that a Christian community living in Rome during Nero's time would have escaped martyrdom completely; and (2) the existence of a persecution under Domitian is disputed (see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 6–8; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. ecc*. 3:17–20).

[75] Cf. Acts 4:1–22; 5:17–42; 7:54–60; 8:1–3; 14:19–20; 17:5–9; 19:23–41; 21:27–36.

> There were three wars between Romans and Jews during this time. The significance of the war of 66–70, resulting in the destruction of the Second Temple, need not be recounted in detail. We know less about the Diaspora war of 115–117 when the Jews of Egypt, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica rebelled, but most scholars seem to think it resulted in the decimation of Egyptian Jewry. The third war, the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–135, resulted in the de-Judaization of Jerusalem, which was reconstituted as Aelia Capitolina, and the renaming as Palestina of the region once known as Judea. In short, the late first and early second century may stand as the worst period of Jewish-Roman relations . . . If one grants that Hebrews was written after the destruction of the temple, it is difficult to imagine that the recipients of Hebrews would have been attracted to Judaism because of the security and status it enjoyed in the Roman world.[76]

While Eisenbaum's comments on the nature of Jewish and Roman relations are made with specific reference to 70 CE and after, we can safely assume that these sorts of pressures would have existed for Jews both in and outside the Jesus movement during the years just prior to the temple's destruction as well.[77]

Another issue with the traditional reading of Hebrews as a polemical writing is that this view is largely based on the assumption that "at the time of writing Judaism was one thing and Christianity was something else altogether,"[78] a view that is difficult to maintain in light of more current research into the historical developments of both Judaism and Christianity in antiquity.[79] Most scholars now acknowledge that in the first century, especially prior to the events of 70, the earliest Jewish Christian groups used the same sacred scriptures (e.g., the LXX), observed many of the same religious practices (e.g., liturgy, Jewish festivals, circumcision), participated in many of the same institutions (e.g., synagogue, Temple), and worshipped in much the same fashion as other Jewish groups. Evidence from the New Testament also confirms that some priests in Jerusalem, Pharisees, and even some members of the Sanhedrin also were part of the early Jesus movement as well.[80] Early Tannaitic sources also provide evidence that during this period Jewish Christians, though considered heretics by some for their messianic beliefs, were still regarded as being a deviant sect within Judaism.[81] Evidence from ancient historical and literary sources further indicates that in many instances it was difficult for pagan outsiders to distinguish the earliest Christian groups from other Jewish groups.[82]

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[76] Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews," 233–34.

[77] See Seeman and Marshak, "Jewish History from Alexander to Hadrian," 30–69.

[78] Johnson, "Anti-Jewish Slander," 519. Johnson, in his essay, makes this observation regarding how some critics have read the Gospel of John as anti-Jewish. The same can be said for how many interpreters have read Hebrews as well. Numada observes that this outmoded assumption can be found even in some reputedly social-scientific works in New Testament studies (see Numada, *Interpreting Johannine Anti-Judaism*, 54).

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[79] See, for instance Boyarin, *Border Lines*, and the collection of essays in Becker and Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted*, and in Avery-Peck, Evans, et. al., *Earliest Christianity Within the Boundaries of Judaism*. For a model of the development of the Jesus movement as a sect within Judaism, see Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement," 75–95.

[80] Luke 23:50–56; John 3:1–2; Acts 6:7; 15:5.

[81] E.g., see Schiffman, "At the Crossroads," 115–56, esp. 148.

[82] For instance, the sources about Claudius used by the first-century Roman court historian Seutonius only make passing reference to the Christian presence in Rome as a "Jewish disturbance" over "Chrestus," leading to civil unrest which resulted in the expulsion of certain Jews from the city (Seutonius, *Claud.* 25:4; cf. Acts 18:2). While Lane (*Hebrews*, 1:lxiv–lxvi) interprets Seutonius's account as saying Jewish Christians were specially targeted in the expulsion, there is nothing in Seutonius's words that specifically support this. Additionally, while Cassius Dio denies that an expulsion took place and instead says that Claudius restricted the Jews from their meetings, he does not make a distinction between Jews and Christians, and so in this regard his reference to the event is just as vague as Seutonius's (cf. Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 60:6.6–7). It is also important to note that it was hardly novel for a Roman emperor like Claudius to show maltreatment towards a large Jewish population living in a major metropolitan center (cf. the accounts of Tiberius and Caligula recorded in Seutonius, *Tiber.* 36; Philo, *Legat.* 30:201; Philo, *Flacc)*. This is not to say that Christian groups were *never* distinguishable from other Jewish groups anywhere during this period. The persecution of Christians in Rome by Nero certainly provides evidence that some were (see Tacitus, *Ann.* 15:44), though Christians in Rome at that time were perhaps easier to identify because of the reduction in Jewish population resultant from the expulsion of Jews from the city by

Literary and Interpretive Issues

Hebrews and Paul

The assumed Pauline connections with Hebrews also pose problems for the relapse theory. Hebrews, of course, does have connections to the Pauline mission through both the mention of Timothy and "those from Italy" (Heb 13:23–24) and the epistle's early association with the *Corpus Paulinum* (e.g., 𝔓^{46}).[83] Additionally, there are some notable affinities shared between the Pauline letters and Hebrews.[84] For example, the author of Hebrews and Paul both affirm the pre-existence of the Son of God (Heb 1:2–6; 5:7; cf. Phil 2:5–6; Col 1:15–17). They both draw on Abraham as an exemplar of faith *par excellence* (Heb 11:17–19; cf. Rom 4). They both view Jesus's death as an atoning sacrifice (Heb 9:11–14; cf. Rom 3:24-25). They also both affirm that the coming of the messiah has inaugurated a new covenant between God and his people (Heb 7:11–22; cf. Gal 3:23–29; 2 Cor 3:6). Indeed, since Origen's time it has often been said that Hebrews is full of Pauline ideas dressed in non-Pauline rhetoric.[85]

Claudius just a few years prior. Luke also records in Acts 11:26 that some of the early followers of Jesus were first given the distinctive label Χριστιανοί ("Christians") at Antioch, a name churches would eventually start calling themselves (cf. 1 Pet 4:16). However, the first mention of "Christians" by a pagan writer that we know of comes to us from Pliny the Younger in his letter to Trajan, composed in the early second century. Also, Ferguson notes that pagan writers like Lucian and Celsus, in their polemical attacks, frequently confused Christians and Jews with one another (Ferguson, *Backgrounds*, 556–65; cf. Lucian, *Peregr.* 11–16; Origin, *Cels.* 5:25–33).

[83] However, Hebrews is noticeably absent from Marcion's canon (Tertullian, *Marc.* 5). The lack of inclusion could be evidence that Marcion simply did not know of Hebrews; or, if he did know of it, he did not believe it to be of Paul. However, Lane suggests that the absence of Hebrews might also be due to Marcion's belief that it was not sufficiently antagonistic towards the Old Testament or Judaism (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:clii).

[84] Koester, *Hebrews*, 54–55.

[85] While Pauline authorship was cautiously affirmed by Clement of Alexandria (150–215 CE), it was accepted only with serious reservations by his disciple Origen (185–254 CE). Origen famously opined, "In the epistle entitled *To the Hebrews*, the diction does not exhibit the characteristic roughness of speech or phraseology admitted by the Apostle himself, the construction of the sentences is closer to Greek usage, as anyone capable of recognizing differences of style would agree. On the other hand, the matter of the epistle is wonderful, and quite equal to the Apostle's acknowledged writings: the truth of this would be

The traditional approach to interpreting Hebrews which sees it as being essentially full of Paul's religious ideas has come under fire in the modern era, however. Scholars have increasingly become aware of the fact that issues addressed by the Hebrews writer are often very different than the issues addressed by Paul in his letters.[86] For instance, while Paul talks about sacrifice in various places, this is a topic only seldom addressed by him in his writings (e.g., Rom 3:24–26; 12:1; 1 Cor 5:7–8). Hebrews, by contrast, is intensely preoccupied with issues of sacrifice and atonement and deals extensively with issues of priesthood, purity, and sacred space (e.g., Heb 7–9). While Paul and Hebrews each talk about faith, the Hebrews writer conceives of faith not as a gift but as an act of hopeful obedience looking forward to God's promises (e.g., Heb 11).[87] There are also differences in how Paul and Hebrews each talk about the Law and issues pertaining to it. Even though it is true that Hebrews "should not be totally separated from the circle of Christians associated with Paul,"[88] the differences between Hebrews and Paul's letters should not be minimized either as they raise the not-insignificant question of whether it is appropriate (or not) to interpret Hebrews through the lens of Pauline themes such as the Law/Gospel or Faith/Works dichotomies. For

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admitted by anyone who has read the Apostle carefully . . . If I were asked my personal opinion, I would say that the matter is the Apostle's, but the phraseology and construction are those of someone who remembered the Apostle's teaching and wrote his own interpretation of what his master had said. So if any church regards this epistle as Paul's, it should be commended for so doing, for the primitive Church had every justification for handing it down as his. Who wrote the epistle is known to God alone: the accounts that have reached us suggest that it was either Clement, who became Bishop of Rome, or Luke, who wrote the Gospel and the Acts" (quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. ecc.* 6:25.11–14 [Williamson's translation]).

[86] E.g., see Miller, "Paul and Hebrews," 245–64; Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 2–7.

[87] For instance, Lane comments: "For Paul, faith is essentially firm commitment to God's accomplished redemptive action through Jesus; it entails a retrospective turn especially to the cross and resurrection. The theological perspective of Hebrews is profoundly different. Faith is both an openness to the future, which is given expression in obedient trust in the God who has promised, and a present grasp upon truth now invisible but certain because it is grounded in the word of promise" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:cxlviii–cxlix). See also Rose, *Die Wolke der Zeugen*, 92–145; Schliesser, "Glauben und Denken," 503–60.

[88] Koester, *Hebrews*, 56.

instance, while Paul at times confronts the issue of misplaced desire for Torah obedience among his Gentile churches (e.g., Galatians), it is significant there is simply no clear indication anywhere in Hebrews that this is an issue the anonymous author was concerned to address. Additionally, while there are many questions surrounding Paul's status as a Jew and whether he makes a break with Judaism in some sense,[89] it is more difficult to know if such issues were relevant for the Hebrews writer since we know so little about him. Therefore, we should also be careful to guard against reading Paul's issues with Judaism into Hebrews as well.

Hebrews and "Polemic"

Many proponents of the traditional reading of Hebrews have assumed that the superlative language and use of comparison between the old and new orders in Hebrews is, in some sense, polemical language aimed at Judaism.[90] However, as Eric Mason points out, this assumption still has not been effectively demonstrated.[91] Most interpreters who read Hebrews this way do not attempt to show *how* the text is polemical and are remarkably vague as to what they mean when they use terms like "polemic" or "polemical" when describing the message of Hebrews. Yet most scholarly studies persist in describing Hebrews in this manner.

Luke Timothy Johnson has written seminal essays on the topics of Jewish polemic and anti-Judaism in the New Testament which are relevant for discussions of

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[89] E.g., Sanders, *Paul,* 171–210; Wright, "The Paul of History," 61–88; Dunn, "Who Did Paul Think He Was?" 174–93; Porter, "Was Paul a Good Jew?," 148–74; Zetterholm, "Paul within Judaism," 31–52.

[90] E.g., Stephen Wilson avers that the author "routinely and starkly contrasts Christianity and Judaism to the detriment of the latter" (Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 117). See also, Salevao, *Legitimation*, 339–412.

[91] Mason, "The Epistle (Not Necessarily) to the 'Hebrews'," 7–20.

Hebrews and should not be ignored.[92] For instance, in his work on Hellenistic and Jewish polemic, Johnson has attempted to identify various rhetorical conventions commonly used in Jewish polemical writings and observes that throughout the Greco-Roman world polemics typically involved a rivalry between public preachers, employed abusive language, and centered on debates over competing teachings and practices. Johnson also demonstrates that these characteristics can be found in Jewish polemical literature as well.[93] According to Johnson, polemics focused on explicitly identifying opponents and often served the internal needs of community insiders by reaffirming communal ideals and practices.[94]

There exists an enormous body of literature preserved from early Jewish and Christian antiquity that features these characteristics and which, therefore, could rightly be considered polemical based on Johnson's categories. For example, we may consider texts like *Jubilees*, Philo's *Against Flaccus*, and Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Though these texts represent different genres, they each display polemical characteristics as they overtly identify and attack opponents and employ abusive language in attacking various practices of opponents that are deemed unsuitable or immoral. *Jubilees*, a text used for communal instruction at Qumran, attacks the Jerusalem priests and castigates them over their wrongful use of the liturgical calendar and their priestly practices. In his treatise, Philo harshly criticizes Flaccus Avillius for conspiring with the Egyptian enemies of the Jews. In Galatians, Paul castigates the Judaizers for attempting to force Gentile believers in Jesus to adopt circumcision. However, when Hebrews is compared to these other texts, and these same criteria are applied, then Hebrews cannot be said to be polemical in any meaningful sense. In fact, the writer of Hebrews never explicitly identifies or condemns opponents and never directs any type of harsh criticism or abusive language against errant practices of any opponents. While the author of Hebrews uses harsh language in his warnings to his community, especially in chapters 6 and 10, these warning passages are aimed at discouraging general disobedience and loss of faith in the face of trial and are not directed against issues concerning any potential opponents. Also, while there is a great deal of paraenesis in Hebrews, the most that can be said on this point is that the author is interested in encouraging his community to live ethically and to persevere in their faith.[95] As Marie Isaacs astutely observes, the author instead is "more concerned to emphasize what they would be leaving [Christ] rather than to discuss what they might be reverting to."[96] Throughout Hebrews the author refers primarily to three general issues of deep concern: social pressure and shaming, a sense of dread of impending suffering and possibly death, and spiritual lethargy resulting in some no longer attending congregational gatherings.[97] However, never is Judaism, nor any of its known practices or sectarian expressions, overtly placed in the author's crosshairs. In fact, in every instance where harsh language is used in Hebrews, the author directs it to his community and not to, or about, any opponents.

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[92] See Johnson, "The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander," 515–40; Johnson, "Anti-Judaism and the New Testament," 541–68. Both essays are conveniently found in Johnson, *Contested Issues in Christian Origins*.

[93] Johnson, "Anti-Jewish Slander," 527–39.

[94] Johnson, "Anti-Jewish Slander," 530–31.

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[95] In fact, Attridge even classifies Hebrews as "paraenetic literature," and provides a summary of its content: "Hebrews urges its addressees to take the word of God seriously (2:1–4); to hold fast to a traditional confession (3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23); to strive to enter the rest promised by God (4:11); to approach boldly God's gracious throne (4:16); to follow in Christ's footsteps 'into the sanctuary' (10:19–21); to live a life of faith, hope, and love (10:22–25); to endure (10:34–36; 12:4, 12–13); to imitate Jesus (12:3); to pursue peace and sanctity (12:14); to love one another (13:1); to show hospitality (13:2); to remember imprisoned fellow believers (13:3); to keep marriage holy (13:4); to remember and obey leaders (13:7, 17); to follow Jesus in his acceptance of public reproach (13:13); to offer sacrifices consisting of praise and deeds of loving kindness (13:16); and, finally, to pray for the unknown author of the work (13:18)" (Attridge, "Paraenesis in a Homily," 211–12). See also Risi, *Die Theologie*, 8–25.

[96] Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 27, brackets mine.

[97] See the discussions in Lane *Hebrews*, 1:xcviii–ci; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 12–13; Koester, *Hebrews*, 64–72; Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 26; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 16–20; Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*, 175–81.

The Case of Heb 13:9–16

There is one instance in Hebrews, however, where some have seen the author venturing into polemic. The text of Heb 13:9–16 is especially intriguing because here the author warns his community not to be "carried away by various and strange teachings" [διδαχαῖς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις μὴ παραφέρεσθε] (13:9). These teachings, whatever they might have been, also apparently involved the consumption of sacred "foods" the author deems as being "of no benefit to those who partake of them" [οὐ βρώμασιν ἐν οἷς οὐκ ὠφελήθησαν οἱ περιπατοῦντες].[98] In 13:10, the author employs contrastive language when he reassures his audience that "*we* have an altar from which *those who minister at the tent* have no right to eat" [ἔχομεν θυσιαστήριον ἐξ οὗ φαγεῖν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες]. Attridge believes that "the language of the general context . . . however obliquely it refers to the objectionable practice, associates it with Jewish or perhaps Jewish-Christian traditions."[99] Later, in Heb 13:11–12 the author compares the ignominy of Jesus's sacrificial death outside the Jerusalem city gate to the Levitical practice of burning unclean carcasses of sacrificed animals outside. The author then in 13:13 calls his hearers to "go to him outside the camp, bearing his disgrace" [τοίνυν ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες]. The reason they are urged to "go out" is because, as stated in 13:14, "we have no lasting city here, but are seeking the one to come" [οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ὧδε μένουσαν πόλιν ἀλλὰ τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐπιζητοῦμεν]. The author then in Heb 13:15–16 encourages his hearers to "offer up a sacrifice of praise" to God by "lips confessing his name" [ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως . . . χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ], "doing good deeds" [εὐποιΐας] and "sharing" [κοινωνίας].

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[98] See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 394–96.

[99] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 394.

This pericope might be taken to suggest the author is adopting a polemical stance against a particular group of opponents and their teachings, and indeed several interpreters have read the text this way.[100] However, this reading is fraught with problems that stem from questions raised by the text itself.[101] For instance, contra Attridge, the references to "strange teachings" and "foods" are less clear since while the author could be alluding to Jewish food-related issues he could also simply be referencing ethical and religious food-related issues commonly encountered by both Jews and Christians living in the Diaspora.[102] Also, Heb 13:10 is ambiguous in a couple of important ways: (1) there is disagreement regarding what sort of "altar" the author is talking about, whether real or metaphorical;[103] and (2) it is also unclear that the mention of "those who minister at the tent" is a polemical cipher referring to actual opponents[104] when the author could simply be making anaphoric reference to the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament which had already been a subject of lengthy discussion previously in Hebrews. Additionally, while several scholars have taken Heb 13:13 as an admonition for the congregation to leave behind "the camp" of Judaism, along with its "various and strange teachings" (cf. 13:9), Attridge notes that there is nothing in the text that links "the camp" with Judaism.[105] Rather, as will be explained later in this dissertation, it seems that "the camp" is most likely a reference to the city of Jerusalem.[106] The author thus seems to be focused on accomplishing two goals with the paraenesis in this pericope: (1) encouraging his audience to follow Jesus by bearing the same dishonor he did when he was crucified in Jerusalem, and (2) encouraging them to look forward to the heavenly Jerusalem to come, because they no longer have the earthly city of Jerusalem to call home.

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[100] E.g., see Hanson, "The Reproach of the Messiah," 234; Moule, "Sanctuary and Sacrifice," 29–41; Bornkamm, "Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief," 195; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 688–703.

[101] Notably, Helmut Koester refers to Heb 13:9–16 as one of the "most difficult passages in the entire New Testament" (Koester, "Outside the Camp," 299).

[102] Some commentators have noted similarities with various ethical admonitions in some of the Pauline letters (cf. Rom 14:1–23; 1 Cor 8:1–13; Col 2:20–22; 1 Tim 4:1–4).

[103] Attridge argues that it is unlikely that the author is talking about a literal altar, and his usage may be compared to similar metaphorical or symbolic uses of "altar" language by second-century Christian writers like Polycarp and Ignatius (e.g., Pol. *Phil.* 4.3; Ign. *Magn.* 7.2). Attridge also notes that exegetes from Catholic and Protestant traditions have speculated that the altar refers to the Eucharist, the cross, or to some spiritual or heavenly reality (see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 396). However, in the present work I argue that this altar refers to the one that was part of the heavenly sanctuary, and that it was not metaphorical (see chapter 4).

[104] Hanson, "The Reproach of the Messiah," 231–40.

With due consideration given to these issues regarding Heb 13:9–16, the evidence for the presence of polemic is, at best, unclear. The author of Hebrews shows no obvious engagement with any opponents and does not seem altogether focused on erecting boundaries against false teachings or practices seen as threatening to the community's religious identity. The author also does not seem worried that his congregation is somehow being lured back to Judaism, whatever that might entail.[107] In fact, as many commentators have noted, the author of Hebrews appears not to be overly concerned with critiquing contemporary Jewish practices since he focuses on Jewish religion primarily as it is presented in the LXX.[108] While it might be (and has been) argued that the Hebrews writer is engaging in *subtle* polemic here,[109] it is important to remember that polemical literature in Greco-Roman antiquity, including that from Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity, was anything but subtle. Writers engaging in polemical invective wanted their audiences to know who was in and who was out, who was good and who was evil, and why they were so. This does not happen in Heb 13:9–16, nor in any other text of Hebrews.

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[105] See, e.g., the discussion in Attridge, *Hebrews*, 398–99.

[106] In Heb 13:12, the city of Jerusalem comes into view when the writer refers to the tradition of Jesus being crucified "outside the city gate," an act which, in the previous verse, is compared to the disposal of sacrificial carcasses "outside the camp" of Israel.

[107] The contrast between Hebrews and texts like the Epistle of Barnabas, or some of the sermons of John Chrysostom on this issue is striking. Early patristic authors dealing with the issue of Judaism are very explicit in how they criticize it as a faith, and they actively discourage their communities from practicing Judaism. Nothing of this sort can be found anywhere in Hebrews. See the comments in Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews," 236–37.

The Use of Comparison in Hebrews

Related to the issue of Hebrews's social function is the question of whether or not the comparative techniques used by its author have any discernable polemical force behind them as well. Throughout Hebrews, the author repeatedly compares and contrasts the old and new orders, and most scholars regard its theological perspective as being, in some sense, *supersessionist*—that is to say, most interpreters understand Hebrews to be making the case that the new covenant established by Jesus has completely supplanted the old covenant which had been established through the giving of the Law at Sinai. Whatever problems this interpretation might create for modern scholars who, living after the atrocities of Auschwitz, are understandably wary of such a theological perspective, it is difficult to argue that the author of Hebrews does not hold to a similar view of Jesus and the Law. For instance, a key passage where this supersessionist perspective appears is Heb 7:11–19, where the author compares the priesthoods of Jesus and Aaron:

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[108] E.g., though she overstates the case regarding the implications for the author's knowledge of the Jerusalem temple, Eisenbaum is certainly correct to say that the text of Hebrews itself does not reflect "experiential knowledge of the temple cult" (Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews," 225).

[109] E.g., see Salevao, *Legitimation*, 117 where Salevao argues in the same paragraph that Hebrews is both "anti-Jewish polemic" and yet that the threat of relapse is only "implicit" throughout the letter.

> Therefore, if perfection came through the Levitical priesthood—for the people received laws based on it—then why is there a need for another priest to arise "after the order[110] of Melchizedek" and not named after the order of Aaron? For this reason: when the priestly office is being changed, out of necessity a change of the law must also occur. For he about whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, one from which no one has ever officiated at the altar—for it is clear that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe about which Moses said nothing concerning priests. And it is even clearer still since there arises another priest after the likeness[111] of Melchizedek, who has become a priest not due to a law based on a requirement of human descent,[112] but due to the power of an indestructible life. For it is testified,[113] "You (are) a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." On the one hand, this means the annulment of the preceding commandment, because it was weak and ineffective, for the law perfected nothing. On the other hand, however, this also means the introduction of a better hope by which we draw near to God.

Beginning with v. 11, the author shifts his attention away from the Melchizedek narrative and focuses intently on the new priest after his order promised in Ps 110:4. By use of a rhetorical question, our author demonstrates the deficiency of the Levitical priesthood and the Law by emphasizing their inability to bring about "perfection" [τελείωσις], thereby necessitating the rise of a new priest "after the order of Melchizedek" [κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ] rather than one named "after the order of Aaron" [κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρὼν]. Ellingworth rightly notes that, in this case, τελείωσις does not refer to the

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[110] It must be noted that τάξις ("order") here refers not to *succession*, but to *likeness*, *nature* or *appearance* (τάξις, BDAG, 989). Thus, Jesus is a priest similar to, not descended from, Melchizedek (cf. 7:15).

[111] The author's use of ὁμοιότητα ("likeness") clarifies how he means τάξις ("order") to be understood.

[112] While the AV translates κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης as "after the law of a carnal commandment," the surrounding co-text makes it clear that the author is simply concerned with contrasting the Levitical priesthood which was based on laws requiring physical descent from Aaron, Levi, and Zadok with Melchizedek's priestly order which was not based on such laws requiring physical descent.

[113] Scribes in later mss (C, D², 𝔐) attempted to smooth over the text by inserting the active form μαρτυρεῖ, however the passive μαρτυρεῖται is attested in most mss (e.g., 𝔓⁴⁶, ℵ, A, B, D*, P, Ψ) and is likely original.

fulfillment of promise (cf. Luke 1:45), but instead to *maturity* or *completeness* as it relates to the holiness or sanctification of the congregation.[114] Because of this inherent shortcoming within the Mosaic covenant, it is described in v. 18 as altogether "weak and ineffective" [ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές]. Our author later asserts that if the Law's sacrifices had been able to produce perfection within worshippers, then they would have ceased being offered long ago (cf. Heb 10:1–2). Elsewhere, he variously describes the Sinai covenant as a "shadow" [σκιά], "obsolete and aging" [παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον], and "soon to be destroyed" [ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ].[115] The urgent need for a new order is highlighted by the author's increasingly emphatic rhetoric: "out of necessity" [ἐξ ἀνάγκης] (v. 12), "for it is clear" [πρόδηλον γὰρ] (v. 14), and "it is even clearer still" [περισσότερον ἔτι κατάδηλόν ἐστιν] (v. 15). Since priesthood and covenant are inextricably linked (v. 12), and since the old priesthood and sacrifices are clearly limited and have served their purpose, there is an urgent need for a completely new priesthood and covenant.[116] Both are provided through Jesus, the one "after the order of Melchizedek."

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[114] Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 371. Cf. τελείωσις, BDAG, 997. Louw and Nida also include both τελείωσις and τελειόω within the semantic domain "Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior" (Domain 88), and the writer of Hebrews often uses these terms to connote moral purity or "perfection" in the presence of God (e.g., Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:11; 7:28; 10:14).

[115] Cf. Heb 8:5, 13; 10:1. Regarding the phrase ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ in 8:13, nearly all modern English versions translate it as "soon to disappear" or something similar. However, this translation probably reflects classical usage (ἀφανισμός, LSJ, 286–87). For instance, in the LXX and the Apocrypha the noun ἀφανισμός is virtually always used in reference to "destruction" or "desolation" as a result of violence or war (e.g., Deut 7:2; 1 Kgs 13:34; 2 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 36:19; Jer 9:10; 10:22; Hos 5:9; Mic 1:7; 2 Macc 5:13; 3 Macc 5:20). See ἀφανισμός, LEH, 1509; ἀφανισμός, BDAG, 155; Gleason, "The Eschatology of the Warning," 108–09; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 78–80.

[116] The presence of μετάθεσις is further evidence that this is no mere amendment to the Law, but a complete displacement of it by a new and better order (Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 374; cf. Heb 11:5; 12:27).

The author of Hebrews repeatedly uses comparative techniques to highlight the significance of the new order.[117] For instance, Jesus is at various points shown to be greater in comparison to angels (chapters 1–2), Moses (chapter 3), Joshua (chapter 4), and the Levites (chapter 7). There are two ways comparison is employed in Hebrews: typological comparison and analogical arguments from lesser-to-greater. In both cases, the author's use of the Old Testament in Hebrews is intended to spur the congregation on to continued perseverance in the face of trial by emphasizing the importance of what they have received in Jesus. The coming of the messiah is said to be the fulfillment of the ages and the culmination of what their ancestors had been promised. Therefore, the implication of the repeated use of comparison is that the magnitude of the community's responsibility to remain faithful is even greater than it was for their ancestors. This comparative technique thus highlights the supremacy of Jesus, his priesthood, and covenant.[118] It also effectively shows the congregation the gravity of their situation and why they *must* persevere in faithfulness. It does not, however, suggest any sort of polemical stance against Judaism or its symbolic world.

Other Proposals for Reading Hebrews

Because of these and other problems with the relapse theory, scholars have proposed a number of alternative scenarios in order to explain what occasioned Hebrews to be written.[119] For instance, Ernst Käsemann, assuming a quasi-gnostic background for Hebrews, has argued that the writer is reminding Christians that, as with biblical Israel, they too were called to be God's wandering people.[120] James Moffatt and W. G. Kümmel each argued that Hebrews was actually addressed to Gentile, not Jewish, Christians who were in danger of returning to paganism.[121] Craig Koester has written that Hebrews does not reflect a situation where Christians have become separated from Judaism, but that they have become estranged from their city and from broader Greco-Roman society.[122] Harold Attridge has argued that Hebrews was written in order to deal with a largely indeterminate complex of issues.[123] David deSilva has argued that the community's problem "appears to be a crisis not of impending persecution, nor of heretical subversion, but rather of commitment occasioned as a result of the difficulties of remaining long without honor in the world."[124]

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[117] That comparison is one of the favorite rhetorical tools of the author of Hebrews is evidenced by the repeated use of μὲν . . . δέ constructions (cf. Heb 7:8, 5–6, 20–21, 23–24; 9:23; 12:9–11) and superlative adjectives (cf. 3:3; 6:13; 7:7, 19, 22; 9:11, 23; 11:26). See Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide*, 19; Johnson, *Commentary*, 178; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 48–55; Robertson, *Grammar*, 1394; Visotzky, "Midrash," 120–26. Cf. deSilva, *Perseverance*, 5–7. Interestingly, deSilva eschews the understanding of comparison as polemic yet still maintains that Hebrews's use of comparison is an early expression of "ideological warfare against both Judaism and paganism" (deSilva, *Perseverance*, 6).

[118] As Lehne notes, the literary pattern is often one of "correspondence, contrast and superiority" (Lehne, *New Covenant*, 101).

In recent scholarship on Hebrews, there has also been a tendency towards interpreting the epistle as addressing issues from a perspective *within* Judaism. For instance, Marie Isaacs has argued that Hebrews was intended to address Jewish Christians in the Diapsora coping with the loss of the temple in Jerusalem.[125] Gabriella Gelardini has argued that Hebrews was a synagogue homily given to commemorate the day of *Tisha be-Av* in remembrance of the Bar Kochba revolt.[126] Pamela Eisenbaum has argued that Hebrews could be read as an attempt by a Jewish-Christian author to "fill a desperate theological and social void" caused by the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and its rituals.[127] Richard Hays has argued that Hebrews is not supersessionist, but that it was written to inspire Jewish Christians towards a "new covenantalism."[128] However, neither these nor any of the proposals mentioned above has gained the kind of hegemony in scholarship enjoyed by the traditional reading of Hebrews, and because of this the relapse theory continues to attract many adherents in New Testament studies.

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[119] See deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 16–20 for an overview.

[120] Käsemann, *Wandering People of God*, 24–25. Käsemann also issued one of the earliest and harshest critiques of the relapse theory, stating: "This prejudice has given rise to so much exegetical confusion that its final burial would be equivalent to liberation from a sinister ghost. It is a product of fantasy . . ." (Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 24). As has been shown above, however, there are still many scholars who disagree with his assessment.

[121] Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xvi–xvii; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 398–401.

[122] Koester, *Hebrews*, 69.

[123] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 12.

[124] deSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude*, 18.

[125] Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 67.

Summary and Goals of Research

As demonstrated above, scholars have long debated the relationship between the Epistle to the Hebrews and Second Temple Judaism. Most commentators in the Western tradition have argued that Hebrews is directed against the issue of relapsing into Judaism, and many have also argued that the author takes a polemical stance against Judaism. However, more recently, several scholars specializing in Hebrews have rejected the traditional interpretation, with some arguing that the letter should be understood as a text from within Judaism. This debate is further complicated by the fact that, unlike Paul, the author of Hebrews does not offer extended discourses that make explicit his views of Judaism or its relevance for his community. A related question is whether the Hebrews writer is concerned with issues of Jewish identity or with helping his congregation to forge a separate Christian identity. The problems attending the traditional reading of Hebrews, and the lack of consensus regarding the social situation the epistle addresses, call for a different line of approach in framing and addressing questions surrounding Hebrews's relationship to Judaism. This will be the primary line of inquiry of this dissertation, the frameworks and methodology of which will be introduced in the next chapter.

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[126] Gelardini, "Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily," 107–27.

[127] Eisenbaum, "Hebrews, Supersessionism," 1–6, 1. However, elsewhere Eisenbaum appears to retreat somewhat from this position on establishing a context for Hebrews (cf. Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews," 213–39).

[128] Hays, "No Lasting City," 151–73. Notably, this reflects a reversal of Hays's former position as espoused in his earlier work on Paul (cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 177).

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF HEBREWS

The problems attending the relapse theory interpretation of Hebrews and the continuing debate over Hebrews's relationship to Judaism necessitate a fresh look at this New Testament letter. To that end, this study will attempt to shed further light on the social context of Hebrews. While there has been more attention given in recent years to studying Hebrews through a sociological lens, there is still a significant need for studies focused on Hebrews's social context since most monographs on Hebrews tend to focus only on its various theological or literary themes. Additionally, the paucity of evidence regarding Hebrews's origins and recipients, and the absence of any scholarly consensus regarding Hebrews's social context,[1] show that other methodologies are needed for studying the context of Hebrews, methodologies that consider other types of evidence and frameworks than what has thus far typically been used by scholars.[2]

This dissertation will argue that Hebrews is best understood as addressing the pastoral needs of a Jewish-Christian community facing a crisis of socio-religious identity.

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[1] Philip E. Hughes, in his 1977 commentary, said that scholarship on Hebrews had become a "battleground of discordant opinion and conjecture . . ." (Hughes, *Hebrews*, 1). Not much seems to have changed since then.

[2] In saying this, I concur with sentiments expressed by Pamela Eisenbaum ("Locating Hebrews," 213–14). However, ironically, even Eisenbaum, with her stated concerns for establishing Hebrews's context, makes the argument that Hebrews should be read as "a Christological treatise," and therefore views its theology as something separate from its social context, a context which she believes cannot be described.

Indeed, there is ample evidence in Hebrews to show that the writer is addressing, as Lane says, "an assembly in crisis."[3] For example, the author notes that, in recent memory, community members have previously endured social pressure, persecution, imprisonment, and the confiscation of their property (Heb 10:34). While they have not yet experienced martyrdom (12:4), suffering and death appear to be imminent (e.g., 11:36–12:3).[4] This crisis has further resulted in the community enduring public shame and disgrace (e.g., 13:13).[5] These circumstances are affecting the community in problematic ways. The author describes some as being spiritually lethargic and fearful (5:11; 6:12; 10:38–39), others as losing confidence (10:35), and he also mentions the fact that some members have even stopped attending congregational gatherings altogether (10:25). The writer repeatedly warns his community against unbelief and against drifting away from the message of salvation which they had received (e.g., 2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 10:19–39). He pleads with them to press on towards maturity and perseverance, holding fast to their confession of Jesus as Messiah (11:1–12:17).

It will also be argued throughout this dissertation that there is evidence that the community's crisis is also one of identity, especially as it relates to issues of Jewishness.[6] For example, they are evidently a community for whom the Levitical sacrificial and purity system are authoritative, sacred tradition, and yet this system is said to be becoming "obsolete" and is "soon to be destroyed" (8:13).[7] They also appear to be a people with a deeply felt need for purity according to biblical tradition and for compassionate, legitimate, priestly mediation. Even their very legitimacy as God's people is also something that seems to be in question as well. Along with this, the writer of Hebrews refers to the liminality of the city of Jerusalem, and the fact that the community is said in Heb 13:14 to "no longer have a remaining city" [οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ὧδε μένουσαν πόλιν] on earth to call home implies that they are a community that was formerly attached to the city of Jerusalem and its sanctuary (though whether they lived near the city is unclear), but for some reason they no longer have access to it. This is supported further by prominent themes of sojourning and landlessness throughout Hebrews which give the sense that the community is plagued with feelings of social displacement as well.[8] In responding to these issues, the writer goes to great lengths to show his community how Jesus (even though he is not a Levite) has made atonement for them in a definitive manner, and how his priestly ministry has purified them and opened the way for them to enter into God's very presence in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 7–9). The writer also repeatedly reassures them of their status as God's legitimate children (2:13–14; 12:7–8), as Abraham's descendants (2:16), and as the true heirs with their Israelite ancestors of the new Jerusalem in the world to come (e.g., 11:39–40; 12:22–23). Rather than attacking opponents or abusively deriding errant practices—conventions to be expected in a polemical religious text—the author of Hebrews instead devotes his energies to demonstrating how Jesus meets their deepest needs as a community, and why it is imperative for them to persevere in the face of trial. Instead of expressing concerns that the recipients are being seduced by the prospect of going back to Judaism, the text of Hebrews suggests that the author is instead concerned that they should move forward in faith, even as social pressure was mounting. While the author sometimes uses strong language to address issues of anxiety, suffering, and the deficiencies of faith (e.g., the so-called "warning passages"), these statements are directed solely to the community and their situation and do not serve any obvious polemical function.

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[3] Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:lxi. See also the summary in Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 52–54.

[4] See Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*, 77–110.

[5] See deSilva, *Hebrews in Social-Scientific Perspective*, 59–94.

[6] These issues will be further developed and described in the major chapters of the dissertation as we examine Jewish identity themes pertaining to the Law (chapter 3), the Temple (chapter 4), and the Promised Land (chapter 5).

[7] Gleason, "The Eschatology of the Warning," 108–9; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 78–80; Koester, *Hebrews*, 384; Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 209.

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[8] These themes were especially highlighted in modern scholarship in Käsemann, *Wandering People*.

In contrast with numerous studies of Hebrews which simply reaffirm questionable assumptions about its recipients or the issues they were facing, the research to be pursued in this dissertation will instead focus on interpreting Hebrews in light of what may be known generally of the social world of first-century Judaism and Jewish Christianity. I will argue that Hebrews addresses significant issues related to the symbolic world of Judaism, and that this suggests that, among other problems, the recipients are also dealing with a profound crisis of religious and social identity. By Christologically reshaping the symbolic world inherited from common Judaism, the author of Hebrews takes drastic steps to preserve his congregation's faith in the face chaotic forces that threaten to extinguish it.

Methodology

The approach for this dissertation will be cross-disciplinary in nature as it will utilize socio-historical description along with theoretical interpretive frameworks based in social theory (e.g., theories of ethnicity and Jewish identity) and modern linguistics (semantic domain theory). Additionally, the paragraphs to follow will attempt to introduce and clarify some of the terminology to be used throughout this study as well.

Socio-Historical Description

We will utilize *socio-historical description* as the methodology for the research to be pursued in this dissertation. The descriptive approach is based in the discipline of social history which has roots in modern social theory. "Social theory," historically, has developed along two primary lines of inquiry since the seminal works of Karl Marx, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber: (1) the development and/or application of theoretical models based on observations of human behavior to the study of human societies; and (2) the study of various societies, contemporary and historical, including their patterns of behavior, values, symbols, and social institutions, either in a synchronic or diachronic manner.[9] The first approach focuses on the development of interpretive models based on general observations of human behavior which can be used to understand human behavior in other social contexts. The second approach, however, focuses on the description of past and present human societies and their socio-historical development. The discipline of social history stems from this second approach to social theory and is the study of the socio-historical development of societies.[10] Social history goes beyond tracing the history of ideas or a banal reporting of "just the facts," and instead focuses on the development of societies with a particular emphasis on describing complex social structures such as institutions, politics, legal tradition, class, religion, economics, education, military, and the symbolic significance of those structures for understanding those societies. Social history also focuses on "history from below" by attempting to describe social *realia* as they would likely have been experienced by most ordinary people, and even marginalized people, within a particular society and not simply the elites within that society.[11] Socio-historical description, therefore, is both interpretive and descriptive as it often incorporates interpretive theoretical frameworks borrowed from the social sciences and employs the practice of detailed or "thick" description.[12]

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[9] On the development of these and other lines of inquiry in modern social theory following the works of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, see Morrison, *Formations of Modern Social Thought*, 1–26, esp. 5–6.

[10] For discussions of the development of social history and its relationship to social theory, see Burke, *History and Social Theory*, 1–20; MacRaild and Taylor, *Social Theory and Social History*, 1–32; McDonald, "The Conversations of History and Sociology," 91–118.

The application of social theory to the study of the New Testament has also generally followed along similar trajectories. First, there is what has come to known as the *social-scientific* approach which relies heavily upon the application of theoretical models from the social sciences to the study of selected biblical texts. Bruce Malina, Philip Esler, John H. Elliott, Richard Rohrbaugh, Halvnor Moxness, John Pilch and other members of the Context Group at the Society of Biblical Literature have been some of the main proponents of this method, and it has been widely influential within New Testament studies.[13] The other approach that has been widely influential in the discipline, and the one to be used in this research, is the *socio-historical* method (also sometimes called *social description*) which seeks to understand the early Jesus movement through the lens of its socio-historical development within the context of Greco-Roman antiquity and Second Temple Judaism.[14] Over the last forty to fifty years, numerous social-historical works on Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity have been produced, but the contributions of Martin Hengel, Wayne Meeks, and E. P. Sanders have been especially standout examples[15] of socio-historical description, setting the tone for its proper application for the following reasons: (1) their articulation of methods, frameworks, and assumptions guiding their work; (2) the sobriety with which they treat historical sources on Judaism and Christianity produced by the upper classes and their attempts to focus on history "from below"; (3) their integration of frameworks and insights from social theory (especially Meeks); (4) their penchant for thick historical description (especially Hengel and Sanders); and (5) their consideration of factors like institutions, religion, legal tradition, ancestry, class, social exchange, politics, language, education, economics, and war as contributing significantly to the formation of early Jewish and Christian communities.

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[11] MacRaild and Taylor, *Social Theory and Social History*, 125–28.

[12] The term "thick description" was first used with respect to ethnographic research by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz and refers to the practice of meticulously describing social institutions and patterns of behavior in order to understand the symbolic significance of those institutions and patterns of behavior in a given cultural context (see Geertz, "Thick Description," 3–30). Elsewhere, Geertz elaborates on the importance of description for the study of culture, saying, "To discover who people think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it, it is necessary to gain a working familiarity with the frames of meaning within which they enact their lives" (Geertz, *Available Light*, 16). Norman Denzin further defines thick description by comparing it with what he calls "thin" description: "A thick description has the following features: (a) It gives the context of an action, (b) it states the intentions and meanings that organize the action, (c) it traces the evolution and development of the action, and (d) it presents the action as a text that can be interpreted. A thin description simply reports facts, independent of intentions or the circumstances that surround the action" (Denzin, *Interpretive Interactionism*, 53–54).

[13] See the history of the Context Group and other related groups at SBL in Elliott, "From Social Description to Social-Scientific Criticism," 26–36. The SBL Context Group has produced several edited volumes highlighting the value of the model-based approach (e.g., see the essays in Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*; Moxnes, *Constructing Early Christian Families*; Pilch, *Social Scientific Models for Interpretation*). Some important collections of essays have been produced by individual members as well

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(e.g, Rohrbaugh, *The New Testament in Cross-Cultural Perspective*; Malina *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*).

[14] For a discussion of the various applications of social history and description to New Testament study, see Smith, "Social Description," 19–25; Clarke and Tucker, "Social History and Social Theory," 41–58. However, see the criticisms in Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 217–41. Malina has been an especially passionate advocate for the social-scientific approach over socio-historical or descriptive approaches and has (rightly) criticized how some biblical scholars have used social history without explicit theoretical grounding. Yet Malina fails to recognize that social history is a well-established discipline that originated with the beginnings of modern social theory itself (cf. the works of Marx and Weber especially). Additionally, as David Horrell has noted, the differentiation between the social-scientific and socio-historical approaches in New Testament studies simply reflects the diversity of approaches that exists among social theorists and social historians more broadly (Horrell, "Reflections on Contested Methodologies," 6–20).

[15] See especially Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*; Meeks, *First Urban Christians*; Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*.

This dissertation will employ social-historical description by providing a description of Judaism of the Second Temple era, along with its various cultural institutions and frameworks of meaning and identity.[16] In doing so, this research will present a topical profile of various cultural frameworks which comprised the symbolic world[17] of Second Temple Judaism and will compare and interpret how that symbolic world is represented and appropriated in the Epistle to the Hebrews.[18] This research will show that the author of Hebrews is appropriating the sacred traditions he and his community have inherited from common Judaism in order to address a crisis of social and religious identity, and that the writer thus presents his community with a symbolic world that makes sense of their situation.[19] In doing so, we will follow traditional methodological principles derived from social history. For instance, the approach will focus on history from below by attempting to present Judaism and Jewish culture as it would have been experienced by most Jews generally in the Second Temple era and in the first century CE in particular, and not simply the perspectives of elite groups like the religious leadership in Jerusalem or the Pharisees and Sadducees. This approach will also be both descriptive and interpretive in that we will utilize thick description in describing the symbolic world of Judaism as well as frameworks based social theory for interpreting that symbolic world and its representation in Hebrews. Regarding the incorporation of interpretive theoretical frameworks, we will utilize theories of Jewish ethnicity and identity (especially E. P. Sanders's "common Judaism"), and modern linguistics (semantic domain theory). These theoretical frameworks will serve as integrative components for our descriptive methodology and its application to this research will be further outlined in the sections to follow.

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[16] The terms "Second Temple era" and "Second Temple Judaism" will be used throughout this dissertation and refer to the period of Judaism's development from the completion of the second temple in 516 BCE to its eventual destruction in 70 CE. However, discussions will also necessarily take into account important socio-historical events and developments bracketing this period, such as the Babylonian exile and the destruction of the first temple in 586 BCE as well as the Bar Kochba revolt of 135–137 CE.

[17] A "symbolic world" comprises the religious beliefs, practices, symbols, and institutions that depend upon, and give meaning to, the real world in which human beings live. While symbolic worlds are inherently theological in that they center on religious belief about the divine, they are also anthropological because they are also socially constructed and maintained. The theory of religious worldview and practice as constituting a symbolic world stems from Peter Berger's theory of plausibility structures. E.g., see Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 45; Berger, *Rumour of Angels*, 50–54; Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 110–46. For discussions of Berger's impact on the study of religion, including the field of New Testament studies, see Gorski and Guhin, "The Ongoing Plausibility of Peter Berger," 1118–31, and the essays in Woodhead, Heelas, and Martin, eds., *Peter Berger and the Study of Religion*.

[18] Jonathan Z. Smith, in his classic essay defining the various possible lines of inquiry of socio-historical description notes that one of the primary applications of the method is, in fact, describing emerging Judaism and Christianity "as a *social world*, as the creation of a world of meaning which provided a plausibility structure for those who chose to inhabit it" (Smith, "Social Description," 21, italics original). Such analysis also involves, to some extent, the practice of "mirror-reading" which is "the drawing of inferences about that situation from the language and formulations used by the writer" (Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 54; also see Barclay, "Mirror-Reading," 73–93; Gupta, "Mirror-Reading," 361–81; Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*, 61–66).

[19] As Berger has argued, it is essential that symbolic worlds make sense of human experience (e.g., Berger, *Sacred Canopy*, 51–52).

The Epistle to the Hebrews and Jewish-Christian Identity

This research contends that Hebrews was written at a volatile time in the first century CE when Jewish groups were contending for the future of Judaism, and when the boundaries between what would become "Judaism" and "Christianity" were shifting and still being formed, but were becoming visible. As mentioned in the previous chapter, most commentators in the modern era have argued for the traditional theory that Hebrews was written to a congregation comprised mostly, or even exclusively, of Jewish followers of Jesus.[20] Those who have argued for a Jewish-Christian audience for Hebrews point to a constellation of supporting pieces of evidence from the text, including: the author's wide-ranging use of the LXX and traditions from Second Temple Judaism, his midrashic interpretive method, his pronounced concern for priestly matters and Israel's sacrificial system, the writer's focus on covenantalism, and the links he establishes between his community and Israel's ancestral history. However, Donald Hagner has rightly noted that no single piece of evidence "*necessitates* that the original readers were Jews, despite strong probability in favor of such a view."[21] Additionally, the title "to the Hebrews," which was added later, only tells us what ancient interpreters thought about Hebrews's recipients. Consequently, alternative proposals have been advanced. Some commentators have posited a mixed congregation of Jewish and Gentile Christians,[22] and a few scholars have even attempted to make the case for an audience exclusively of Gentile converts from paganism.[23]

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[20] E.g., Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxxv–xlii; Montefiore, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 11–16; Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, xxiii–xxxv; Guthrie, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 22–31; Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, xx–xxx; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:lii–lx; Hagner, *Encountering Hebrews*, 23–26; Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 55–56.

Out of these options mentioned, the last one is the most difficult to substantiate. For example, the Hebrews writer does not seem interested to address issues typically faced by Gentile converts from paganism such as idolatry, magic, deviant sexuality, or other taboos, issues that are addressed, for example, in Paul's letters to his Gentile congregations.[24] Additionally, while some have pointed to the author's references to "the living God" (Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31) and the mention of "dead works" (6:1; 9:14) as evincing Gentile readers who had converted from idolatry,[25] this evidence is tenuous at best since such language and concepts are used elsewhere in plenty of Jewish texts written for Jewish audiences.[26] Further, the theory which posits a community comprised mostly or exclusively of Gentiles who had not long been connected with the synagogue or Judaism fails to explain some of the most Jewish elements of Hebrews. For example, it is difficult to see why the author, if writing to recent Gentile converts from paganism, would find it necessary to make such an elaborate argument for the legitimacy of Jesus's high priestly ministry in relation to the Levitical requirements for priesthood as he does in Heb 7. It is unlikely that an issue such as Jesus's Judahite lineage would have been troubling to an audience of Gentile converts whose conceptions of sacrifice and purity had not been shaped significantly by the priestly system of Israel. Indeed, such issues regarding Jesus and Israel's priestly system are virtually never addressed in other New Testament writings to Gentile congregations.[27] Also, as mentioned previously, whenever the Hebrews writer uses kinship language linking his community with Israel's ancestors, he never feels any compulsion to argue for a universal or inclusivist interpretation of that ancestral relationship as Paul did for his Gentile recipients (cf. Rom 9:6–8; Gal 3:29). For these and other reasons, this theory about Hebrews's intended recipients has not won over many supporters.

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[21] Hagner, *Hebrews*, xv, italics mine.

[22] E.g., Attridge, *Hebrews*, 9–12; Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21–27; Koester, *Hebrews*, 46–48.

[23] E.g., Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xvi–xvii; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 398–401; Ehrman, *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings*, 271.

[24] Cf. 1 Cor 8:1–4; 10:20; 12:1–2; 2 Cor 2:16–18; Gal 5:19–21; Eph 4:17–5:20; Col 3:5–6; 1 Thess 1:9. These issues are also similarly addressed in some other New Testament writings sent to churches that likely had significant populations of Gentile Christians (e.g., 1 Pet 4:3; Rev 2:20–25).

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[25] See the discussions in deSilva, *Hebrews in Social-Scientific Perspective*, 37–50; Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 88–93.

[26] For references to "the living God" see Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; Ps 42:2 [41:3 LXX]; 84:2 [83:3 LXX]; Tob 13:1; Matt 16:16; 26:6. Also, as deSilva admits, while the references to "dead works" could allude to idolatry (cf. Wis 15:7) they could also just as easily refer to violations against the Torah that constitute "works that lead to death" (e.g., Deut 30:15–20; Rom 6:23) (deSilva, *Hebrews in Social-Scientific Perspective*, 39–40).

[27] For example, there are just three instances in the Pauline corpus where language and concepts from the Levitical system are used to describe Jesus's death: Rom 3:24–26, 1 Cor 5:7–8, and Eph 5:2. In Romans, Paul uses the "mercy seat" [ἱλαστήριον] of the ark of the covenant as a metaphor for talking about Jesus's atoning death, a reference that would not have been lost on a mixed Jew-Gentile congregation such as the one he was writing to in Rome. However, in writing to the predominately Gentile church in Corinth, Paul simply refers to Jesus as "the Passover lamb" [τὸ πάσχα] reflecting the well-known tradition that Jesus had been crucified just prior to the festival, a tradition Paul himself had evidently passed on to the Corinthian church and which had become part of its worship (1 Cor 11:23–26; cf. Matt 26:2; Mark 14:1, 16; Luke 22:15; John 19:14; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 12:11). Finally, in Eph 5:2, Jesus's death is described in more generic terms as "an offering and sacrifice" [προσφορὰν καὶ θυσίαν].

Indeed, the bulk of scholarly discussion tends to agree that Hebrews's audience was probably Jewish, but with disagreement over *how* Jewish they were and to what extent Gentile proselytes might have made up part of that congregation. As mentioned above, many recent commentators have argued that Hebrews was written for a Jewish-Christian community that likely included some Gentile members as well, and this research agrees with Filtvedt's assertion that this should be the "default" position taken on the matter.[28] However, while it might have been the case that Hebrews's community also included some Gentile members, the continuing debates over Hebrews's community should also be reframed with respect to the following considerations.[29] (1) Ethnic identity, including Jewish identity, was/is socially constructed. (2) As mentioned, following the pattern of other Hellenistic ἔθνη the Jewish ἔθνος in Greco-Roman antiquity was comprised of variegated identity markers such as ancestral history, sacred traditions, common mythos, attachment to a national homeland and heritage, and ethno-religious practices. (3) Various identity categories were emphasized, and sometimes interpreted differently, by different Jewish groups depending on where they lived and the social realities they encountered. (4) Jewish identity in the Second Temple era, therefore, was multifaceted, flexible, and in many cases even open to allowing Gentile proselytes to become Jewish as well. (5) Evidence suggests that the early Jesus movement was largely characterized by a similar approach to Jewish identity as can be seen in various debates among Jewish-Christian groups over certain Jewish practices as well as the early and wide-spread acceptance of Gentile proselytes into Jewish-Christian congregations (e.g., Acts 15).

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[28] See the discussion in Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 19.

[29] The theoretical basis for these additional considerations will be addressed in the sections to follow vis-à-vis the issues of Jewish identity and Sanders's theory of common Judaism.

The major chapters of this dissertation will show that the author of Hebrews textually constructs for his audience a type of Jewish identity through how he treats matters related to Jewish socio-religious identity frameworks. From the writer's (emic) perspective, his congregation *is* a Jewish-Christian community.[30] For example, they are unequivocally said to be "Abraham's descendants," regardless of whether the members are all Jewish by birth or whether some are Gentile proselytes who had been connected to the synagogue and the traditions of Judaism (Heb 2:16). Israel's patriarchs, the prophets, the wilderness generation, and the heroes of Israel's past are said to be the community's "ancestors," again without caveat or equivocation (Heb 1:1; 3:7–9; 8:9). The writer also implicitly identifies his congregation as "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" since they had evidently lived under the "first covenant" of Moses but now had received the promised "new covenant" of Jeremiah through the ministry of Jesus Christ (Heb 8:8–12; 9:15–26). Those who would insist upon reading the author's assertions about his community's kinship to Israel in an ambiguous, universal, or ethnically-neutral manner can only make such an argument by going outside of Hebrews and appealing to the Pauline writings, which, as we have noted in the previous chapter, is problematic since the writer is clearly not Paul, is not addressing a congregation founded by Paul (Heb 2:3!), and does not appear to be dealing with the same sorts of issues Paul does. On its face, such an argument forces certain interpretive claims onto Hebrews that the text does not make for itself.

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[30] For a fuller treatment of this issue, see the section on "Ancestry and Kinship in Hebrews" in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Jewish Identity: "Jews," "Christians," and "Jewish Christianity"

Before we proceed, however, some even more fundamental questions need to be addressed. What made someone a Jew? What made someone a Christian? If a Jew became a Christian did that somehow change one's identity as a Jew? Does the term "Jewish Christianity" even make sense? It is now widely accepted in biblical scholarship that, unlike today, in the world of the first century there were not always clear boundaries demarking "Christians" and "Jews" from one another.[31] Additionally, it is also widely accepted that "Judaism" was a complex faith in the Second Temple era characterized by a great deal of theological and sectarian variety, and that even as the emerging Jesus movement began to distinguish itself it was still very much a part of that Jewish socio-religious milieu, not separate from it.[32] Further still, it is also generally recognized now that even with such diversity within Second Temple Judaism there were various characteristics that Jews possessed which made them recognizable as Jews in antiquity, including: ethnic and geographical origin, distinctive cultural mores, religious practices, and beliefs.[33] These assumptions have largely replaced the historical reconstruction of early Christianity by F. C. Baur and later of the German History of Religions school,[34] and several scholars now prefer to date the so-called "parting of the ways" to after the first century.[35] Whereas Baur had argued that the split between Judaism and Christianity—and also between Jewish and Gentile Christianity—began in the first century, many scholars of Judaism now often contend that the separation between Jews and Christians occurred later, either around the time of the Bar Kochba revolt in the early to mid-second century (which is the position adopted in this research),[36] or, less plausibly, even as late as the fourth-century CE.[37]

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[31] David Frankfurter has aptly described this era as "a period of blur and flux in religious boundaries" (Frankfurter, "Beyond 'Jewish Christianity'," 131–43, 131).

[32] For a model of the emergence of the Jesus movement from faction to sect, see Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement," 75–95.

[33] E.g., see the classic work on "common Judaism" in Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*. Also, see Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 457–512.

[34] E.g., Baur, *Church History*, 1:44–45; Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, 1:81–83.

The currently dominant view of Second Temple Judaism has also led to a renewed interest in interpreting the New Testament in light of issues pertaining to Jewish identity. This is especially evidenced by the ongoing trend in scholarship since the 1980s that seeks to understand the New Testament from a perspective within Judaism.[38] It is no surprise, therefore, that scholarship on Hebrews has also followed these trends. As mentioned in the previous chapter of this dissertation, several recent interpreters who have rejected the relapse theory have instead argued that Hebrews should be read as a Christian-Jewish or Jewish-Christian text reacting to in-house or intra-Jewish issues.[39]

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[35] E.g., see Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, xi–xxiv; Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek?*, 11–30; Runesson, "Who Parted from Whom," 53–72; Wardle, "Samaritans, Jews, and Christians," 15–39.

[36] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 312–18.

[37] See the essays in Becker and Reed, *The Ways That Never Parted*. However, while there were certainly continued interactions between Jews and Christians well after the first and second centuries, there are several problems with ascribing such a late dating for the parting between Jews and Christians. For instance, such a reconstruction struggles to adequately explain the existence of well-developed, competing Jewish and Christian apologetic traditions that were polemical and antagonistic towards one another by the middle of the second-century CE, or the suspicion of Jewish or Judaizing Christian groups like the Ebionites evinced by prominent proto-orthodox writers like Irenaeus (e.g., *Adv. Haer.* 1:26.2) or Ignatius (e.g., *Magn.* 8–10). E.g., see Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, 19–20, 67–73; Carleton-Padget, "The Jew of Celsus," 201–42.

[38] E.g., see Charlesworth, *Jesus within Judaism*; Chilton, "Jesus within Judaism," 262–84; Tuckett, "The Role of the Christian Community within Judaism," 65–77; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish–Christian Relations," 95–132; Nanos and Zetterholm, *Paul within Judaism*; Willitts, "Paul the Rabbi," 225–47.

[39] E.g., Hays, "No Lasting City," 151–73; Isaacs, *Sacred Space*; Docherty, *Old Testament in Hebrews*.

Yet while recent scholarship on Judaism perhaps offers a corrective to anachronistic depictions in nineteenth-century German scholarship of Judaism and Christianity as well-defined and separate religions in the first century, it also further complicates historical reconstruction by introducing questions about Jewish and Christian identity and how they related to each other in antiquity. This also raises the equally complex issue of how Jewish identity is represented in the (Christian) New Testament. For instance, Ole Jakob Filtvedt articulates some of the difficulties of locating Jewish identity in Hebrews when he says:

> The argument of Hebrews is . . . entirely free of ethnic distinctions. It is not only that we lack an explicit address to the addresses as Jewish, but also that Hebrews is silent on several of the most important markers of Jewish identity. There is no indication that the audience was in solidarity with their Jewish contemporaries, or that they were distinguished from the nations. We hear nothing about circumcision, Sabbath observance or religious festivals, or other typical practices that separated Jews from non-Jews.[40]

While I will argue that Filtvedt overstates some of the problems with Hebrews (more to be said on this later), his point is well-taken, as is his concern to adopt a historically minimalist approach in his interpretation of Hebrews.[41] His comments, importantly, call attention to the issue of what constitutes Jewish identity, and he rightly notes that defining what it meant to be a Jew in the first century is not as easy as one might think. Indeed, there was a great deal of variety which characterized first-century Judaism both in Judea and the Diaspora.[42] Additionally, as mentioned above, there is also disagreement among scholars over how long it took for a uniquely Christian identity to emerge from within Judaism and become distinctive from it. However, concerning Hebrews, Filtvedt's research raises a particularly important question: Is Hebrews concerned with Jewish identity at all?[43] Indeed, although Ἑβραίους ("Hebrews") is in the title, the term Ἰουδαῖος ("Jew" or "Judean") is not mentioned anywhere in the letter.[44] Filtvedt also argues that Jewish identity was primarily rooted in ethnicity, and that it does not make sense to go looking for Jewish identity in Hebrews since Hebrews does not seem overly concerned with issues of ethnicity.[45] Instead, Filtvedt looks for "Israelite" identity in Hebrews, and in doing so he explores what constitutes "the people of God" in Hebrews, an epithet the author uses for his community. This Israelite identity, Filtvedt argues, is centered on emulating Jesus as the prototypical Israelite.[46]

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[40] Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 20. Similar observations have been made by several others (e.g., Vanhoye, *Structure*, 2; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 2–6; Marhol, *Faithfulness*, xi–xiv).

[41] However, I disagree with Filtvedt's assertion that we must remain "agnostic" about the issue of ethnic identity in Hebrews (Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 19).

[42] This facet of Second Temple Judaism has been especially emphasized in the work of Jacob Neusner. E.g., see Neusner, *Judaism When Christianity Began*, 1–10.

Filtvedt's work raises some unintended questions, however. For instance, why would ethnicity be a major concern for the Hebrews writer if his audience is predominately Jewish, as most scholars agree was likely the case? Indeed, ethnicity is rarely a concern in Jewish religious texts that do not specifically address issues regarding

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[43] Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 17–22.

[44] However, while the title is certainly a later addition to the text, it should not be completely dismissed as evidence since it appears in every extant manuscript of Hebrews and at the very least tells us what some of the earliest Christian interpreters believed about the original recipients.

[45] However, the author employs kinship language which, as we shall later see, raises questions about the ethnicity of Hebrews's recipients. For instance, the Hebrews writer mentions how God spoke "to the ancestors" by the prophets, a phrase that often refers to physical ancestors in the LXX and in the New Testament (Heb 1:1). He also refers to his audience both as "Abraham's descendants" (Heb 2:16) and implicitly as "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" who have received the new covenant (Heb 8:8–10), epithets that nearly always imply Jewish ethnicity in both the LXX and the New Testament (see the discussion of ancestry and kinship in Hebrews in the next chapter). It is also important to note that there is no indication that the Hebrews writer is dealing with the same Jew/Gentile concerns that Paul addresses in Romans or in his other letters, and thus there is nothing in Hebrews to suggest that the author is using this language in any way differently than how it is used in other Jewish literature including the LXX, the Apocrypha, or the New Testament. Further still, it is worth pointing out that most scholars have argued that Hebrews's recipients probably did include some Gentiles, but that most were likely Jewish Christians worshipping in a Jewish-Christian milieu (either Judean or in the Diaspora) in contrast with Pauline congregations that reflected a more Gentile milieu (e.g., the churches at Corinth, Galatia, or Philippi).

[46] Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 30, 217–22.

Gentiles or Samaritans. Additionally, it is important to note that identity as a social construct often involves far more than just ethnicity as we think of it.[47] For example, John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, in summarizing standard theories of ethnic identity or *ethnie*, note that most ethnologists agree that ethnicity is comprised of: (1) a common name to identify the community; (2) a myth of common ancestry; (3) shared historical memories; (4) common cultural elements such as shared norms, religion, and language; (5) a link to an ancestral homeland; and (6) a real sense of solidarity.[48] In a similar vein, Steve Mason has persuasively argued that in the Greco-Roman world an *ethnos* (ἔθνος, "nation" or "people") was expansive beyond just physical descent:

> Each *ethnos* had its distinctive nature or character (φύσις, ἦθος), expressed in unique ancestral traditions (τα πάτρια), which typically reflected a shared (if fictive) ancestry (συγγένεια); each had its charter stories (μύθοι), customs, norms, conventions, mores, laws (νόμθοι, έθη, νόμιμα), and political arrangements or constitution (πολιτεία).[49]

In Greco-Roman antiquity, Jews were also widely regarded as an ethnos with a similarly multifaceted ethnic identity.[50] The various institutions, practices, and beliefs which comprised the symbolic world of Judaism, therefore, were also widely viewed by both Jews and non-Jews as endemic to what made someone *Jewish*, in addition to ancestry.[51] This is especially true for Ἰουδαῖοι living in the period following the Maccabean Revolt when an even greater emphasis was placed on the ancestral laws, traditions, and customs and their importance for Jewish identity.[52] Thus, contrary to Filtvedt's suggestion, for most Jews and Jewish Christians in the first century CE like the author of Hebrews, the notion that the question of what it meant to be "the people of God" or "Israel" could be answered separately from the question of Jewish identity is an idea that would have been inconceivable. In support of this assertion is the fact that most pagan and Jewish writers in antiquity frequently point to external customs, religious practices, and beliefs as markers of Jewish identity, not just human origin.[53] Additionally, Jewish writers often considered Abrahamic descent as something central to Jewish identity, but not usually Abrahamic descent apart from other markers.[54] Indeed, scholars like E. P. Sanders, Martin Hengel, John Collins, and John Barclay, among several others whose works are representative of the current majority view in scholarship on Second Temple Judaism have argued persuasively that historians should be concerned with issues of custom, practice, and belief when talking about Jews and Judaism in antiquity for the simple reason that this is what is consistently found in relevant historical sources.[55]

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[47] For a discussion of various sociological theories of ethnicity and how these can be applied to New Testament research, see also Kuecker, "Ethnicity and Social Identity," 59–77.

[48] Hutchinson and Smith, "Introduction," 6–7. Contrast this with Filtvedt's approach which he describes as "a strong definition of ethnicity," equating ethnic identity with shared ancestry and shared geographical boundaries (Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 23). However, Alan C. Mitchell pointedly critiques Filtvedt's essentialist conceptualization of ethnicity, arguing that he "redefines it to a point where it becomes unrecognizable" (Mitchell, Review of *Paradox of Hebrews*, 408).

[49] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 484. See also Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 402–04; Gruen, *Construct of Identity*, 95–111. One is reminded of the words of Dio Cassius about Jews: "[T]he country has been named Judaea, and the people themselves Jews. I do not know how this title came to be given them, but it applies also to all the rest of [hu]mankind, although of alien race, who affect their customs. This class exists even among the Romans . . . They are distinguished from the rest of [hu]mankind in practically every detail of life . . ." (Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 37:17.1, LCL, Earnest Cary's translation).

[50] Mason, "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 489–510.

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[51] E.g., see the discussion in Collins, *The Invention of Judaism*, 1–19.

[52] Collins, *The Invention of Judaism*, 11–19.

[53] Much of this evidence is helpfully accessible in the three-volume set by Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors.*

[54] For instance, one might consider the example of Philo's nephew, Tiberius Julius Alexander, who, though certainly a Jew by ancestry, was widely considered an apostate and a traitor for abandoning Judaism, for being appointed as a Roman-sponsored procurator of Judea, and for later serving with Tiberius Caesar during the siege of Jerusalem (see Cohen, *Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 41). In a similar vein, E. P. Sanders avers, "But could individual people be Jews while omitting, say, half or even three-fourths of the common, typical practices and belief? I would say yes, if they counted themselves Jewish and if other people saw them as Jewish. A person who gave up all of the typical practices, it would seem to me, would merge into the gentile world. Legally, a 'son of Israel' might still be a Jew by birth; but socially, a total apostate would remove himself or herself from the collective entity, Judaism" (Sanders, *Comparing Judaism and Christianity*, 47).

[55] Socio-historical works such as Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*; and Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora* rely heavily on information from pagan and

Permitting the considerations above, we are justified in expanding the scope of our inquiry beyond unduly narrow concepts of ethnicity to a more dynamic concept of ethnicity which also allows for the role of ancestral traditions, customs, practices, and beliefs in the shaping of Jewish identity. Considering the question of whether Hebrews addresses issues of Jewish identity, therefore, hardly amounts to creating an abstract or ideological concept of Jewish identity as Filtvedt suggests.[56] Rather this seems to be an approach based on sensible, historical-critical assumptions predicated upon known historical realities. Anders Runesson has also argued persuasively that focusing on "praxis-oriented" criteria for recognizing and interpreting Jewish and Jewish-Christian texts is more productive than approaches based on ethnic categories alone.[57] Such an approach also aligns well with studies in social identity theory which focus especially on collective identity, recognizing that group identities, including national and religious identities, are often integrative and highly multifaceted.[58] Additionally, even though generalized theoretical frameworks and the historical reconstructions on which they are based must sometimes admit exceptions, such exceptions do not mean that those frameworks are merely ideological, nor do they render such approaches useless.[59] This is

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Jewish sources regarding customs, practices, and beliefs, and use this information as the basis for their own histories of Jews and Judaism.

[56] Cf. Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 22–24.

[57] Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 95–132, esp. 101–04.

[58] E.g., see Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luychx, "Toward an Integrative View of Identity," 1.1–27; Abrams and Hogg, "Collective Identity," 425–60; Esler, "An Outline of Social Identity Theory," 13–40.

[59] The reality that socio-historical frameworks are limited and that they admit exceptions seems to be one of the reasons Filtvedt is so reticent to rely on theories of Jewish identity, and why he instead posits a more theological "Israelite" identity for interpreting Hebrews. However, this objection seems to confuse generalizations with reductionist stereotypes. The distinction is crucial, however. For instance, as Tom Nichols writes, generalizations are "probabilistic statements, based in observable facts," while stereotypes are "impervious to factual testing," and rely on "the clever use of confirmation bias to dismiss all exceptions as irrelevant" (Nichols, *The Death of Expertise*, 61–62). Sociological and historical frameworks are based on generalizations that admit exceptions, but exceptions usually do not undermine the frameworks. In fact, exceptions are exceptions precisely when the generalizations generally hold true. See also the reflections on historical methodology in Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora,* 399–402.

also true of the dominant theories of Jewish identity in Greco-Roman antiquity.[60] Additionally, one may also argue that in choosing to focus on what constitutes "Israelite" identity instead of "Jewish" identity in Hebrews, Filtvedt introduces a distinction without a substantial difference.

Fildvedt also is skeptical about whether Hebrews can be regarded as a Jewish document since, he argues, it does not address practice-related issues such as *kashrut*, circumcision, or Sabbath observance. However, such objections miss the fact that Hebrews, though an extensive homily, is an epistle nonetheless, written to address particular issues in a particular place to a particular people. This also raises the question of whether a Jewish author in the first century CE would necessarily have felt compelled to address those kinds of issues in every instance, and whether this is even a valid objection to reading Hebrews as a text concerned with Jewish issues. For instance, as Collins has shown, evidence from Diaspora Jewish literature shows that a text does always not need to deal with the most obvious boundary markers in order to be Jewish. While Jews in the Diaspora were also concerned for the more traditional matters of the Law, it was common for Jewish writers to emphasize "the broader concerns of the Law" as well, focusing on ethical material not specifically in the Torah in order to address specific contemporary issues of Diaspora life.[61] In fact, in several texts that purport to deal with matters of Law, the discussions instead focus on other types of ethical matters and not always on the most salient "Jewish" issues. For example, regarding summaries of the Law offered in texts from Philo (*Hypoth.* 7.1–9), Josephus (*Apion* 2.190–219), and Pseudo-Phocylides (*Sentences*), Collins observes:

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[60] For a helpful review of the various theories of Jewish identity and the relevant literature, see the forthcoming article by VanMaaren, "Mapping Jewishness in Antiquity."

[61] Collins, *The Invention of Judaism*, 139–40, 140.

> The common material extends to the duties of parents and children, husband and wife, the young and their elders, and the burial of the dead. Conspicuously lacking are discussions of the most distinctive practices of Judaism, such as circumcision and the Sabbath. Philo follows his epitome of the laws with a discussion of the Sabbath in *Hypothetica* 7.10. But if these three authors shared a common source, as seems likely, the discussion of the Sabbath does not seem to have been part of it.[62]

It should be noted that Filtvedt's work is generally careful and nuanced, and his concerns should caution us against being too cavalier about the assumptions we bring to the text of Hebrews. However, Hebrews's apparent lack of concern for certain boundary markers should not be taken to mean that the writer is not concerned for other markers of Jewish identity. While Hebrews perhaps is not preoccupied with the most obvious issues like circumcision or Sabbath practice, the author does appear to be deeply concerned for other issues that were endemic to Jewish socio-religious identity like covenantalism, Israel's priesthood, sacrifice and atonement, Israel's liturgical tradition, kinship with Israel's ancestors, and attachment to both the holy city and the Promised Land.[63] Also, as Mikael Tellbe observes, while Filtvedt follows some scholars like Pamela Eisenbaum in arguing that there is little which can be known about Hebrews's audience or their social context, this unfortunately leads him to read Hebrews in a way that seems "non-historical or, at least, non-contextual."[64] In contrast, this dissertation will argue that Hebrews should not be treated as a disembodied text (e.g., a theological treatise),[65] nor as a

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[62] Collins, *The Invention of Judaism*, 139.

[63] While Filtvedt (*Paradox of Hebrews*, 20–22) asserts that ethnicity—at least, as he construes ethnicity—is irrelevant to the argument of Hebrews, the major chapters of this dissertation will show that this assumption is incorrect, and that, in fact, Jewish identity plays a significant role throughout Hebrews.

[64] Tellbe, Review of *Paradox of Hebrews*, 240.

[65] E.g., Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews," 213–39.

"general epistle" intended to address broad, generic, and nebulous issues apart from a specific social context.[66] Rather, it appears that the author knows his audience and is familiar with their circumstances.[67] Careful analysis of the text can clue us in to at least some of the problems his community is facing.

Additionally, rather than resorting to talking about a kind of separate and abstracted Israelite identity, it seems that we are on safe ground in discussing Jewish identity in Hebrews, because in doing so we are utilizing categories well attested in extant historical sources and widely accepted by historians of Second Temple Judaism. For instance, in discussing Jewish identity in antiquity, Sanders offers the following uncontroversial summary:

> Who were Jews? In general they were people who were born of a Jewish mother or who converted to Judaism. Another general way of defining ancient Jews fixes on perception: Jews were people who regarded themselves as Jewish and who were so regarded by other people. The vast majority of Jews in the ancient world had these characteristics: (1) they believed in and worshipped the God of Israel; (2) they accepted the Hebrew Bible (often in translation) as revealing his will; (3) consequently they observed most aspects of the Mosaic law; (4) they identified themselves with the history and fate of the Jewish people.[68]

Sanders's definition of the term "Jew" will be operative throughout this dissertation. It is faithful to historical sources on Judaism in antiquity in that it embraces

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[66] E.g., Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 12.

[67] Cf. the sociological approaches in Elliott, *Home for the Homeless*; Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice*, 14–18. Following the interpretive approaches of Elliott, Dunnill and others, this dissertation assumes that the language of Hebrews—even its "theological" language—addresses a real social situation faced by a real religious community. Of course, it is worth noting that some scholars, following Attridge, have expressed uncertainty as to how well the Hebrews writer knew his audience and their situation (e.g., see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 12–13). However, it is difficult to imagine the author issuing such strong warnings to his hearers (Heb 6:1–9), chastising them for their immaturity (Heb 5:11–12), or speaking to them about their circumstances and sufferings the way he does (Heb 10:32–35) if he does not know them well. There is an immediacy to Hebrews that one does not find, say, in the text of Romans where Paul is writing to a congregation with whom he is not as familiar. Instead, regarding tenor, Hebrews reads more like 1 Corinthians, another letter from a pastor who is frustrated, worried, and perplexed at the behavior of his people.

[68] Sanders, *Comparing Judaism and Christianity*, 42.

Jewish concerns for issues like ancestry as well as Jewish practices and beliefs (e.g., adherence to monotheism, the Torah, and the temple).[69] Thus Sanders's definition is definitive enough to include both ethnicity and the Jewish symbolic world as significant for Jewish identity (again, as per historical sources). However, it is also flexible enough to allow for conversion identities (e.g., proselytes to Judaism), the role of emic and etic perspectives on identity (i.e., perceptions of Jews and outsiders), and the diversity also known to have characterized Judaism and Jewish culture in the Second Temple era.

But what of "Christians"? While scholars supporting the current majority view on Second Temple Judaism tend to prefer a later date for the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity, evidence suggests that even in its earliest stages the Jesus movement had already begun distinguishing itself from other Jewish factions.[70] Indeed, there is plentiful evidence in the New Testament to suggest that the developing rift between Jewish Christians and non-Christian Jews began with Jesus himself through his harsh criticisms of the Jerusalem religious establishment and his subsequent crucifixion by the Romans with help from a complicit high priest in Jerusalem. Evidence from Acts and Josephus further suggests a series of ruptures developed between the leadership of the early Jesus movement and the Jewish religious leadership in Jerusalem soon after, expressed in events such as the imprisonment of Peter and John (Acts 4:1–21), the attempted extradition of Jewish Christians from Damascus back to Jerusalem for trial by the Sanhedrin (Acts 9:1–2), and the martyrdoms of both Stephen (Acts 7:54ff) and James the Just (Josephus, *Ant.* 20:197–203). The influx of Gentile converts into Diaspora Jewish-Christian congregations through Paul's mission, as well as the events of the Jewish Revolt of 66–70 CE which likely resulted in Jewish Christians leaving Jerusalem for Pella, are historical factors which further contributed to the developing rift between nascent Christian communities and the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. The separation between the leadership of the early church and the Jewish leadership which, by the end of the first century, came to be based at Yavneh was largely completed by the time of the Bar Kochba revolt of 132–135 CE. Afterwards, Christian assemblies in places like Antioch were still trying to comprehend their relationship to Judaism and its traditions, and there would be a long, complicated history of continued interactions between Christian and Jewish groups throughout the centuries to follow. Yet while historical questions surrounding the "parting," its causes, its effects, and its complexity are certainly debatable, it should be acknowledged that, at the very least, the seeds for it had already been planted during the years leading up to the tragic events of 66–70 as "the Jesus Movement was still negotiating its relationship to Jews and Judaism, both inside and outside the (still fluid) boundaries of its own communities."[71]

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[69] This concept of Jewish identity is further elaborated in Sanders's theory of common Judaism, which will be explained below. Other scholars like James Dunn and N. T. Wright have appropriated and popularized Sanders's ideas of Jewish identity and common Judaism. See Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 24–48; Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 224–26.

[70] E.g., see Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement," 75–95.

However, John Barclay, in his work on deviance theory, convincingly argues that while the shape of the early Jesus movement was affected by "the particularities of location, personnel and social context in which early Christianity took root," this messianic movement nevertheless remained largely part of the first-century Jewish milieu as a deviant sect within Judaism.[72] Even as the Jesus movement spread and increasingly included Gentile proselytes among their numbers, by the mid to late first century, around the time most scholars believe Hebrews was written, most of these communities still remained deeply connected to the symbolic world and institutions of Judaism. This connectedness to Judaism, of course, varied according to the level of Jewish-ness or Gentile-ness within different congregations.[73] Nevertheless, it also appears to be the case that most Jewish members of the Jesus movement in the first century regarded Gentile converts as being included in the promises of Abraham and as having been "grafted in" to Israel, even if they did not adhere to the ancestral laws in exactly the same manner as ethnically Jewish followers of Jesus did (e.g., Gal 3:7–9; Rom 11:7–32; Eph 3:6; cf. Acts 15). The term "Christian," therefore, will in this dissertation refer to those who were, in general, part of the Jesus movement, who followed Jesus as the messiah, who held to the symbolic world of Judaism as interpreted through religious devotion to Jesus, and who identified with the history and fate of biblical Israel (e.g., salvation history). Those congregations believed to be predominantly Jewish either in ethnic makeup and/or in terms of devotion to Jewish practices and beliefs will be referred to as "Jewish-Christian."[74] Additionally, following Barclay, therefore, we will regard Hebrews as evincing a Jewish-Christian community at a stage in its development when it would likely have been regarded as "a deviant form of Judaism" by other rival Jewish factions in the first century.[75] This will be further born out in our analysis of Hebrews's treatment of themes important for Jewish identity.

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[71] Reed and Becker, "Traditional Models and New Directions," 4.

[72] Barclay, "Deviance and Apostasy," 114–125, 125.

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[73] For instance, if the accounts of the earliest Christians recorded by Luke in Acts are to be believed, it appears that even before 70, Christians who were ethnically Jewish and living in both Palestine and the Diaspora had not stopped worshipping at the temple or participating in Judaism's rituals and institutions (cf. Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42; 20:16; 21:26; 22:17). Even as the Jesus movement spread throughout the Roman world and included more Gentiles, these churches remained closely tied to the church in Jerusalem and to the symbolic world of early Judaism (e.g., see Bruce, *New Testament History*, 265–78). Regarding Paul, even while he was the "apostle to the Gentiles," his teaching should be seen as a further development of Jewish theology rather than a radical break from it (e.g., see Judge, "St. Paul as a Radical Critic," 191–203). Even Paul's punishment that he received at the hands of the Jewish leadership are evidence that he was still regarded as a Jew by his opponents (2 Cor 11:24; cf. Deut 25:2–3; Bird, *Anomalous Jew*, 98). Additionally, while it is true that following the Pauline mission the early church became increasingly Gentile and became further distinct from other Jewish groups which remained ethno-centric, even this missionary trend towards evangelizing and converting Gentiles was itself rooted in Judaism (see Sterling, "Turning to God," 69–95).

[74] Some scholars like Anthony Saldarini have argued the labels "Christian Jew" and "Christian Judaism" are preferable to more traditional terminology, because they highlight even more the Jewishness of the earliest followers of Jesus (e.g., Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 1–7). The debate over terminology, however, also highlights the difficulty interpreters face in describing the formative nature of emerging Judaism and Christianity and their shifting boundaries in the first century.

"Common Judaism"

In describing the social base of Second Temple Judaism and Jewish Christianity, this research will also draw upon E. P. Sanders's theory of *common Judaism*.[76] Sanders contends that most Jews in the Second Temple era, in particular the "people of the land," likely were not members of a particular sect like the Pharisees or Sadducees. Additionally, Sanders argues convincingly that there were various institutions, practices, and beliefs which united most Jews of the Second Temple era (though, of course, not without variation), forming a symbolic world which gave them a distinctive identity in both Judea and in the Diaspora. Therefore, in defining common Judaism, Sanders focuses intently on the practices and beliefs of "the ordinary priests and the ordinary people."[77] In outlining common Judaism, therefore, Sanders argues that the Jewish symbolic world consisted of the Jerusalem temple and its rituals, monotheism, election (and what he calls "covenantal nomism"), the Old Testament (both in Hebrew and in Greek), and the synagogue.

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[75] Barclay, "Deviance and Apostasy," 114. Barclay, of course, does not use the term "deviant" pejoratively. Rather, this term simply refers to the sociological reality that cultures and groups tend to label certain rival groups and their practices as deviant or out of the norm. Barclay's classification of Christians as "deviant" Jews is supported by evidence from the Tannaitic sources as well (cf. Schiffman, "At the Crossroads," 115–56).

[76] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 47–303. It is important to clarify that, by adopting Sanders's concept of common Judaism as an organizing principle for this research, I am not advocating for any sort of return to the "myth of normative Judaism," as it is certainly the case that when the New Testament was being written, "neither Christianity nor Judaism had reached the point of uniformity and separation that would characterize them in later centuries" (Johnson, "Anti-Jewish Slander," 523–25). See also McCready and Reinhartz, "Common Judaism and Diversity within Judaism," 1–10. In the early 1980s, during his tenure at McMaster University, Sanders was also largely responsible for a major set of studies on Jewish and Christian identity that resulted in a three-volume collection of essays (see Sanders et al., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*).

[77] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 11.

While Sanders's common Judaism has gained wide support within studies of Second Temple Judaism, his work has also generated a fair amount of controversy as well. In particular, Sanders's views on Paul, and what has come to be known as "The New Perspective," have engendered numerous wide-ranging debates among biblical scholars over the nature of Judaism and Paul's relationship to it.[78] Those opposed to Sanders's views on Paul have focused mostly on challenging his ideas about covenantal nomism, insisting that Sanders has unduly ignored Jewish traditions centered more on nomism, or legalism, than on covenantalism. The contention is, therefore, that covenantal nomism introduces an unhelpful methodological reductionism into the study of Second Temple Judaism.[79] In a similar vein, Jacob Neusner has charged Sanders with fabricating a monolithic Judaism for the purpose of justifying his own particular views of Paul and of early Christianity.[80]

Another significant critique of Sanders's views on Judaism comes from Martin Hengel and Roland Deines. While Hengel and Deines generally agree with Sanders's conclusions regarding the existence of a common Judaism, they argue that Sanders has gone too far in downplaying the role of the Pharisees in shaping common Jewish theology and practice.[81] As evidence, Hengel and Deines point to the Pharisees' rise to prominence during the Hasmonean era, and also to how, in contrast with other Jewish factions, the Pharisees were generally thought to be the "party of the people."[82] Additionally, while Hengel and Deines agree with Sanders's characterization of the practices of Judaism, especially Sanders's views of the temple and the priests, they also argue that Sanders wrongly downplays both the contentiousness and the eschatological focus that characterized much of Judaism throughout the Second Temple era.[83] Hengel and Deines, therefore, suggest that the term "complex Judaism" might be preferable to "common Judaism."[84]

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[78] Probably the most comprehensive re-evaluation of Sanders's work is to be found in the two volumes of Carson et al., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*. Other significant challenges to Sanders's work include, but are not limited to: Seifrid, *Justification by Faith*; Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul's Doctrine of Justification*; Das, *Paul and the Jews*; Gathercole, *Where is Boasting?*; Kruse, *Paul, the Law, and Justification*; Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles*; and Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul*. For a discussion and critique of challenges to Sanders, see Yinger, "The Continuing Quest," 375–91.

[79] See the "Concluding Reflections" in Carson et al., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 1:543–48.

[80] See Neusner, "Review," 167–78.

It should be noted that some critiques of Sanders have more merit than others. For instance, while it is true that some Second Temple Jewish texts seem to emphasize covenantalism while others perhaps focus more on nomism, Carson overstates the issues when he asserts that Sanders's theory of Judaism should be dismissed.[85] Additionally, even though the volumes of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* were published in 2001 and 2004, they almost exclusively engage with Sanders's work in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) instead of his later and more mature works such as *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (1990) or *Judaism: Practice and Belief* (1992), works that evince a far more circumspect use of primary source material from Second Temple Judaism and which also lack the polemical bite of Sanders's earlier work on Paul. Similarly, while

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[81] Hengel and Deines, "Review," 1–70.

[82] Hengel and Deines, "Review," 56–59.

[83] Hengel and Deines, "Review," 63–64.

[84] Hengel and Deines, "Review," 15–16, 53–55.

[85] However, Mark Seifrid concedes that several essayists who contributed to the first volume of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* concluded that many of the Jewish texts they analyzed "fit nicely into the scheme of 'covenantal nomism'" (Carson et al., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 2:144). See also the pointed critiques in Aune, *Jesus, Gospel Tradition and Paul*, 496–98 and Dunn, "The New Perspective," 57.

Neusner's sharp criticism of Sanders's ideas of Judaism and Paul perhaps could apply to Sanders's earlier works, this is not really a fair charge to level against Sanders's later and more developed works on Judaism produced well after the controversial and polemical *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*. Additionally, while Neusner has often argued that the Second Temple era was characterized by multiple "Judaisms," he also has at times found it necessary to argue for a type of common Judaism that bears some resemblance to Sanders's conclusions,[86] and seems to agree with Sanders regarding covenantal nomism.[87]

The critiques of Sanders that focus on his apparent emphasis of covenantalism over nomism are important, however, and should not be ignored. Indeed, a careful and thorough reading of texts from Second Temple Judaism shows that there existed certain strains of Jewish religion that emphasized covenantalism (e.g., Daniel, Esther, *1 Enoch*, *1 Esdras*, Pss 154–155 [LXX], the *Prayer of Manasseh*), others that emphasized nomism (e.g., *2 Enoch*, *4 Maccabees*, *4 Ezra*), and still others that emphasized *both* covenantalism *and* nomism (e.g., *Jubilees*, 4QMMT).[88] Additionally, Hengel and Deines make a valid point in saying that Sanders perhaps goes too far in downplaying the influence of the Pharisees and of eschatology on Second Temple Judaism. While it is almost certainly the case that most Jews were not Pharisees, or members of any other faction for that matter, evidence suggests that Pharisaism was broadly influential as the Pharisees were considered to be the people's party, and because it was the Pharisees to whom many Jews turned for religious leadership after the tragic failures of the first and second Jewish revolts.[89] Additionally, the observations of Hengel and Deines regarding the widespread nature of apocalyptic eschatology in Second Temple Judaism harken back to the criticisms leveled by Albert Schweitzer against nineteenth-century German scholarship which also had downplayed the apocalyptic tradition of first-century Judaism,[90] and are further supported by modern research on Jewish apocalyptic literature by scholars like Richard Bauckham.[91] While these criticisms do not undermine Sanders's basic theory about the existence of a common Judaism in antiquity, they should be taken into account when trying to understand what common Judaism was like.

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[86] Neusner, "The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism," 3–42, esp. 21. Cf. Sanders, "Common Judaism Explored," 14–16.

[87] Neusner, "Later Rabbinic Evidence," 43–63.

[88] One example of the failure to recognize this valid critique of Sanders's work is to be found in N. T. Wright's attempts to defend Sanders by appealing to the Qumran manuscript 4QMMT (see Wright, "4QMMT and Paul," 104–32). 4QMMT addresses issues of the religious calendar, ritual purity and temple sacrifice, intermarriage with Gentiles, and keeping the Law (e.g., see the introduction in Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 220–21). Wright repeatedly chides the editors of *Justification and Variegated Nomism* for not dealing with 4QMMT and has argued that Sanders's idea of covenantal nomism is present in 4QMMT because the role of God's grace in salvation is presumed throughout the text. However, it must be said that Wright's is a rather selective reading of 4QMMT as he ignores the text's clear emphasis on how salvation is dependent upon obedience to the Torah as well as God's grace and election (see esp. 4Q398 14–17 ii and 4Q399). It is thus unclear how this text can possibly support Wright's claims. In fact, this text directly contradicts Wright's view and would have supported the editors' challenge to Sanders's interpretation of Judaism at Qumran had they included it. Both divine initiative *and* human obedience to the Law are necessary for salvation in 4QMMT. Additionally, 4QMMT is a sectarian text that does not evince the same broadly covenantal perspective as that expressed in the biblical literature or other non-sectarian Jewish literature from the Second Temple era.

Sanders's theory of common Judaism remains significant because it has led to a couple of needed correctives in scholarship on Second Temple Judaism. In the first place, Sanders's decision to focus on the lived religion of common people challenged the former consensus on Judaism which had anachronistically viewed the priests, the Pharisees, and the rabbis as the custodians of a singular, normative Judaism during the Second Temple era. Secondly, as McCready and Reinhartz note, Sanders has challenged the "tendency of scholars to focus on what was distinctive about the sects and parties mentioned in our extant sources, to the point of referring to them as distinctive 'Judaisms' rather than as diverse, divergent, and sometimes antagonistic Jewish groups."[92] Additionally, as Schiffman argues, the existence of a common Judaism also helps to explain the parallels between Second Temple texts and early rabbinic Judaism.[93] While there have been some who have objected to various aspects of Sanders's common Judaism, the theory has gained wide acceptance because of its ability to account for both unity and diversity within Second Temple Judaism, and because of its focus on the way Judaism was expressed in the lives of ordinary people.[94]

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[89] E.g., see Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 184–203.

[90] Schweitzer, *Quest*, 222–68.

[91] E.g., see Bauckham, "The Rise of Apocalyptic," 10–23; Bauckham, "Apocalypses," 135–87.

It is also important to note that Sanders's ideas have gone through various iterations in subsequent scholarship on Second Temple Judaism. For instance, James Dunn has claimed that the Jewish symbolic world primarily rested on four pillars: monotheism, election, the Torah, and the land centered on the Temple.[95] N. T. Wright has similarly focused on the land, temple, Torah, and ancestry as the "symbols" of Second Temple Judaism.[96] Erich Gruen has argued that Jews in the Diaspora held to monotheism, the temple in Jerusalem, the synagogue, and devotion to the Torah.[97] For organizational purposes, this dissertation will appropriate Sanders's theory by focusing on the institutions of the Law, the Temple, and the Land, and how these relate to Jewish identity in both Second Temple Judaism and in Hebrews.[98] Additionally, with consideration given to the historical complexities of the emergence of both post-biblical Judaism and early Christianity, this research will proceed based on the widely-accepted premise that Hebrews reflects a time in the development of Christianity when it was "historically still a form of Judaism"—however it might have been considered to be a deviant faction or sect—and that Hebrews is a text which "belongs just as much to Jewish as to Christian history."[99] Thus, Sanders's common Judaism can be said to have relevance for our study of Hebrews.

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[92] McCready and Reinhartz, "Common Judaism," 3.

[93] For example, Schiffman avers, "How can we explain the contradictory observations that we are making here? On the one hand, we have emphasized the lack of a literary pipeline from early Judaism into rabbinic Judaism, beyond that of the Hebrew Scriptures themselves. On the other hand, we have pointed to rich parallels and apparent intellectual interaction between those who left us Second Temple texts and those who were apparently the spiritual ancestors of the Tannaim, namely, the Pharisees. It would seem that the existence of a 'common Judaism' provides the answer" (Schiffman, "Early Judaism and Rabbinic Judaism," 289).

[94] For instance, Martin Goodman's comments, which agree with Sanders, reflect the view expressed in most recent histories of Second Temple Judaism when he states: "All Jews might claim to be following faithfully the laws as handed down in the Bible, and those laws provided precise details about behaviour in every aspect of life. As a result, the majority of Jews saw it as a religious duty to refrain from work on the Sabbath, to circumcise their sons, to avoid forbidden foods and to bring offerings, when they could, to the Jerusalem Temple. Such were the characteristics of Judaism as remarked by Greek and Latin pagan writers of the first century BCE and the first century CE. For most Jews, simply keeping the Torah as they believed that their ancestors had done will have sufficed. Probably only a minority adopted any particular philosophy" (Goodman, *A History of Judaism*, 111). See further comments he makes elsewhere in Goodman, "Jews and Judaism," 38.

[95] Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 24–48.

[96] Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 224–32.

Our usage of Sanders's theory of common Judaism will also be informed by primary sources, including relevant texts from the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, early rabbinic tradition (e.g., the Mishnah), the Dead Sea Scrolls, and prominent Jewish authors like Philo and Josephus. Evidence from the New Testament which sheds light on issues pertaining to Second Temple Judaism will be taken into account at various points as well.[100] Additionally, we will utilize critical social histories depicting the known general realities of life for Jews living during the Second Temple era.[101] This research will thus employ social description in presenting a topical profile of the symbolic world of common Judaism by which to compare Hebrews. However, concerning Hebrews itself, we will be careful to follow Filtvedt's suggestion by adopting a historically minimalist approach, acknowledging the fact that there are many specific details lacking in Hebrews regarding the recipients, their location, their relationship to other Jewish groups, and even the specific circumstances that led to the writing of the letter in the first place. While these pieces of information were no doubt common knowledge shared between the Hebrews writer and his addressees, they are lost to us and simply cannot be replaced with modern conjecture.

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[97] Gruen, "Judaism in the Diaspora," 95–120.

[98] For a similar approach to Jewish identity, see Cromhout, *Walking in Their Sandals*, 35–40. Cromhout presents a "socio-cultural" theory of Jewish identity which combines the covenantal nomism of Sanders, Dunn's four pillars of Judaism, Duling's theory of ethnicity, and Berger and Luckmann's theory of the symbolic universes.

[99] Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*, 1.

[100] This contrasts with the approach of many standard reference works on Second Temple Judaism which typically use the New Testament for comparative analysis only. For instance, see my comments in Strickland, Review of *Early Judaism*, R25.

"Semantic Domain Theory"

In addition to being sociological in nature, this research is also fundamentally a *textual* analysis. In identifying themes in Hebrews which are relevant to the most salient elements of common Judaism, we will also utilize *semantic domain theory* as well. Semantic domain theory assumes that human knowledge is categorized within sets of cognitive frameworks, and that language reflects this categorization of meaning as well. *Semantics*, at its most basic level, is "the study of meaning communicated through language" or more specifically, "the study of meanings of words and sentences."[102] Eugene Nida has defined a *semantic domain* as "essentially a group of meanings (by no means restricted to those reflected in single words) which share certain semantic components."[103] Nida also identifies three different kinds of "semantic components" which serve as the basis for domains: common components which are semantic commonalities shared by the words in a group; diagnostic components which make individual words in a group have their own meanings; and supplementary components which describe certain features of a given meaning.[104] Additionally, Nida has posited four primary semantic domains universal to all language systems, and under which various sub-domains exist: entities (e.g., numerable objects), events (e.g., actions and processes), abstracts (e.g., qualities and quantities), and relationals (marking the relationships between objects, events, and abstracts).[105] Semantic domains, of course, vary in size, hierarchy, associations, and boundaries. Semantic domain theory, therefore, asserts that words are not isolated entities with stand-alone meanings, but instead are connected via networks or webs of meaning within a language system.[106]

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[101] Social histories such as Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*; Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*; and Goodman, *A History of Judaism* will be vital for this research.

[102] Saeed, *Semantics*, 3. See also Allan, "A History of Semantics," 48–68. For a discussion of the relevance of semantics for Biblical Studies, see Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, 17–32.

The work of J. P. Louw and Eugene Nida in their *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* (abbreviated here as LN), published in 1988 and followed by a second edition in 1989, represented a major breakthrough in biblical studies in that for the first time modern linguistic theory was applied to lexicography of the Greek New Testament.[107] Except for the work of Louw and Nida, New Testament lexicography has generally followed the model of traditional dictionaries, with words being arranged alphabetically and treated as singular entities, each with its own sets of possible translational glosses based on partial diachronic study.[108] The traditional definition process is, inevitably, one of circularity in that words are defined by resorting to other words. This way of defining words also presumes a type of encyclopedic knowledge in that dictionary editors in this tradition define words based on knowledge of how those words are used in a wide array of known sources. Instead of following the traditional method, however, Louw and Nida organized their lexicon on the basis of semantic domains.[109] Thus, in LN, words are defined by their relationship to other words used in similar contexts and which evoke similar concepts. For example, there are several words that Louw and Nida have categorized under the domain "Religious Activities" (LN 53.1–105) including: θρησκεία ("religion, piety"), δικαιοσύνη ("religious requirements"), εὐσεβής ("devout"), λατρεύω ("to perform religious rights"), and προσφορά ("offering, sacrifice"). These words all pertain to religious actions and attitudes, and thus have a broadly-shared religious context. Yet these words may also be used in a variety of different specific contexts which lend them other meanings as well. For example, δικαιοσύνη also is often used to denote a moral or ethical quality (e.g., "righteousness"). The various meanings of words thus relate to each other and "constitute complex clusters or constellations . . . similar to diverse dialects of the same language."[110]

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[103] Nida, *Componential Analysis*, 174.

[104] Nida, *Componential Analysis*, 32–67. Also, see the helpful summary in Porter and Ong, "Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw," 296–97.

[105] Nida, *Componential Analysis*, 175. By the time Louw and Nida had finished their lexicon, however, the category "relationals" was included as a subset of "abstracts" (Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, vi).

[106] See Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, vi–xx; Porter, "Linguistic Issues in New Testament Lexicography," 54–55.

[107] E.g., see Porter and Ong, "Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw," 291–318, esp. 312–13; Lee, *History of New Testament Lexicography*, 155–66; Vorster, "In What Sense," 37–48; Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*, 49–55.

Louw and Nida's decision to organize words and their meanings into semantic domains also means that a single word might be included within multiple domains, reflecting the semantic range of that word. Nida gives the notable example of πνεῦμα, which is usually translated as "wind," "breath," or "spirit" depending on the context in which the word is used. *Pneuma* may thus be categorized as a physical event (e.g., "breathing" as physical act), as a supernatural being (e.g., "spirit" or "demon"), or as a human trait ("heart" or "soul").[111] This also reflects the polysemist theoretical basis for Louw and Nida's approach to semantics. In all, the Louw-Nida lexicon was organized into 93 semantic domains containing roughly 25,000 different meanings for around 5,000 New Testament words.[112]

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[108] Porter, "Linguistic Issues in New Testament Lexicography," 49–74, esp. 52–63.

[109] Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, viii–xi; Nida, *Componential Analysis*, 177–93.

[110] Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, vii.

The Louw-Nida lexicon has been critiqued for various reasons as well, such as its limited focus on New Testament vocabulary, the organization of some of its domains, and the lexicon's polysemist approach to semantics.[113] Nevertheless, the work of Louw and Nida represents a real, if underappreciated, advance in the use of modern linguistics in New Testament studies. The Louw-Nida lexicon will, therefore, be a significant linguistic resource for the descriptive methodology used in this dissertation.

The advantage of using semantic domain theory is that this approach allows us to expand the scope of our inquiry to include relevant passages within Hebrews which might otherwise be overlooked in a study focused only on the most obvious terminology or themes. It also provides us with a more objective means of pinpointing texts that are linguistically and conceptually relevant to our line of inquiry. For example, when considering how the writer of Hebrews deals with issues of purity, we will examine passages that contain relevant language included in the subdomains "Purify, Cleanse" and "Defiled, Unclean, Common" (LN 53.28–32; 53.33–40) which include terms like: καθαρίζω ("to cleanse"), ῥαντίζω ("to sprinkle"), κοινόω ("to make ritually unacceptable") and ἀμίαντος ("undefiled"). However, while Jews in the Second Temple era were concerned for matters pertaining to ritual purity, they also were often concerned for issues of moral purity as well. Therefore, we will expand our examination of purity language in Hebrews to include issues of moral purity by considering relevant terminology categorized under the domain "Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior" (LN 88.1–318), including terms such as: καλός ("good"), δίκαιος ("just, righteous"), ἅγιος ("holy"), and τελειόω ("to make perfect"). Chapters in Hebrews with significant clusters of terms from within these and other relevant semantic domains will thus serve as the primary basis for analysis. In the case of purity, for instance, chapters 9 and 10 will be especially significant given the frequent occurrences of terms related to the concept of purity in those chapters. In this manner, employing the use of semantic domains within our exegetical analysis of various passages in Hebrews will allow us to arrive at a fuller and more accurate description of how the writer conceptualizes and lexicalizes various themes related to the Jewish socio-religious frameworks of the Law, Temple, and Land.

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[111] Nida, *Componential Analysis*, 177–78; Louw and Nida, *Lexicon*, x. In fact, πνεῦμα appears in four different subdomains in the Louw-Nida lexicon: "Supernatural Beings" (12.1–42), "Psychological Faculties" (26.1–16), "To Think, Thought" (30.1–38) and "Wind" (14.4–9).

[112] See the domain list in Louw-Nida, *Lexicon*, xxiv–xxv. The editors originally proposed 275 semantic domains (see the comments in Nida, *Componential Analysis*, 178).

[113] Porter, "'On the Shoulders of Giants'," 47–60.

Procedure

The analysis to be pursued in this dissertation seeks to answer two questions. (1) What is the Hebrews writer doing conceptually and linguistically with the symbolic world of common Judaism? (2) What can this tell us, if anything, about the situation being addressed in Hebrews and how the author is addressing it? Pursuant to answering these questions, this study will examine how the author of Hebrews addresses the following institutions that comprised much of the symbolic world of common Judaism: the Law, the Temple, and the Land. Utilizing a combination of socio-historical description and linguistic/exegetical analysis, this research will examine how various aspects of the symbolic world of common Judaism were significant for Jews living during the Second Temple era, and how this symbolic world is represented in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The analysis will also include discussions of how features of the symbolic world of common Judaism are appropriated by the author of Hebrews, and what this can possibly tell us about the social realties which might have served as a basis for Hebrews's use of the Jewish symbolic world. The following is an outline of the procedure to be followed in this dissertation.

A socio-historical sketch of the religious symbolic world of common Judaism during the Second Temple era will be produced by using socio-historical description and the framework of the Law, Temple, and Land based on the assumptions of Sanders's theory. The realization and appropriation of that symbolic world in Hebrews will then be established by thematic analysis assisted by the use of semantic domains. References to the objects, practices, and themes related to the Law, Temple, and Land will be identified in Hebrews. In discussing the Law, we will examine the themes of monotheism, purity, the Sabbath, ancestry/kinship, and covenant. Regarding the Temple, we will examine themes related to sacred space (the design of the tabernacle and the temple, along with their sacred artifacts) and the Levitical priesthood (the high priesthood, its character as an institution, its sacrifices, and associated personalities [e.g. Aaron and Levi]). Concerning the Land, we will examine references to the Promised Land, themes of the land as an inheritance or possession, themes of wandering and sojourning to and through the Land, and references to the city of Jerusalem. The evidence collected by linguistic and exegetical analysis will then be combined into a composite sketch of a symbolic world as presented in Hebrews to be compared with the symbolic world of common Judaism. We will then consider which social realities could potentially have served as a basis for making sense of Hebrews's treatment of Judaism's sacred traditions. This should provide us with a clearer view of how the author of Hebrews is appropriating the traditions he and his community have inherited from common Judaism, and hopefully a better understanding of the nature of the crisis the author is addressing.

Conclusion: Goals and Contribution of the Research

To summarize what has been presented above, the primary aim of this dissertation will be to clarify further the social context of Hebrews. The cumulative weight of this research will attempt to make the case that Hebrews is best understood as a form of crisis literature dealing with issues related to Jewish-Christian social identity. Indeed, the writer of Hebrews goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Jesus has given his community a new covenant and Law, a new type of definitive atonement and access to God in the heavenly temple, and an inheritance in the new Jerusalem to come at the end of the age. Further, it will be contended that such an argument by the author makes the most sense if it is being addressed to a Jewish-Christian community that is becoming increasingly disconnected from some of the central symbols of Jewish identity, and is in need of being shown how Jesus the messiah is able to provide for those foundational identity-related needs.

This research does not purport to be any sort of final word on the issue of Hebrews or its background, however. Indeed, the lack of scholarly consensus regarding the social situation of the Hebrews writer and his addressees only serves to highlight both the difficulty and continuing necessity of the task being pursued in this dissertation. Interpreters who have subscribed to the traditional reading of Hebrews have long argued (with various nuances) that Hebrews is, in some sense, taking a polemical stance against Judaism by showing its inferiority to Christianity, despite numerous problems militating against this interpretive position. This dissertation, therefore, aims to offer a serious and historically grounded interpretation of various issues concerning Hebrews's relationship with Second Temple Judaism that are not adequately explained by the relapse theory. Also, while some purportedly social-scientific studies of Hebrews have relied too much on tenuous historical reconstructions, others have not engaged deeply enough with scholarship on Second Temple Judaism and its history. The second point is a particularly pressing need as Susan Docherty has argued in her 2009 monograph.[114] This study thus represents a modest attempt to help address what appears to be a significant gap in the scholarly literature on Hebrews. I believe that there is much to be gained from such a study, not the least of which being a more-nuanced understanding of Hebrews's message and its function within the social setting of first-century Judaism and Jewish Christianity.

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[114] Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews*. However, monographs such as Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection*; Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*; Church, *Hebrews and The Temple*; and Fildvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews* are all notable and welcome additions in this regard to recent scholarship on Hebrews.

CHAPTER THREE

THE LAW IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND IN HEBREWS

In the previous chapters, we advanced an argument against the traditional reading of Hebrews which views it as a polemic intended to prevent a relapse into Judaism and have instead proposed a thesis for reading Hebrews as a Jewish-Christian text dealing with issues pertaining to Jewish identity. However, the question remains: what sorts of identity-related issues does the author of Hebrews deal with, and how does he deal with them? Following the work of E. P. Sanders and other historians of Second Temple Judaism, we will adopt a praxis-oriented approach in describing both common Judaism and Hebrews's relationship to it. Beginning from this point, we will attempt to provide an answer to this question by examining how the author of Hebrews addresses various aspects of common Judaism, with a particular focus on the author's treatment of themes related to issues concerning the Law, the Temple, and the Land.

In this first chapter of analysis, we will examine the Law in Second Temple Judaism and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Torah was of central importance for Jewish social identity in antiquity. There were different frames of information rooted in cultural memory that many first-century Jews associated with various commandments of the Law, and which shaped their understanding and practice of it. For our purposes, we will examine the following salient praxis-oriented themes related to the Law in Second

Temple Judaism: monotheism, purity, the Sabbath, ancestry/kinship, and election and covenant. The first portion of this chapter will feature a socio-historical sketch regarding these aspects of the Law from within common Judaism. This will be followed by a thematic analysis examining how the writer of Hebrews deals with each of these themes as well. In doing so, we will identify relevant texts in Hebrews with the assistance of semantic domains which are used by the author as he addresses Law-related themes throughout his discourse. Relevant texts within Hebrews will thus serve as the basis for a composite sketch of how the author treats each of these themes. The chapter will conclude by providing a discussion of how Hebrews appropriates concepts rooted in the Torah and traditions about the Jewish law inherited from common Judaism and what this can possibly tell us about the situation of the community. In this chapter, I will make the case that Hebrews is a text which reflects a Jewish-Christian concept of identity as it exhibits patterns of both tradition and innovation in how it appropriates themes from the Law that were significant for Jewish identity in the Second Temple Period.

The Law in Second Temple Judaism

Monotheism

Most historians of Israelite origins recognize that polytheism co-existed with the worship of YHWH throughout much of the early history of ancient Israel.[1] However, while this was perhaps the case for Jewish monotheism in the earliest stages of Israel's history, by the Second Temple era, worship of the one God was considered central to Jewish social identity and to the Law.[2] For Jews, there was only one God, YHWH, the creator of heaven and earth.[3] Unlike most other ancient deities, YHWH was believed to be an invisible spirit, and was not to be associated with images or forces of nature.[4] Unalloyed, un-iconic[5] devotion to YHWH was, therefore, the first commandment listed in the Decalogue and was often regarded by Jews as the greatest commandment, essential for carrying out the other commands of the Law as well.[6] YHWH, the creator of the cosmos and the ruler of history, was also known as the God of Israel's ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[7] Belief in YHWH, therefore, also entailed belief in his special election of Israel as his chosen people.[8] Thus, the social identity of the Jewish people was seen as inextricably linked to the identity of God.[9]

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[1] For instance, Julius Wellhausen, in his reconstruction of Israelite religion, argued that the priestly cult was inherited from the surrounding Canaanite inhabitants and that only with the ministry of Elijah did Israel begin moving towards an exclusive form of monotheistic worship (Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 462–69). Max Weber, in his treatment of Judaism, similarly argues that much of Israelite monotheistic religion and ritual has its origins in Near Eastern polytheism (e.g., see Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, 118–68). While most scholars today would take issue with the simplistic and at times dubious conclusions of both Wellhausen and Weber, there is now a general recognition that ancient Israelite worship was not consistently monotheistic, and for a time existed alongside polytheism. For example, works on ancient Near Eastern archaeology have found trace evidence for Asherah worship in ancient Israel (see the essays

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in Becking et al., *Only One God?*). There is also evidence that some Israelites perhaps viewed YHWH as head of a pantheon that included Asherah and Baal (Anderson, *Monotheism*, 23–37). While this position might be somewhat controversial in more conservative scholarly circles in Biblical Studies, it is consistent with details provided in the Deuteronomistic history of the Old Testament (e.g., see Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*; De Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism*). Most scholars agree, however, that after the Babylonian exile, Israelites appear to have largely rejected polytheistic syncretism and moved towards a more exclusivist form of monotheism as evidenced the latter Old Testament writings like Daniel and Ezra-Nehemiah. E.g., see the discussion on the exclusionary nature of monotheism in the latter Old Testament in Cataldo, *Breaking Monotheism*, 133–38.

[2] Deut 4:32–40; 6:4–5; Philo, *Deca.* 65; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:91. See also the chapter on "common theology" in Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 241–51.

[3] Gen 1–3; 3 Macc 2:3; Josephus, *Ant.* 1:154–155; Philo, *Creat.* 13.

[4] Gen 1:2; Exod 20:1–6; Num 24:2; *LAE* 35:3; *T. Abr.* 16:4; Josephus, *War* 7:345–347.

[5] While Jews in the Second Temple era adamantly rejected idolatry and the use of images in the worship of YHWH, they were not always as strict about the use of art and imagery on coins, in homes, in synagogues, or even in the temple itself. See Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 243–47; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 433–34.

[6] Exod 20:1–6; Deut 6:1–7; Dan 14:5 LXX; Matt 22:36–38; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:26; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:91; 8:343.

[7] Exod 3:6, 15–16; 4:5; 1 Kgs 18:36; Matt 22:32; Acts 3:12–14; 4 Macc 16:25; Philo, *Mut.* 12; Josephus, *Ant.* 11:169.

[8] Deut 7:6; Tob 8:15; *4 Ezra* 6:54–59; *Jub* 2:17–20. See also Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 241.

[9] This idea is grounded in the patriarchal narratives of Genesis and would time and again be referred to by the prophets (e.g., see Mal 2:10 where Malachi says the people of Israel have "one father" in reference to God). This idea also carried over into Second Temple Judaism as well. For instance, Philo

The exclusive worship of YHWH defined Jewish religious practice in the Second Temple era in several ways. Jews had a body of authoritative, sacred literature (the Hebrew Bible or LXX) whose foundation was a sacred law based on the worship of YHWH. By the first century, Jewish worship was centered on the confession of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4–5) at daily prayers and in the synagogue.[10] Additionally, in contrast with surrounding cultures that were religiously pluralistic and boasted multiple shrines to gods and goddesses, Jews had one main temple in Jerusalem to which they made pilgrimage for worship and sacrifice. The temple was, as Levine says, "the Jewish *locus sanctus* par excellence," and thus served as a profound symbol of Jewish monotheism.[11] Philo discusses the significance of the Jerusalem temple for Jewish worship when he says:

> But [God] provided that there should not be temples built either in many places or many in the same place, for he judged that since God is one, there should be also only one temple . . . Countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea, from east and west and north and south at every feast.[12]

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refers to the Jews as "children of the one God" (*Conf.* 145). The relationship between YHWH and Israel is especially pronounced in Deuteronomy, where, as MacDonald notes, "How the nations respond to Israel determines their response to YHWH" (MacDonald, *Deuteronomy*, 180).

[10] Evidence from the Gospels agrees with early rabbinic sources from the Mishnah, confirming that the *Shema* was recited regularly by at least the first century CE (e.g., Mark 12:29–30; *m. Berek.* 1:1–3; *m. Tamid* 5:1). The use of the *Shema* has also been confirmed by archaeological evidence. For instance, excerpts from the *Shema* have been found on some of the phylacteries discovered at Qumran. Also, the Nash Papyrus contains portions of the *Shema* along with the Ten Commandments. For further discussion, see Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 195–97; Zahavy, "The Case of the Shema," 33–40.

[11] Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1289. See also Lynch, *Monotheism*, 72–101. Of course, it is known that there were at least a couple of secondary temples constructed during the Persian and Hellenistic eras for Diaspora Jewish communities in Elephantine and Leontopolis. However, it does not appear that these were seriously considered to be rival sanctuaries to the one in Jerusalem. For further discussion of this issue, and also of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, see the section on "Reactions to the Temple in Second Temple Judaism" in the next chapter of the present work.

[12] Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:67–69 (LCL, Colson's translation, brackets mine).

The Roman historian Cassius Dio's comments are also noteworthy as they corroborate Philo's testimony and further highlight the uniqueness and significance of Jewish monotheism:

> [Jews] are distinguished from the rest of [hu]mankind in practically every detail of life, and especially by the fact that they do not honour any of the usual gods, but show extreme reverence for one particular divinity. They never had any statue of him even in Jerusalem itself, but believing him to be unnameable and invisible, they worship him in the most extravagant fashion on earth.[13]

However, as many scholars have noted, "monotheism," a term that originated with Enlightenment scholarship, is a term that is somewhat problematic for discussions of Judaism in the Second Temple era.[14] An interesting characteristic of Jewish monotheism often neglected by biblical scholars is that there existed a variety of speculative traditions regarding whether there were other quasi-divine persons or entities either included within YHWH or serving as unique agents on YHWH's behalf.[15] There is diverse and compelling textual evidence from the Second Temple era to confirm this. Anthropomorphic theophany traditions in the Old Testament (e.g., Gen 18:1–33; Josh 5:13–15); the cosmic "Son of Man" who appears in Dan 7, *4 Ezra* 13, and *1 Enoch* (46:1–5; 48:1–10; 62:6, 9);[16] Philo's mysterious *Logos* figure (e.g., *Conf.* 146; *Fug.* 101; *Cher.* 127);[17] and traditions about principal angels who share divine names and attributes with

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[13] Dio, *Rom. Hist.*, 37.17.2–3 (LCL, Earnest Cary's translation).

[14] See the discussions in Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 60–126; Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 111–17; Haymen, "Monotheism," 1–15.

[15] E.g., see Hurtado, *One God*, 17–92; Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 111–33; Boyarin, "The Gospel of the *Memra*," 243–84; Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 120–25; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:154–55; Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 157–70.

[16] Older scholarship traditionally dated the Similitudes of *1 Enoch* (chapters 37–71) to after the first century since this section of *1 Enoch* was not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Even so, the difficult textual history of *1 Enoch* makes this conclusion far from certain. Recent scholarship on *1 Enoch* tends to favor an earlier date for the Similitudes. For instance, regarding the conclusions of the Enoch Seminar, see Boccaccini, "The Enoch Seminar," 3–16. However, scholars like Hurtado and Bauckham have been reticent to draw too many conclusions from the *1 Enoch* material regarding Christological origins. Cf. Fletcher-Louis, *Jesus Monotheism*, 1.172–205.

[17] Tobin, "Logos," 894–96.

God such as Yaoel or Metatron (e.g., *Apoc. Abr.* 11:2–3; *b. Sanh.* 38b) or the angelic Melchizedek who is called "Elohim" by the Qumran covenantors (11QMelch)[18]—these are some prominent examples which can be mentioned. Indeed, as Hurtado notes, the evidence from Second Temple Judaism illustrates that there was "variety and flexibility in ancient Jewish monotheistic tradition, especially the ability to accommodate 'divine' figures in addition to the God of Israel in the belief structure and religious outlook."[19] Therefore, what eventually became the trinitarian monotheism of early Christianity originally developed within a Jewish milieu which was more dynamic in its monotheism than many scholars in the modern era have admitted. This also provides important historical and socio-religious context for the kind of Christ devotion exhibited in texts like Hebrews.[20]

While there was wide speculation regarding certain heavenly beings who perhaps shared attributes with God, and even though Jews debated over various philosophical ideas about God, most Jews of the Second Temple era were still careful to reserve their worship practices for YHWH alone.[21] In general, Jews appear to have rejected the alien, pluralist cults of Gentiles, and pagan idol worship was often an object of ridicule in

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[18] E.g., see Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, 138–40; Mason, *You are a Priest Forever*, 168–90. Such speculative angelology is rooted in the traditions about YHWH's divine council. See White, *Yahweh's Council*, 173–79.

[19] Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 115. E. P. Sanders similarly avers, "Jews, then, who frequently said the Shema and recalled the Ten Commandments, believed that there was only one true Lord, and they intended to worship only him. The meaning of monotheism, however, was flexible, and Jews were by no means completely isolated from the pervasive influence of the rich and variegated religious world of their environment" (Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 247).

[20] This, of course, diverges from the assumptions of History of Religion scholars like Bousset who argued that the Christ cult was a result of later Gentile influences. See the discussion in Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 3–17.

[21] Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 128–29.

Jewish literature.[22] Instead, most Jews held to their ancestral traditions and believed that they alone worshipped God in the correct manner.[23] The Roman historian, Tacitus, confirms this as well when he notes that "Jews acknowledge one God only, and conceive of him by the mind alone" (*Hist.* 5.3). For this reason, Jews often faced accusations of "atheism" and "impiety" from Gentiles who were offended at the Jewish spurning of their cults.[24] Hurtado observes that, in Jewish texts concerning monotheism, authors are often concerned to assert the sovereignty of God and God's uniqueness and superiority vis-à-vis the gods of other nations and various angelic beings.[25] While it is true that Jews accommodated themselves in various ways to Hellenistic culture,[26] religious syncretism was usually rejected, especially after the threat posed to Jewish culture and religion by the attacks of Antiochus IV Epiphanes which resulted in the Maccabean revolt.[27]

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[22] E.g., Exod 20:4; Isa 44:9–20; Bel 1:1–22; Sir 30:19; Wis 13.10–15.17; *Let. Aris.* 134–38; *Apoc. Abr.* 1–8; Josephus, *Apion* 2:239–254; Philo, *Conf.* 168–173. See Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 429–34.

[23] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 430.

[24] E.g., see Josephus, *Apion* 2:148. See also Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 432.

[25] Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 120–21. Hurtado focuses on devotional practices and notes that it is "in the area of worship that we find 'decisive criterion' by which Jews maintained the uniqueness of God over against both idols and God's own deputies" (Hurtado, *How on Earth*, 121).

[26] For instance, see Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism.* Hengel shows that so-called Palestinian Judaism of the Second Temple era was, in fact, *Hellenistic* Judaism. Throughout his book, Hengel meticulously catalogues evidence such as: the production of Jewish literature written in Greek in Judea/Palestine (e.g., 1 Maccabees, Greek Esther); the use of Greek names by Jewish aristocrats; Greek and Aramaic inscriptions on ossuaries; early followers of Jesus who had Greek names (e.g., Andrew and Philip); Greek loan words preserved in early rabbinic tradition; and the history of cultural exchange between Greece-Phoenicia-Egypt-Judea/Palestine. Hengel concludes: "On the whole, it emerges that Hellenism also gained ground as an intellectual power in Jewish Palestine early and tenaciously. From this perspective the usual distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism needs to be corrected . . . From about the middle of the third century BC *all Judaism* must really be designated *'Hellenistic Judaism'* in the strict sense" (Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:104–5). Also, regarding issues of accommodation in the Diaspora, see Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 92–98.

[27] For instance, Hengel writes: "Only in that brief space of about eleven years under the rule of Antiochus IV (175–167 BC) was Judaism in the acute danger of submitting to Hellenistic culture as the result of the assimilation furthered by a powerful aristocratic minority. This deep crisis, which led to the attempt—which was undertaken primarily by Jewish forces themselves—decisively altered the religious and spiritual face of Palestinian Judaism" (Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:77).

Additionally, even though Gentiles might have simply equated the God of Israel with their own deities, Jewish writers typically resisted the impulse to associate YHWH with either Zeus or Jupiter, or with other gods from the Greco-Roman pantheon.[28] While some Jews might have had an affinity for Greco-Roman cultural and literary traditions,[29] they did not typically share the same regard for Gentile worship practices or theology.[30] Also, while there was a great deal of speculation within Second Temple Judaism about angelic beings as well, including their hierarchies and their roles, Jews were generally careful not to ascribe worship to them, but to YHWH alone.

Purity

While the Torah was central to Jewish identity in both Judea and the Diaspora, during the Second Temple era there was a tendency among Jewish writers to focus on the "broader meaning" of the Torah rather than on halakhic disputes over particular legal or cultic issues as one finds in the Dead Sea Scrolls or in the rabbinic literature.[31] Rather, it was commonplace in both Judea and the Diaspora for the Law to be interpreted as wisdom or natural law in the promotion of ethical monotheism and of Judaism as an ancient and venerable philosophy.[32] However, while it might be the case that most Jews were probably not as scrupulous in their interpretation and application of Torah as were the Qumran covenantors or the Pharisees, they nevertheless took the Law seriously. Particularly important for Jewish social identity were issues of purity and impurity.[33] As Hannah Harrington succinctly states, in Jewish tradition purity was considered "a state of ritual fitness necessary for the people of Israel to enjoy the holy presence and power of God."[34] Conversely, impurity signified not merely the lack of ritual purity, but represented "a threatening force" which jeopardized the community's relationship with God.[35]

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[28] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 143 rightly observes that even in the notable example of Aristeas, the author simply acknowledges that Gentiles equate Zeus with YHWH but does not make this equivalence himself.

[29] The influence of Greco-Roman literature on some strands of Second Temple Jewish literature is evident. See Berthelot, "Early Jewish Literature Written in Greek," 228–52. For the influence of Greco-Roman literature on the New Testament see the essays in Aune, *Greco-Roman Literature*.

[30] Again, regarding the example of Aristeas, Barclay observes: "The strategy of Aristeas, here as elsewhere, is to illustrate Gentile recognition of Jewish religion, but that does not mean that Jews also recognize the validity of Gentile worship. While Gentiles in this story send gifts to the Jerusalem temple, Eleazar does not reciprocate with gifts for an Egyptian temple . . . While Philadelphus' delegates are staggered by the beauty of Jewish worship, Eleazar's delegates are spared the usual ceremonies in the Ptolemaic dining-rooms when 'the sacred heralds, the sacrificing priests and the others whose custom it was to offer prayers' are banished in order to accommodate the sensitivities of the Jews [*Let. Arist.* 184]. Thus also the reader is tactfully spared any depiction of the practice of non-Jewish cult" (Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 143, brackets mine).

[31] For a helpful survey of Jewish literature, including the papyri found at Herakleopolis, see Collins, *The Invention of Judaism*, 134–58.

There were numerous prescriptions in the Torah, especially in Leviticus, regulating the practices of sacrifice and worship (e.g., Lev 1–10). Indeed, the most significant act of purification in Second Temple Judaism was the Day of Atonement ritual. It was believed that moral impurity, and especially sexual immorality, defiled not just the worshipper but the temple itself, making sacrifice essential for cleansing the sanctuary in order to restore right relations between God and Israel as well as proper order to the cosmos.[36] The Levitical priests also were expected to purify themselves so that they could duly administer this and other essential rites of purification for the people.[37] However, ritual purity also governed the functions of everyday life for Jews in antiquity as well. Even the most mundane facets of life such as food, sex, birth, menstruation, disease, death and burial were governed by concerns for ritual purity and impurity (e.g., Lev 11–15).[38] Evidence for this wide-spread concern for purity within Judaism is well-attested in both literary and archaeological sources.[39] For example, Jews generally were devoted to the Jerusalem temple and its sacrificial rituals. The use of stone jars and washing basins (*miqva'ot*) for ritual purification was also common practice as was the widespread observance of food laws (*kashrut*). Jews also often observed sacred burial customs (e.g., laws for corpse impurity). Jews also circumcised their male infants, a practice which, while vital for covenantal identity, was also important for purity reasons, because this, in many cases, determined who an Israelite woman was eligible to marry and have appropriate sexual relations with, and was thus closely related to the practice of conservative sexual mores like endogamous marriage.[40]

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[32] See Blenkinsopp, *Wisdom and Law*, 151–82; Collins, *The Invention of Judaism*, 149–50. Among Judean sources, the most prominent example would probably be Ben Sira. From the Diaspora, of course, we have Philo of Alexandria.

[33] E.g., see Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 32–71; Milgrom, *Leviticus*; Klawans, *Purity*, 111–74; Harrington, *Purity Texts;* Haber, *Purity in Early Judaism*.

[34] Harrington, "Purity and Impurity," 1121.

[35] Harrington, "Purity and Impurity," 1121.

[36] The work of Jacob Milgrom is especially important on this issue. E.g., see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1.253–92; Milgrom, "Israel's Sanctuary," 390–99. The issue of sacrifice, while related, will be explored in more depth in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Adherence to the Torah's purity laws became an even greater concern for Jews during the Hellenistic era, especially following the attempted Hellenistic reforms of Jason and the persecutions of Antiochus IV. Strict observance of the Torah's purity practices was also frequently portrayed as a virtue in Second Temple texts such as Daniel, Tobit, and 1–2 Maccabees. Concerns for ritual purity sometimes even affected otherwise mundane issues of trade between Jews and Gentiles.[41] Throughout much of the Second Temple era, therefore, the Law's purity instructions were widely seen as endemic to what it meant to be a Jew socially and religiously and were also the sorts of things that drew the attention, and sometimes ridicule, of outsiders as well.[42]

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[37] Klawans, *Purity*, 4–5 rightly observes that ritual purity was a prerequisite for the priests to be able to administer sacrifices.

[38] See the comprehensive discussion in Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 214–30.

[39] For a discussion of the general issues, see Haber, *Purity in Early Judaism*, 31–46. For archaeological evidence, see Zangenberg, "Archaeology, Papyri, and Inscriptions," 322–66; Klawans, *Purity*, 169–70; Poirier, "Purity beyond the Temple," 256–58.

[40] E.g., Gen 17:10; 34:14. Cf. Josephus, *Ant*. 1:192 where Josephus states that the purpose of circumcision was to prevent the descendants of Abraham from "mixing" with non-Jews. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 213–14.

However, it is also important to note while the purity laws were taken seriously by most Jews, they were almost never uniformly or perfectly observed. For instance, as Sanders notes well, the laws were set up in such a way that the realities of daily life rendered "most Jews impure most of the time."[43] Additionally, it was likely more difficult for Jews living in the Diaspora to practice strict observance of the Torah's purity regulations than it was for Jews living near Jerusalem and its Temple, where the religious elites and the priests exerted considerable influence.[44] Further, it is doubtful that ordinary Jews (e.g., the "people of the land") were able to be as rigorous in their observance of the purity regulations as were the Jerusalem elites or sectarian groups like the Pharisees.[45] Rather, it seems that average Jews simply tried to observe the regulations of the Law as best they could, which also probably explains the popular emphasis on interpreting the Torah as practical wisdom.

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[41] E.g., there are numerous recorded instances where Jews in various locales would not accept wine, grain, or animals from non-Jewish providers. At times, however, purity concerns were also used as an excuse for economic boycotts in response to what Jews saw as Gentile aggression. See Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:52–53.

[42] Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 6–13.

[43] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 73.

[44] This meant that Jews sometimes had to make accommodations. For example, Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 2:145–149) provides evidence that Jews in Egypt who could not make pilgrimage to Jerusalem and who did not have direct access to the priests would offer sacrifices and perform purity rites—practices typically meant to be done at the temple—in their own homes. See also Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 133.

[45] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 413–51. This also is confirmed by evidence from the Gospels where the Jewish religious elites frequently criticize Jesus and his disciples for not subscribing to their own strict interpretation of certain purity practices (e.g., Matt 15:1–3; Mark 7:1–15; Luke 11:37–41).

Also, Jewish purity concerns did not always focus solely on external matters. Most Jews, like Aristeas, believed the Law was intended "for the sake of righteousness, to aid the quest for virtue and the perfecting of character" (*Let. Arist.* 144).[46] Sometimes ritual purity and impurity served as metaphors for sin or moral impurity. Philo treats impurity as a metaphor for wickedness and warns those who would purify themselves physically but not spiritually (e.g., *Spec. Leg.* 3:209; *Cher.* 94–95).[47] He also admonishes priests to make sure that the right preparation of their hearts mirrors the right preparation of their sacrifices (*Spec. Leg.* 1:269–270). The Apostle Paul, in a similar vein, talks about true circumcision as being the "circumcision of the heart" (Rom 2:28–29; cf. Phil 3:3; Col 2:11), and the author of 1 Peter describes ritual immersion as "an appeal to God for a good conscience" (1 Pet 3:21). As Klawans has shown, moral impurity is a theme which can also be traced through a wide array of Second Temple texts such as Ezra-Nehemiah, *Jubilees*, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.[48]

The Sabbath

The Law commanded that the seventh day of each week was to be set apart as a holy day of rest from all labor (Exod 20:8–11; Lev 16:29–31; Deut 5:12–15).[49] All those in Israel, including foreigners and slaves, were commanded to abstain from work just as YHWH had abstained from his work of creation (Gen 2:2–3; cf. Exod 31:17). The Sabbath was also a commemoration of the flight of the children of Israel from Egypt (Deut 5:15). Failure to observe the Sabbath was considered a violation of the covenant between God and Israel and could result in the penalty of death (Num 15:32–36; Jer 17:27). However, interestingly, the Torah also was not entirely clear regarding what actually counted as "work."[50] As Falk notes, the only labor explicitly forbidden in the Torah is kindling fire (Exod 35:3) and working fields (Exod 34:21).[51] However, while it was a day of rest for regular Jewish people, for the priests at the Jerusalem Temple, the Pentateuch seems to suggest that it was simply "a day among other days, on which they carried out religious duties."[52]

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[46] Craig Evans's translation.

[47] See also Haber, *Purity in Early Judaism*, 36–37. However, it must also be pointed out that most Jews did not simply reduce the purity laws of the Torah to spiritual or moral truths (e.g., see the critique of this approach in Philo, *Mig.* 89–93).

[48] Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 43–60.

[49] See the helpful summary of biblical information in Falk, "Sabbath," 1174–76. Also, see Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 208–11.

It is important to note, however, that worship prescriptions for the biblical Sabbath are unclear. As McKay observes, while commentators often remark on how Sabbath observance in the Old Testament was characterized by worship, such assertions "embody unexamined assumptions" and "have been made without adequate considerations of what the texts actually say."[53] In fact, the Pentateuch does not describe the Sabbath as a cultic celebration, and there are not many ritual prescriptions specifically tied to its observance for non-priestly Jewish people.[54] As Barker plainly states, "Basically it was a day of rest. The dominant command or prohibition attached to the observance of the Sabbath day is 'You shall do no work.'"[55]

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[50] See McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 13, n. 8. McKay observes that it was also unclear whose work was counted as "work," and notes that both versions of the decalogue, wives are not counted among those who are to rest on the Sabbath day (cf. Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14).

[51] Falk, "Sabbath," 1174.

[52] McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 13.

[53] McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 12. For an example of such descriptions of the Old Testament's laws regarding the Sabbath, see Dressler, "The Sabbath," 21–41.

[54] Barker, "Sabbath," 698–99.

[55] Barker, "Sabbath," 698.

Sabbath observance began taking on a different significance for various Jewish communities during and following the exilic period.[56] For instance, in later Old Testament writings, the Sabbath came to be mentioned frequently along with New Moon celebrations and appointed feasts, implying a clearer association with the (re)emerging Hebrew cult (e.g., 1 Chr 23:31; 2 Chr 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Ezek 46:1–3).[57] Prohibitions against general commercial activity came to be adopted as well (e.g., Isa 58:13–14; Jer 17:19–27; Neh 12:15–22; Amos 8:5). Jewish liturgies for Sabbath observance also began to develop within certain communities during this period (e.g., Ps 92).

The religious nature of the Sabbath becomes especially highlighted in the Maccabean literature, however.[58] For instance, the writer of 1 Maccabees expresses moral outrage over Antiochus IV's prohibitions targeting Sabbath observance (e.g., 1 Macc 1:39–45). The author of 2 Maccabees also depicts Jews as meeting together on the Sabbath secretly in caves in order to avoid persecution (2 Macc 6:11), and later lionizes Judas as one who observes the Sabbath after a military victory over Nicanor (2 Macc 8:24–29). During the Hellenistic era, the Qumran covenantors also developed their own extensive body of liturgical tradition around the Sabbath as well (e.g., CD 11–12; 4QShirShabb^{a}). Sabbath practices would continue to be debated and refined by different Jewish communities throughout Greco-Roman antiquity (e.g., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 2:65–68; Josephus, *War* 2.147; *Jub* 2:17–23; CD 10:14–11:18).

Evidence suggests also that sometime during the Second Temple era the Sabbath had become associated with the activities of the synagogue.[59] The synagogue (συναγωγή, literally "gathering place") is most often referred to in Second Temple literature as a προσευχή or "house of prayer," thus implying that prayer was a regular part of synagogue meetings and perhaps Sabbath worship as well. By the first century CE, the reading of Scripture had also become a hallmark of Sabbath observance in the synagogue. For instance, Philo mentions how it was common practice for Jews to meet at the synagogue on the Sabbath in order to "study philosophy," no doubt a reference to reading and expositing the Septuagint (*Spec. Leg.* 2:56–139), and the writer Hecateus of Abdera also confirms that this was a regular custom for Jewish communities in Egypt (*Hec. Ab.* 12.189). However, this practice also seems to have been the norm in first-century Judea as well. Josephus recounts synagogue meetings where the Torah was studied on the Sabbath (Josephus, *War*. 2:289–292). The Gospel of Mark likewise depicts Jesus reading Scripture on the Sabbath at the synagogue in Capernaum and confirms that this was a normal practice for him (Mark 1:21; 6:2; cf. Luke 4:16).[60]

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[56] Rowland, "A Summary of Sabbath Observance," 44–55.

[57] McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 25–33.

[58] See McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 46–50.

[59] See McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*, 61–88.

In Greco-Roman antiquity, Sabbath observance had also become one of the most visible identity markers for distinguishing Jews from Gentiles.[61] During the reign of Julius Caesar, several Greco-Roman cities extended special rights to Jews, including rights respecting Sabbath observance.[62] Sabbath observance also was attractive to Gentiles in certain places, and even imitated at times (e.g., Josephus, *Apion* 2:282). However, because Sabbath observance required time away from work and military service, Jews were sometimes stereotyped by pagan authors as lazy.[63] Also, invading armies occasionally took advantage of the Jewish commitment to abstain from military fighting on the Sabbath, a fact which only further highlights the significance of Sabbath devotion to Jews.[64]

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[60] See Runesson, "The Importance of the Synagogue," 265–97.

[61] Falk, "Sabbath," 1174.

[62] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 209–10.

[63] E.g., Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.4.3; Seneca, *Ep. Moral* 95.47. See Falk, "Sabbath," 1174; Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 209.

Ancestry and Kinship

The Law's traditions regarding ancestry and kinship were also significant for Jews living in the Second Temple era. The patriarchal stories in Genesis about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob served as people-defining narratives for Israel and as the basis for their covenantal relationship with YHWH. Kinship was also significant for Israel as the family unit was the primary custodian of the Jewish covenantal tradition.[65] Thus, in combination with laws, cultural norms and religious practices, ancestry and kinship also helped to form the foundation of a national identity for Jews living in Judea and the Diaspora.[66]

The issue of ancestry and kinship is, of course, related to the broader issue of ethnicity. However, as mentioned in the previous chapter of this dissertation, ethnicity in Second Temple Judaism is a rather complex subject. During the Second Temple era, Jewish ethnic identity progressively came to encompass ancestral traditions, customs, laws, religious practices and beliefs in addition to ancestry and kinship.[67] While Jews were born as members of the covenantal community, in some places it eventually became possible for Gentiles to become Jews as well. For instance, Josephus recounts the conversion of Helena, Queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates (*Ant.* 20:2), and seems genuinely welcoming of those who would become proselytes and obey the Torah, believing that membership among the Jewish people consisted of "not family ties alone which constitute relationship, but agreement in the principles of conduct" (*Apion* 2:210).[68] Philo views the conversion of Gentile outsiders not just to a spiritual philosophy, but to a new *politeia* (e.g, *Spec. Leg.* 1:51; *Virt.* 108, 175).[69] Gentile conversion was also a popular topic of Jewish literature as we see, for example, in the story of *Joseph and Aseneth*. There are also references throughout the New Testament to Gentile friends and converts to Judaism like Nicholas the "proselyte from Antioch" (Acts 6:5), Cornelius the Roman centurion and "god fearer" (Acts 10:1–2), and possibly even Paul's companion Titus (Gal 2:3). Martin Goodman and John Barclay have also argued that disputes regarding the *fiscus Iudaicus* of 70 CE show that, at times, Jews were treated by the Romans as more of a religious group than simply a kinship group since at least some Jews no longer practiced Judaism, while some Gentiles did.[70]

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[64] E.g., 1 Macc 2:29–41; 2 Macc 5:25–26; Josephus, *War* 1:145–147. See Falk, "Sabbath," 1174; Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 209.

[65] Barclay, "The Family as Bearer of Religion," 66–80.

[66] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 402–13.

[67] E.g., see Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 457–512; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 402–04. Numada likewise contends that "Jews constructed their social identity using their *ethno-religious* practices derived from their relationship to God" (Numada, *Interpreting Johannine Anti-Judaism*, 344, italics mine).

However, even while the racial boundaries of Jewish social identity had become porous for some individuals and communities, ancestry nevertheless remained an important issue for Jews in Greco-Roman antiquity.[71] For instance, the Apocrypha provide plentiful evidence that Jewish people, even with their various religious and cultural differences in the Hellenistic era, continued to view themselves as one nation of people descended from Abraham and united in their covenantal faith.[72] The Torah was not simply a body of regulation, but was held sacred as "the ancestral law" to which Jews were expected to remain faithful (3 Macc 1:23; cf. 4 Macc 18:1). Jewish writers in the Second Temple era, especially the authors of the Testamental literature, also often hagiographically memorialized Israel's ancestors. Even Philo, with his representation of Judaism as a spiritual philosophy, remains fully committed to the Jewish nation, its ancestral heritage, and the hope of future restoration (e.g., *Mos.* 2:43–44).[73]

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[68] Thackeray's translation (LCL). See also Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 404.

[69] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 408.

[70] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 404; Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 120–28.

[71] The same can be said for Jewish Christianity in the first century as well. For instance, see Buell and Hodge, "The Rhetoric of Race," 235–51.

Covenant and Election

Walther Eichrodt has demonstrated in his classic work on Old Testament theology that the concepts of covenant and election were central to the Law.[74] Covenant and election, therefore, were also concepts of vital importance for Jewish identity in the Second Temple era as well.[75] Christiansen, borrowing from Johs. Pedersen, notes:

> [T]he covenant is one of the most fundamental categories of identity, because, 'one is born of a covenant and into a covenant, and wherever one moves in life, one makes a covenant or acts on the basis of the already existing covenant.'[76]

The covenantal tradition of the Old Testament was multi-faceted, being comprised of multiple divine/human covenants which defined Israel's history, such as the covenant with Noah (Gen 6 and 9), the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12 and 15), the Mosaic covenant at Sinai (Exod 20), and the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7).[77] The Old Testament's covenantal tradition was also foundational for Israel's social cohesion. It provided the nation with "a common history and tradition of shared values, norms and rituals," and also "a common life and a common goal of the people."[78] For the purposes of our discussion of Jewish social identity, the covenants of Abraham and Moses feature most prominently in Second Temple literature. These covenants were seen as YHWH's prerogative. As Christiansen notes, "God commands, and the divine decree brings the covenant into existence."[79] Christiansen also rightly characterizes the Abrahamic covenant as one of "promissory relationships," and the Sinai covenant as one of "obligatory" laws that defined a "renewed relationship" between YHWH and Israel.[80]

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[72] Numada is correct when he asserts that "Jews clearly understand themselves as a single people, whether they are referred to as Jews, Hebrews, or Israel" (Numada, *Interpreting Johannine Anti-Judaism*, 66). To illustrate his point, Numada shows that in 2 Maccabees the author refers to the people as Ἑβραῖοι ("Hebrews") (2 Macc 7:31; 11:13; 15:37); Ἰσραήλ ("Israel") (2 Macc 1:25–26; 9:5; 10:38; 11:6; 15:14); and Ἰουδαῖος ("Jew" or "Judean") (61 times) in that text alone. Similar usage can be found throughout other texts in the Apocrypha as well. For instance, the texts of Judith and 4 Maccabees also each refer to the Jewish people collectively as "Israel" (Jdt 4:1; 4:8; 5:1; 4 Macc 18:1); as "Hebrews" (e.g., Jdt 10:12; 12:11; 14:8; 4 Macc 4:11; 5:2: 8:2); and as "Jews" or "Judeans" (Jdt 4:3; 4 Macc 5:7).

[73] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 406.

[74] Eichrodt, *Theology*, 1.36–69.

[75] See the discussion in Scott, "Covenant," 491–94.

[76] Christiansen, *The Covenant*, 27.

Covenantalism was also based on belief in the special election of Israel. Jews believed they had been specially chosen by God to be his people on earth, and that God's covenant with them through Abraham was "eternal" (Gen 12:1–3; 17:7–19). Jewish boys were to be circumcised on the eighth day as a sign of their admission into the covenant (Gen 17). Israel would later become a nation upon entering the covenant at Sinai following the exodus from Egypt, with Moses serving as priestly mediator and lawgiver (Exod 20–24). The Sinai covenant differed considerably from the covenant of Abraham as it imposed numerous obligations and commands governing nearly every facet of life for Israelites. Obedience to the stipulations of the Sinai covenant was expected as the appropriate response to God's gracious act of election, a theological conviction E. P. Sanders has famously referred to as *covenantal nomism*.[81] Thus, on the basis of God's election via the covenant of Abraham, the people's continued faithfulness to the covenant of Moses was met with promises of divine blessing, progeny, and land (Deut 28:1–14), promises resembling those that were originally given to Abraham. Conversely, however, failure to keep the stipulations of the covenant incurred the penalties of cursing, death, and exile from the land (Deut 28:15–68).[82]

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[77] Christiansen, *The Covenant,* 30–37. Cf. Williamson, "Covenant," 139–55 who also distinguishes between universal, ancestral, and national covenants in the Old Testament tradition.

[78] Christiansen, *The Covenant,* 28.

[79] Christiansen, *The Covenant,* 30.

[80] Christiansen, *The Covenant,* 29.

Israel's history in the Old Testament is fraught with examples of failure to keep the Sinai covenant. Starting from the receiving of the Law at Sinai, Israel breaks the covenant by worshipping the golden calf (Exod 32). Israel grumbles in the wilderness and is prevented from entering Canaan (Deut 1:19–45). The following generation fails to take complete possession of the Promised Land, setting off a perpetual cycle of disobedience, divine punishment/military occupation, and deliverance which continues throughout the book of Judges and the rest of the Deuteronomistic history. Finally, Israel's covenant breaking culminates in the conquest of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in 722 BCE (2 Kgs 17; 1 Chr 5) and the exile of the Southern Kingdom by the Babylonians in 586 BCE (2 Kgs 24; 2 Chr 36). Biblical writers during the exile, like the author of Second Isaiah, would speculate about a return to a more idealized form of the covenant

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[81] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 262–75. While Sanders's basic idea of covenantal nomism has generated controversy among some conservative biblical scholars, especially as it relates to Sanders's views of Paul's relationship to Judaism, as mentioned above, Sanders's conclusions have nevertheless won the support of most scholars of Second Temple Judaism. See the discussion of the New Perspective on Paul and various critiques of Sanders's views in the previous chapter of this dissertation (pp. 62–65). Also, see Gathercole, "Covenantal Nomism," 494–96.

[82] The blessings and curses of Israel's covenantal tradition should also be understood in the broader context of legal contracts and agreements of the ancient Near East. See the discussions in Alexander, "Promises, Divine," 655–62; Buchanan, "The Covenant," 27–52. Walther Zimmerli was one of the first Old Testament scholars to note the similarities between the covenant speeches of Deuteronomy and suzerain vassal treaties (e.g., Zimmerli, *The Law and the Prophets*, 52–59).

(e.g., Isa 54, 65), while Jeremiah would hail the coming of a "new covenant" that would be altogether different from the covenant of Moses (Jer 31:31–34). Yet there remained the promise that God would be faithful to the covenant of Abraham and deliver a remnant of his people from exile (e.g., Ps 106; Ezek 11:14–20).

Following the exile, and throughout the Second Temple era, covenantalism remained crucial for Jewish social identity in both Judea and the Diaspora. For instance, Jews living in Judea saw Antiochus IV's programs as an attack on the covenants of Abraham and Moses, and thus on their very identity as Jews (e.g., 1 Macc 2:19–22). Also, Jewish authors often reflected on the significance of Israel's special election as God's covenant people.[83] Covenantalism thus produced a strong sense of unity among Jewish communities throughout the Greco-Roman world, especially as expressed by wide-spread devotion to the Jerusalem temple[84] and Jewish solidarity in military and political conflicts.[85] It is also known that at least one Jewish sect, the Qumran covenantors, viewed themselves as partakers of the "new covenant" prophesied by Jeremiah (CD 6:19; 8:21; cf. Jer 31:31–34), which they understood to be a renewed expression of the covenant of Moses, untainted by what they saw as corrupt priestly practices in Jerusalem (e.g., 1QpHab 2:3–4; 1QS).[86] Other communities likewise had their own ideas of how to recapture the purity of the Sinai covenant in their own day (e.g, *Jubilees*).

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[83] E.g., Philo *Spec. Leg.* 1:303; *Ps. Sol.* 9:9–10; Rom 9:3–5.

[84] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 265. For instance, scholars have marveled at the consistency of historical evidence showing Jews paying the temple tax throughout the Greco-Roman world. This practice was even observed in Egypt, where there was another Jewish temple at Leontopolis. Jews also continued to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem during feast times, even if such trips were expensive and irregular for most.

[85] Concerning political and military conflicts, some prominent examples of cooperation between Judeans and Diaspora Jewish communities include: the time Hyrcanus II and Antipater worked with Egyptian Jews to aid Julius Caesar (Josephus, *Ant.* 14:127–132); when Hyrcanus II was given asylum by Jews in Babylon during the Parthian seizure of Jerusalem (Josephus, *Ant.* 15:14–15); when Herod helped Jews living in Ionia (Josephus, *Ant.* 16:27–61); and when Jews throughout the Greco-Roman world convulsed at the idea of Gaius Caligula setting up a statue of Jupiter in the Jerusalem temple (Philo, *Flacc.*). The Romans also believed that Jews throughout the empire were connected. A prominent example of this is when, following the Jewish revolt in the Mesopotamian Diaspora in 115 CE, Trajan responded by brutally attacking and destroying Jewish communities in Cyprus, Cyrene, and Egypt.

In Second Temple literature, Abraham and Moses were treated as the two primary representative figures of Israel's covenantal past. Abraham was primarily known as the father of the Jewish people, the recipient of God's covenant, and the exemplar of faith, themes born out of numerous retellings of the Old Testament's narratives of Abraham.[87] The text of *Jubilees* presents an interesting case in this regard. For example, *Jubilees* depicts Abraham as one who obeyed the Torah even before it was written by Moses, portraying Abraham as a staunch monotheist who denounces idolatry even while in his father's house in Mesopotamia (*Jub* 11–23). The writer also sanitizes Abraham's character in his own retelling of the episode where the patriarch presents his wife to foreign rulers as his sister, and also says that the devil—not God—tempted Abraham to kill Isaac, but that Abraham resisted temptation.

Moses was also widely revered among Jews as the preeminent legislator, mediator, and prophet.[88] For instance, Josephus says that the entire way of Jewish life "hangs upon the wisdom of Moses the lawgiver" (*Ant.* 1:18). Eupolemus records the legend that Moses was "the first wise man" and that he created the Jewish alphabet, which later became the foundation for all human writing and wisdom (Eupolem. Fragment 1). The Qumran covenantors viewed entry into their community principally as a "return to the Law of Moses" (CD 15:9). By the New Testament era, Moses was so linked with the Torah that even his name, Moses, could be used as a cipher for referring to the Law itself (e.g., Acts 15:21). The writers of *Jubilees* and the Greek text of the *Life of Adam and Eve* each highlight Moses's role as the intercessor and mediator of God's revelation, roles also shared by angels (*Jub* 1:29; 6:22; 6:35; *LAE* 1). Falk notes that the Qumran literature also depicts Moses as the prophet *par excellence* who provides eschatological revelation (4QMMT [4Q394–99]; 4QFlor 174:1–3).[89] Joshua's words in the *Testament of Moses* are especially illustrative of the reverence with which Jews typically regarded Moses when he calls him, "worthy of the Lord, manifold and incomprehensible, master of leaders, faithful in all things, the divine prophet for the whole earth, the perfect teacher in the world" (*T. Mos.* 11:16, OTP).

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[86] Evans, "Covenant in the Qumran Literature," 55–80.

[87] See Bowley, "Abraham," 294–95.

[88] See Falk, "Moses," 967–70.

The Law in the Epistle to the Hebrews

Now that we have provided a socio-historical sketch of some of the most salient praxis-oriented themes related to the Law, we can now turn our attention to Hebrews. In the pages to follow, we will examine whether and how the writer addresses the Law-related themes of monotheism, purity, the Sabbath, covenant/election, and ancestry/kinship. Our thematic analysis will be also be assisted by the use of semantic domains which will help us to identify passages relevant to our inquiry.

Monotheism in Hebrews

In order to get some idea of how the author of Hebrews treats the issue of Jewish monotheism, we will examine passages throughout Hebrews where the author uses terms categorized within the domain "Supernatural Beings" (LN 12.1-42). Hebrews uses at least 11 different words within this semantic domain. The most widely used term from this domain in Hebrews is θεός ("God") which occurs 68 times throughout the epistle, averaging nearly 14 occurrences per 1,000 words, highlighting the overtly theological nature of the discourse.[90] Other terms that feature prominently in Hebrews are κύριος ("Lord") (LN 12.9)[91] and πνεῦμα ("spirit" or "Spirit") (LN 12.18).[92] The author also uses epithets for God that were commonly used in Greek literature from Second Temple Judaism and which are categorized in this domain as well, such as ὕψιστος ("Most High") (LN 12.4),[93] μεγαλωσύνη ("[your] Majesty") (LN 12.5),[94] and πατήρ ("Father") (LN 12.12).[95] The writer also evinces traditional Jewish belief in the existence of spiritual beings such as "angels" [ἄγγελοι (LN 12.28)][96] and the "devil" [διάβολος (LN 12.34)].[97]

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[89] Falk, "Moses," 968.

From the outset, we see that the writer's theology is firmly grounded in the Old Testament. God is identified as the God of Israel's ancestors, who spoke to them and the prophets, and who continues to speak living words (Heb 1:1–2; 4:12). He is also called "the living God," an epithet for YHWH commonly used in the LXX and in Second Temple literature (Heb 3:12; 10:31).[98] For Hebrews, God is the one who created the world "in the beginning" (Heb 1:10–12; cf. Ps 101:26–28 LXX), and is both the Lord of the Sabbath (Heb 4:1–11; cf. Gen 2:2; Ps 95:7 LXX) and the one whom Moses "feared" [ἔκφοβος] at the Sinai theophany (Heb 12:21; cf. Deut 9:19 LXX). God is also a "spirit" (e.g., Heb 2:4; 3:7; 9:14)[99] and is referred to in Hebrews as "the invisible one" (Heb 11:27). God is also the covenant-making God who has made a promise to Abraham and his heirs that is irrevocable (Heb 6:16–20; 13:5). Yet God is also the one who makes a new covenant with the houses of Israel and Judah (Heb 8:8–12; cf. Jer 31:31). God is the builder of a new Jerusalem and is not ashamed of his wandering people, past and present (Heb 11:9–16; 12:22). He is a "father" who disciplines his children, is the "judge of all," and is "a consuming fire" (Heb 12:7–10, 23, 29).

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[90] This analysis is based on the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland text of the Greek New Testament.

[91] Heb 2:3; 7:14; 8:2, 8–11; 10:16, 30; 12:5–6, 14; 13:6, 20.

[92] Heb 1:7, 14; 2:4; 3:7; 4:12; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29; 12:9, 23.

[93] Heb 7:1. Cf. Gen 14:18; Num 24:16; *1 En* 9:3.

[94] Heb 1:3; 8:1. Cf. Deut 32:3; 1 Chr 29:11; *1 En* 3:4; 12:3.

[95] Heb 12:7, 9; Josephus, *Ant.* 1:20.

[96] Heb 1:4–7, 13; 2:2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 16; 12:22; 13:2.

[97] Heb 2:14.

[98] Some have argued that the injunction in Heb 3:12 against turning away from "the living God" provides evidence that Hebrews was written for a Gentile audience (e.g., Moffatt, *Hebrews*, xvi–xvii; Kümmel, *Introduction*, 398–401; cf. Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 6:16). However, such a command does not imply that Hebrews's recipients had previously engaged in idol worship. Indeed, θεὸς ζῶν is an epithet for the God of Israel used commonly throughout the LXX and in the New Testament (cf. Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; Pss 42:2 [41:3]; 84:2 [83:3]; Tob 13:1; Matt 16:16; 26:63).

The writer has definitive ideas about angels as well. Quoting Ps 104:4 (103:4 LXX), he describes angels in Heb 1:7 as "spirits" [πνεύματα], "ministers" [λειτουργούς], and a "flames of fire" [πυρὸς φλόγα]. They are sent to "minister to those who will inherit salvation" (1:14). The angels are thus clearly set in a subordinate relationship to God in a manner befitting common Jewish practice.[100] The writer also echoes the Jewish tradition of angels serving as mediators of divine revelation (Heb 2:2). He additionally recalls traditions about angels traveling disguised as mysterious strangers looking for some pious individual to show them hospitality (Heb 13:2).[101]

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[99] The word "spirit" [πνεῦμα] in Hebrews sometimes refers to angels (1:7, 14) and other times to human spirits (12:9, 23). Most often, however, the term refers to the Holy Spirit (2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15; also 9:14 ["the Eternal Spirit"] and 10:29 ["Spirit of Grace"]).

[100] E.g., Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, 34.

[101] A prominent example would be the meeting between Abraham and the three strangers at Mamre in Gen 18.

Interestingly, the Hebrews writer also articulates a remarkably high Christology in some places.[102] God has a special relationship to his "Son,"[103] whom he has begotten and brought into the world and by whom he speaks (Heb 1:1–5). The Son is the "exact representation" of the invisible God's essence and, like God, sustains all creation "by his powerful word" (Heb 1:3).[104] In 1:8, the author, using Ps 44, depicts Jesus as being addressed as "God" (ὁ θεός) by none other than God the Father.[105] He further characterizes "the days of [Jesus's] flesh" as being full of "piety" [εὐλάβεια] towards God, simultaneously implying pre-existence and providing the reason why God raised Jesus from death (Heb 5:7).[106] Appealing to Ps 110—a psalm he frequently refers to throughout the letter—the author says that the Son is seated "at the right hand of the Majesty on High" [ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς] (Heb 1:3; cf. Ps 110:4).[107] Jesus is also given the exalted title "Lord" [κύριος] throughout Hebrews (e.g., Heb 2:3; 7:4; 13:20).[108] The divine Son is, additionally, given superiority over the angels who are commanded to "worship" [προσκυνησάτωσαν] him as they do God himself (Heb 1:5–6; cf. Ps 97:7 [96:7 LXX]). Jesus is also described as the one who ultimately destroys the devil by rendering him powerless (Heb 2:14).[109]

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[102] See Bauckham, "The Divinity of Jesus Christ," 15–36. Philip Hughes argues that Hebrews's Christology "sets the tone for the whole epistle" (Hughes, "Christology of Hebrews," 21). That Hebrews is largely devoted to demonstrating the supremacy of Christ is not a novel interpretation of Hebrews but goes back at least to the fifth-century CE with Theodoret of Cyrus's commentary on Paul's letters (see Guthrie, *Structure of Hebrews*, 3–8). For structures of Hebrews which highlight the theme of Christ's supremacy, see Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 1–2; Hughes, *Commentary*, 2–4; Kistemaker, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 18–19; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:xcvi–xcviii. However, simultaneously, the Hebrews writer also in places exhibits what might be regarded as a "low" Christology by making references to Jesus's humanity and sufferings (e.g., 2:5–18; 5:7; 12:3; 13:12).

[103] Cf. Heb 1:2–3, 5, 8; 2:6; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 28; 10:29. See also Peeler, *You Are My Son.*

[104] On this point, several commentators have noted similarities between Hebrews and Jewish Wisdom traditions (e.g., Wis. 7:22–8:1) and the *logos* Christology of the Gospel of John.

[105] Amy Peeler argues on the basis of the catena in Heb 1:6–13 that Jesus's name is not "son" but "Lord God" [κύριος θεός], and that the title "son" instead connotes Jesus's filial relationship to the Father and his status as God's rightful heir (Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 59–61).

[106] E.g., see Peeler, *You Are My* Son, 21–29 where Peeler argues well for Jesus the Son's personal pre-existence in Hebrews *contra* Dunn (*Christology*, 54) who avers that the writer is influenced by Platonic idealism and that he does not assume pre-existence. The parallels between Middle Platonism and Hebrews have often been exaggerated (e.g. Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1.39–91; cf. Williamson, *Philo*, 1–10). Andrew Lincoln observes: "The main framework for the thought of Hebrews is the developed eschatology, including its cosmology and spatial dualism of heaven and earth, also found in apocalyptic writings, such as *1 Enoch*, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*. A concentration on the heavenly realm and its realities does not require one to posit a more Hellenistic background in Middle Platonism but is already evident in the vertical dimension of the apocalypses familiar within first-century Judaism" (Lincoln, *Hebrews*, 42–43). See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 54–55; Vandergriff, "Διαθήκη καινή," 97–110; Backhaus, "Licht vom Licht," 95–114.

[107] Psalm 110, the most quoted psalm in the New Testament, was especially important for the earliest followers of Jesus as all references to Jesus's heavenly exaltation and enthronement appeal to this

Additionally, the words of YHWH spoken in the Old Testament also are applied by the Hebrews writer to Jesus in some remarkable ways.[110] For instance the writer creatively reinterprets Psalm 44 in a way that depicts God as directly addressing his Son as "God" while establishing his throne "forever and ever," implying co-regency and shared divine status (Heb 1:8–9; cf. Ps 44:6–7 LXX). God gives the divine Son the seat at his right hand, and the Son has superiority over the angelic hosts (Heb 1:13).[111] Elsewhere, Jesus is also repeatedly associated with the messianic themes of victory and heavenly enthronement (e.g., Heb 3:6; 10:12; 13:8; 13:21).[112]

As Hurtado rightly contends, however, any study of monotheism should focus on religious practices as well as beliefs. To that end, we will examine passages in Hebrews

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text (cf. Matt: 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:34; 5:31; 7:55–56; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; 1 Pet 3:22). See also Buchanan, *Hebrews*, xix. While Buchanan overstates the case when he asserts Hebrews, as a whole, is a "homiletical midrash based on Psalm 110," he is right to highlight the importance of this psalm for the writer of Hebrews (cf. Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

[108] Ellingworth notes that, starting in Heb 1:8–12, the author uses the title "God" and "Lord" interchangeably when referring to Jesus the Son (Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 126). Barnard likewise argues that the author uses κύριος as the Greek equivalent of the Tetragrammaton, as it is so often in the LXX (Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 164).

[109] Jason Whitlark argues that the reference to "the devil" in Heb 2:14–15 is a cipher for Rome, and that the Hebrews writer's depiction of Jesus as disempowering the devil is intended to function as subtle anti-imperial polemic (Whitlark, *Resisting Empire*, 122–41). This interpretation seems forced, however, as the empire does not factor in any obvious way in the text of Hebrews.

[110] See Attridge, "Giving Voice to Jesus," 101–12; Pierce, *Divine Discourse*.

[111] David Moffitt also argues that the writer's focus on Jesus's heavenly ministry and exaltation above the angels assumes belief in his bodily resurrection and subsequent exaltation (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 45–194).

[112] Westfall, "Messianic Themes," 217–19; Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 144–70.

where the author uses terms categorized within the subdomains of "Religious Practice" (LN 53.1–15) and "Worship or Religious Reverence" (LN 53.53–64), both of which are included within the primary domain "Religious Activities" (LN 53.1–105). Hebrews uses 9 different terms from these domains: δικαιοσύνη ("righteousness" [in terms of fulfilling divine requirements]) (LN 53.4),[113] εὐλαβέομαι / εὐλάβεια ("to show reverence" / "piety") (LN 53.7),[114] λειτουργέω / λειτουργία ("to perform religious rites" / "ministry") (LN 53.13),[115] λατρεύω / λατρεία ("to perform religious rites" / "worship") (LN 53.14),[116] προσκυνέω ("to bow down in worship") (LN 53.56),[117] and φόβος ("reverent fear") (LN 53.59).[118] Clusters of terms from within this semantic domain are found most frequently in chapters 9 and 10, which is where we find an extended discourse on worship in the earthly and heavenly tabernacles, and chapter 11 which describes the faithfulness of the heroes of Israel's past.

Hebrews most often uses the terms λατρεύω ("to perform religious rites") and λατρεία ("worship") in reference to the Levitical priestly service in the tabernacle (e.g., Heb 8:5; 9:1, 6, 9, 14), and it is clear that the Levitical priesthood shapes the writer's imagination of Jesus's heavenly ministry, even if he is said to be a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" and not "of the order of Aaron" (Heb 7:11). The writer also describes some of the devotional practices of the community. In Heb 6:2, he says that the community practices ritual "washings" [βαπτισμῶν] and "laying on of hands" [ἐπιθέσεώς τε χειρῶν], rituals that are evidently practiced by other early Jewish-Christian communities, as well as by Christian communities more generally in the Greco-Roman world.[119] The community is also instructed to show gratitude to God by offering "proper worship" [λατρεύωμεν εὐαρέστως] with "reverence and awe" [εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους] (12:28). Further, their worship is described in priestly terms when they are exhorted to "offer up" [ἀναφέρω] sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving, and confession of "his [Jesus's] name" (13:15). The mention of "confession" [ὁμολογία][120] centered on Jesus is especially important for Hebrews as this practice is referenced multiple times by the writer (Heb 3:1, 4:14; 10:23; 13:15).[121]

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[113] Heb 1:9; 5:13; 7:2; 11:7; 11:33; 12:11.

[114] Heb 5:7; 11:7; 12:28.

[115] Heb 8:6; 9:21; 10:11.

[116] Heb 8:5; 9:1, 6, 9, 14; 10:2; 12:28; 13:10.

[117] Heb 1:6.

[118] Heb 2:15 (noun) / 10:27, 31; 12:21 (adjective).

The term δικαιοσύνη ("righteousness") in Hebrews resembles Pauline usage in that it often collocates with πίστις ("faith"). However, "righteousness" in Hebrews generally refers to righteous acts of obedience instead of the kind of forensic righteousness featured in some of Paul's letters.[122] The writer begins the theme of living "by faith" in 10:38

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[119] For ritual washings or baptisms, see Matt 28:19; Mark 1:4; John 3:26–4:2; Acts 2:38–41; 8:38; 9:18; Rom 6:3; 1 Cor 1:14. For the practice of laying on of hands, see Matt 19:13–15; Mark 6:5; 8:23–25; 10:16; Luke 4:40; Acts 6:6; 8:18; 19:6; 28:8; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim 1:6. Each of these practices has its origins in Jewish ritual from the Second Temple era (e.g., see the surveys in Lawrence, "Washing, Ritual," 1331–32; Tipei, *Laying on of Hands*, 17–66). Delitzsch has also argued that these ritual practices represented "fundamentals" of the synagogue as well (Delitzsch, *Hebrews*, 1:274). These practices were first adopted by the earliest Jewish followers of Jesus and were subsequently transmitted to new congregations established as the church expanded its missionary efforts throughout the Mediterranean world.

[120] Louw and Nida have listed ὁμολογία ("confession") and ὁμολογέω ("to confess") within the semantic domain "Communication" under the subdomain "Profess Allegiance" (LN 33.274). However, given the obvious role confession played in religious practice, there is an argument to be made that it should also have been included within the domain "Religious Practices" as well.

[121] The importance of the confession of Jesus's name as a vital practice of early Christ-devotion was first highlighted in modern scholarship by Wilhelm Bousset (e.g., Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 129–38). See also Mackie, "Confession of the Son of God," 114–29.

[122] Cf. Rom 3:21-25. This should not be taken to mean, however, that Paul and Hebrews represent radically different thought worlds. Both interpret Jesus's death as an atoning sacrifice, and both argue that this portends eschatological salvation for their respective communities. However, when Paul talks about "righteousness" he often does so in terms of one's juridical standing before God, whereas Hebrews talks about "righteousness" in terms of what a person does.

where, like Paul, he quotes Hab 2:4 saying, "But my righteous one shall live by faith" (cf. Gal 3:11; Rom 1:17). However, in chapter 11, the writer presents a "catalogue of *exempla virtutis*"[123] from the Old Testament to demonstrate in practical terms what it means to be righteous and live by faith. Thus δικαιοσύνη is used to describe the actions of Abel who offered a better sacrifice than Cain (11:4), Noah who built the ark (11:7), and other Old Testament heroes who "performed acts of righteousness" [εἰργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην] (11:32–33). The community is likewise encouraged to persevere under discipline, so they too might yield "the fruit of righteousness" (12:11). The writer also repeatedly issues paraenesis throughout his homily, calling on his readers to practical obedience by holding fast to their confession of Jesus (3:6, 14), assembling together for worship (10:22–25), loving each other by showing hospitality (13:1–2), keeping the marriage bed pure (13:4), and praying for and obeying their leaders (13:3, 7, 17).[124] Thus, for Hebrews, righteousness is attained through persevering in faithful and ethical obedience to God's (new) covenantal requirements.

Summary: Monotheism in Hebrews

The Hebrews writer adheres to a monotheism that is, conceptually, deeply rooted in the Torah and in Second Temple Jewish tradition. God, for Hebrews, is none other than YHWH, the God of Israel's ancestors. Their identity as a community, therefore, is also defined not simply by being "Abraham's descendants" (Heb 2:16), though they are, but by being "the people of God" (4:9; 8:10).[125]

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[123] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 306.

[124] Attridge, "Paraenesis in a Homily," 211–12.

[125] The community's identity as "the people of God" is especially highlighted in Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 83–141.

The author's repeated use of material from the Psalms and from the Pentateuch also shows that he is firmly rooted in the liturgical tradition of ancient Israel as well. Angelic beings are also considered in their proper role as God's ministering servants. However, as mentioned above, the writer and his community nevertheless practice a form of Yawhistic worship that is not staunchly exclusivist, resembling in some respects various other Jewish communities who speculated about whether there were other quasi-divine persons or entities either included within YHWH or serving as God's unique special agents. For the Hebrews writer, Jesus, as Messiah, has both shared divine status and co-regency with YHWH, and he interprets the Jewish liturgical tradition in ways that support his convictions. Jesus the Son is even depicted as receiving cultic devotion from the angels and from the writer's community, just as God does (Heb 1:5–6).[126] This theological conviction, along with numerous other factors, would come to distinguish Jewish Christians, and Christians in general, from other Jewish factions.[127] Also, it is important to note that there is no obvious argument or debate within Hebrews over whether it is *apropos* to accord Jesus divine status. While scholars have speculated that the Hebrews writer might have been attempting to combat some sort of inappropriate devotion to angels[128] or even Melchizedek,[129] clear evidence of this is lacking in the text of Hebrews. Instead, the belief in Jesus's exalted position in close proximity to God is treated as a theological conviction that is foundational for the community (cf., Heb 2:3–4; 6:1–2).[130]

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[126] As Attridge notes, the idea of individuals and communities worshipping God in concert with angelic hosts was a widely popular tradition in Second Temple Judaism (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 51). E.g., see Isa 6:3–5; Rev 4:8–11; *Jub* 2:17–18; *T. Levi* 3:5–6; *1 En* 39:10–13; *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*.

[127] E.g., see Evans, "Root Causes," 20–35.

[128] For instance, some scholars have seen parallels with Col 2:18 where Paul warns against those who participate in "the worship of angels" (θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων). E.g., see Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 9; Montefiore, *Hebrews*, 41–2; Charles, "Angels, Sonship and Birthright," 171–78. Cf. Moffit, *Logic of the Resurrection*, 47–53.

[129] E.g., De Jonge and Van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek," 301–26; Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument in Hebrews," 161–85. Cf. Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, 164–69.

Regarding devotional practices, while the author makes mention of the community's use of certain rituals, for the greater part the writer advocates for a type of ethical monotheism that was common within Jewish and Christian circles.[131] Along with this, however, the writer also advocates for Christ devotion as well, especially in regards to his repeated calls for his audience to maintain their confession of the name of Jesus.

Purity in Hebrews

To ascertain how Hebrews handles issues of purity, we will examine the author's use of language related to purity, cleansing, and defilement (LN 53.28–40). We will also consider the author's use of language concerning "Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior" (LN 88.1–318), with a special focus on terms with connotations such as: "holy, pure" (LN 88.24–35), "perfect, perfection" (LN 88.36–38), "just, righteous" (LN 88.12–23), "sexual misbehavior" (LN 88.271–82), and "sin, wrongdoing, guilt" (LN 88.289–318). Additionally, we will take into account references the author makes to ritual sprinklings or washings, foods, and the human body as these things frequently relate to purity as well.

Purity language pervades Hebrews, especially concerning Jesus. For instance, the Hebrews writer uses "perfection" language [τελειόω, τελείωσις] throughout his letter when he repeatedly asserts that Jesus was "made perfect" so that the community could also be "perfected" and purified before God (e.g., Heb 2:10; 5:9; 7:11; 7:28; 10:14).[132] The author also interprets Jesus's death through the lens of the Levitical sin offering and the Day of Atonement ritual, saying that Jesus has made "purification" [καθαρισμός] for sins by shedding his blood (Heb 1:3). Jesus is also the priestly mediator of the new covenant, whose blood "sprinkles clean" [ῥαντισμός] and speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Heb 12:24).[133] The Hebrews writer argues that since the blood of bulls and goats provided "cleansing" [καθαρότης] for the flesh, Jesus's once-for-all sacrifice will even more effectively "cleanse" [καθαρίζω] worshippers' consciences from sin (Heb 9:13–14). The author also agrees that everything must be cleansed with blood as the Torah commands, and that there is no forgiveness without it (Heb 9:22). This necessitates the real sanctuary in heaven be cleansed with an even better sacrifice (i.e., Jesus's blood) than the earthly tabernacle required (i.e., animal sacrifices) (Heb 9:23). The blood of Jesus has "sanctified" [ἁγιάζω] the people, and they are sternly warned against treating Jesus's sacrifice as something "common" [κοινός] (Heb 10:29). The Hebrews writer also calls Jesus "holy" [ὅσιος], "innocent" [ἄκακος], "undefiled" [ἀμίαντος], and "set apart from sinners" [κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν] in Heb 7:26, which is the strongest statement about Jesus's purity in Hebrews, and arguably in all the New Testament. The purity of Jesus is, therefore, central to Hebrews's argument for the efficacy of his sacrifice and priestly ministry. The author's repeated use of "perfection" language also drives home the point that community's purity is fully dependent upon the purity of Jesus.

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[130] For instance, it is notable that the writer of Hebrews specifically laments his hearers' immaturity and not deficiencies in their doctrine. He encourages them to move on from the "elementary teachings about Christ" and carry onward towards "perfection" (Heb 6:1).

[131] Dieter Georgi similarly avers that "Hebrews understands law most of all as paraenesis" (Georgi, "Hebrews and the Heritage of Paul," 244).

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[132] There has long been debate over the moral implications of Hebrews's portrayal of Jesus's perfection and humanity (e.g., see the discussions in Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 1–20; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 82–87; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 194–97; Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 78–79). However, it is significant that the Hebrews writer uses terms connoting "perfection" [τελειόω, τελείωσις] repeatedly in collocation with references to "suffering" [πάθημα] and references to "sacrifice" [e.g., ἀναφέρω, προσφέρω, προσφορά]. God is said to have made Jesus a perfect sacrifice and priest through suffering (2:10; 5:8–9). Jesus is also said to make worshippers—both the community members and their Israelite ancestors—perfect by his sacrificial sufferings and priestly ministry in a definitive manner only foreshadowed by the Levitical system (7:11, 27–28; 9:9; 10:1, 14). Thus, the concept of perfection in Hebrews has an explicit cultic context as it concerns the efficacy of Jesus's sacrifice for the removal of moral impurity from the community and the heavenly sanctuary space (see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 157–63, esp. 162–63). This, unfortunately, has been missed or downplayed in prior discussions of perfection in Hebrews (cf. Hughes, *Hebrews and Hermeneutics*, 32–34; Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection*, 71–73). Indeed, Moffitt argues convincingly that it is Jesus's perfection as a result of his suffering and death which enables him to enter the heavenly sanctuary to make atonement for the perfecting of his people (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 195–98).

[133] Neusner observes that while there are Levitical laws regulating and prohibiting blood in certain instances, the blood of Jesus does not defile, but cleanses (Neusner, *The Idea of Purity*, 64).

The Hebrews writer also deals with other types of purity concerns that resemble those addressed in other Second Temple literature. For instance, ritual "baptisms" or "washings" [βαπτισμῶν], which, as mentioned above, probably refers to immersion rituals common in Second Temple Judaism and Jewish Christianity,[134] are listed as part of the "elementary teachings about Christ" [τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον], along with laying on hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eschatological judgment (Heb 6:1–3). However, Hebrews also argues that Old Testament's purity laws concerning "food and drink" [βρώμασιν καὶ πόμασιν], "washings" [βαπτισμοῖς], and "regulations for the flesh" [δικαιώματα σαρκός] were only intended to be in effect until the time of the new order (9:10), implying that at least some in the community were no longer observing these regulations. In Heb 10:22, the author also uses ritual washing or immersion as a metaphor for spiritual cleansing when he invites his people to "draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." The Hebrews writer also deals with issues of sexual purity when he admonishes his hearers not to be "sexually immoral" [πόρνος] or "profane" [βέβηλος] like Esau (Heb 12:16). He further commands them to keep their marriage beds "undefiled" [ἀμίαντος], because God will judge "the sexually immoral" [πόρνους] and "adulterers" [μοιχούς] (Heb 13:4). The author's use of Esau notably reflects Second Temple Jewish tradition where the brother of Jacob was widely regarded as profane and sexually immoral for engaging in exogamous marriage and polygamy, and so it is unclear whether the writer of Hebrews is advocating for endogamous monogamy or a more generalized sexual ethic.[135]

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[134] For instance, cf. Jdt 12:7–9; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:263; Josephus, *War* 2:129; Mark 1:9–11; Acts 2:38–41, 8:38; 18:8; Rom 6:3–4; 1 Cor 1:12–17. See Adler, "Jewish Ritual Immersion," 1–21; Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 196–208; Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 392–400.

Summary: Purity in Hebrews

From this examination of purity language in Hebrews, we can see that the author is deeply concerned for matters related to ritual and moral purity which were common in Second Temple Judaism. This puts the lie to the belief widely held in older New Testament scholarship that early Christians did not much care for matters of purity and impurity.[136] The author's understanding of atonement is deeply rooted in his understanding of the Levitical sacrificial system. Yet, in the new covenant era, Jesus now serves as both sacrifice and priest, purifying both the heavenly tabernacle and the community. The emphasis the author places on Jesus's purity is particularly significant as this serves as justification for Jesus's priesthood and sacrifice, and as the basis for the community's purity before God.

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[135] E.g., see the portrayals of Esau in Philo, *Virt.* 208 and *Jub* 25:1–9. Esau was likely viewed this way because he rejected both monogamy and endogamy when he married two Hittite women (Gen 26:34). However, it is unclear how much of this context the Hebrews writer has in mind, and thus it is also unclear whether the author is warning against this specific type of sexual behavior or whether he is warning against sexual immorality in general. Even so, contrary to what some scholars have suggested, Heb 12:16 is not a metaphor for the problem of idolatry. See Attridge, *Hebrews*, 368–69.

[136] See also Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 140–63; deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity*, 279–316.

It is also notable that Hebrews argues neither for nor against adherence to traditional Jewish practices like *kashrut*. Yet, paradoxically, the writer regards the Old Testament regulations concerning washings and foods as no longer binding in the messianic age, perhaps implying that some in his community no longer observe these regulations as they once did. He also assumes that his recipients adhere to certain baptismal or washing rituals which are likely Jewish or Jewish-Christian washing purification rituals which are foundational to their communal identity as followers of Jesus.[137] Finally, the author also argues for a traditional Jewish stance on sexual purity, although his allusive reference to Esau in Heb 12:16 makes it unclear whether he is promoting endogamous marriage or a more generalized sexual ethic.

The Sabbath in Hebrews

In examining how the Hebrews writer conceives of the Sabbath, we will consider specific references the author makes to "Sabbath" [σάββατον] and "Sabbath rest" [σαββατισμός]. We will also consider references to "the seventh day" [either the phrase ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ ἑβδόμη or the truncated ἕβδομος] which is synonymous with "Sabbath Day" and is used this way throughout the LXX.[138] Additionally, we will examine references the author makes to "resting" from work (LN 23.78–87) as this theme is often associated with Sabbath observance in Second Temple Jewish sources. Finally, we will also take into account possible references to the synagogue in relation to Sabbath observance in Hebrews as well.

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[137] Cf. Matt 3:11; 28:19; John 4:1–3; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 1 Cor 1:14–17; 12:13.

[138] E.g., Gen 2:2–3; Exod 12:16; 16:26; Lev 13:5; Num 19:12; Deut 16:8; 2 Kgs 25: 8; Ezek 30:20.

The theme of Sabbath rest comes into focus for Hebrews in chapters 3 and 4 where the author discusses it in conjunction with the wilderness wandering narratives of the Old Testament.[139] The writer appeals to Psalm 95, a psalm that by the first century CE was possibly used in various synagogue services on the Sabbath.[140] Three times, in Heb 3:11, 4:3, and 4:5, our author quotes Ps 95:11 (94:11 LXX), saying "they shall never enter my rest." The passage alludes to Num 14:21–23 where YHWH, in spite of Moses's pleading, swears an oath that those who had been rebellious and unfaithful would die in the wilderness and would not enter into the Promised Land.[141] The initial reference to "rest" (κατάπαυσις) in 3:11 also prepares for the warning passage of Heb 3:12–19 and begins the "rest" motif which drives the remainder of this exposition.[142]

The history of Israel comes alive for Hebrews's community as a solemn warning from God that they should likewise be wary of faithlessness and hard-heartedness lest they meet the same fate as the wilderness generation.[143] The author reminds his audience that the disobedient wilderness generation was not allowed to enter God's rest because they did not believe God (Heb 3:18). Yet, in Heb 4:1, the author says that a rest for God's people remains a real promise for his community and that they should be careful not to miss it. In Heb 4:2 he establishes both continuity and discontinuity between his audience and the wilderness generation by saying the wilderness generation had the same "gospel" preached to them as well, but because of their rebellion they "were not united by faith to those who listened."[144] The author again mentions the wilderness generation not entering God's "rest" [κατάπαυσις] in Heb 4:3–4. However, here he also asserts that God's "works" have been "finished since the foundation of the world" [καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων]. The connection of this motif with the Sabbath further draws out the eschatological dimensions of rest. The author of Hebrews gets there by resorting to *gezera shawa*, the exegetical technique of using one text to illuminate another.[145] Our author thus links two passages that mention "rest" and "work," Gen 2:2–3 and Ps 95:7–11, establishing a conceptual link between the Sabbath rest and God's promised rest for the children of Israel in the Promised Land.[146] This connection is made clear in Heb 4:4 when the author specifically mentions "the seventh day" [τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑβδόμῃ]. In Heb 4:5–6, the author says that some may still enter God's "rest"

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[139] As Attridge notes, the author's train of thought here "does not progress in a simple linear fashion," making the logic of his exegesis at times difficult to follow (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 124). This section also begins the theme of wandering and sojourning in Hebrews (Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 17–96).

[140] See the discussions in Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:85; Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst*, 108, 112–13.

[141] Hofius, *Katapausis*, 117–31.

[142] See the concise discussion of the use of κατάπαυσις in the LXX and Hebrews in Calaway, *The Sabbath and the Sanctuary*, 81–84. The most comprehensive treatment, however, is Hofius, *Katapausis*.

[143] The so-called "warning passages" were intended to deter the community from apostasy. However, regardless of what one believes about the soteriological questions Hebrews raises, the fact that Hebrews was addressed to Christians should caution us against interpreting these warnings as mere rhetorical devices or empty threats (cf. Heb 2:2–4, 11–12, 17; 4:3; 6:10; 10:22, 29, 32–34). For discussion of the theological implications of these passages, see the collection of essays in Bateman, *Warning Passages*.

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[144] Regarding translational issues, the NRSV's handling of the text here is to be preferred to others like the NIV or NAS. Lane notes that while the manuscript tradition on Heb 4:2 preserves "a bewildering variety of readings" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:93), the reading found in the current Nestle-Aland text, μὴ συγκεκερασμένους ("not having been united to"), has the best attestation and makes the most sense in the context. Attridge observes that the Hebrews writer is saying the rebellious wilderness generation is not united to the recipients, because they did not respond "by faith" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 125–26). This contrasts with how Hebrews treats the "heroes of faith" in chapter 11, where the writer clearly identifies his audience with Israel's faithful ancestors. The phrase τῇ πίστει ("by faith") here also adumbrates the important theme of faith which later becomes prominent in Heb 11.

[145] Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 73; Bakhos, "Midrash, Midrashim," 945.

[146] E.g., see Hofius, *Katapausis*, 55.

[κατάπαυσις], but reiterates that the wilderness generation did not enter because they were disobedient.

In Heb 4:7 the writer again references Ps 95, this time Ps 95:7, when he says that this rest is available "today," and that the community should take care not to harden their hearts like the wilderness generation before them. The author then says in Heb 4:8 that if Joshua had given the people "rest" [καταπαύω] then God would not have spoken of another "day," alluding once again to the Sabbath day rest for God's people. In Heb 4:9 he again says that there remains a future "Sabbath rest" [σαββατισμός] for God's people—this is also the first specific mention of the Sabbath in Hebrews.

The Hebrews writer's justification for Sabbath observance is one that was common in Second Temple tradition: that the worshipper should rest from his or her works just as God has rested from his (Heb 4:10). Yet, as Attridge observes, the reference to "works" is ambiguous.[147] The writer could be referring to the expectation of rest after enduring the toils of persecution and social pressure.[148] He could also be referring once again to the disobedience of the wilderness generation and the "dead works" [νεκρῶν ἔργων] from which his community are supposed to repent (cf. Heb 6:1; 9:14). Nevertheless, the writer urges his hearers to "eagerly strive" [σπουδάσωμεν] to enter God's rest (Heb 4:11).

Concerning the related issue of Sabbath observance and the synagogue, the Hebrews writer does not have much to say. However, there is one tantalizing reference in Heb 10:25 where the author admonishes his community not to forsake "the assembly"

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[147] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 131.

[148] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 131. Attridge also notes that Philo sometimes uses "work" as a metaphor for spiritual struggles.

[τὴν ἐπισυναγωγήν].[149] There has been much speculation among scholars over what might have led some to cease attending congregational gatherings, such as disillusionment over the delay of the Parousia or persistent fear of persecution.[150] Yet, whatever the cause might have been, as Lane notes, the Hebrews writer treats this problem "as utterly serious."[151] Failure to participate in the assembly, and failure to persevere in faith more generally, is described in the harshest terms by the writer as "willful sin" for which "no sacrifice for sins is left," but only "fear of judgment" (Heb 10:26–30). However, while this "assembly" almost certainly refers to the community gathering for corporate worship, for our purposes it is unclear whether this is a reference specifically to traditional Sabbath worship or to worship on the "first day of the week" which was increasingly becoming accepted practice among some of the earliest Christian communities in the first century.[152] It is also unclear whether the writer is referring to an actual gathering in a Jewish synagogue or prayer-house, or to a house church assembly.[153]

Summary: The Sabbath in Hebrews

As mentioned earlier, by the first century CE, the Sabbath had become a highly significant marker of identity for Jewish communities in both Judea and throughout the Roman Diaspora. Evidence from the New Testament indicates that the Sabbath continued to have a high level of importance for many early Jewish-Christian communities as well.[154] This is why it is interesting that the author of Hebrews does not spend much, if any, time discussing traditional concerns about Sabbath observance. In fact, these sorts of issues seem to be largely outside the scope of what he is addressing. For instance, while it is clear that the writer reveres the Sabbath and understands it in the traditional Jewish manner (e.g., Heb 4:10), he does not refer to any halakhic debates over what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable work. Also, while the admonition to assemble together in 10:25 could certainly be taken as a reference to meeting on the Sabbath for worship in the synagogue or in some other location, by this time some Christian groups were evidently gathering for worship on Sunday as well in celebration of Jesus's resurrection (e.g., Mark 16:2; Acts 20:7), and so it is not entirely clear what relevance that passage might have for Hebrews's understanding of either the Sabbath or the synagogue. Even so, it is difficult to imagine that the Sabbath would not have been highly significant for the writer or his recipients since together they viewed themselves as a Jewish-Christian community of "Abraham's descendants" (Heb 2:16) who had longstanding connections to both the Judean church (2:3) and also to Timothy, an observant Jewish Christian associated with the Pauline mission (13:23; cf. Acts 16:1–3). Thus, if there were community members not gathering for worship, then presumably those worshippers would have been delinquent from any Sabbath gatherings along with any potential Sunday gatherings as well. It is perhaps for this very reason that the author uses the Sabbath tradition as a means for addressing his community's crisis of perseverance.

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[149] Attridge's translation (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 290).

[150] Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:290.

[151] Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:290.

[152] Cf. Mark 16:2; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2.

[153] Cf. 2 Macc 1:27; Matt 23:37; 2 Thess 2:1. See Schrage, "ἐπισυναγωγή," *TDNT* 7:841–43; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 290; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 528–29. The author also refers to his community as part of "the assembly of the Firstborn" [ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων] in Heb 12:23.

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[154] E.g., contrary to D. A. Carson's claim that the earliest Christians "treated the Sabbath as a shadow of the past" (Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath," 85), there is ample evidence in the New Testament to suggest otherwise. For example, in several places, the Gospels focus attention on debates between Jesus and the Pharisees over the true nature of Sabbath observance, and in no instance is the Sabbath ever disregarded or treated as anything other than sacred tradition (Matt 12:1–8, 10–14; Mark 2:23–27; 3:1–5; Luke 6:1–10; 13:10–17; 14:1–6; Jn 5:1–18; 7:19–24; 9:1–16). Also, throughout Acts, Luke depicts Jewish Christians, including communities that admitted Gentile proselytes, as adhering to Sabbath observances in the synagogue as well, continuing the practice of Jesus and the earliest disciples (Acts 1:12; 13:14–49; 15:19–21; 16:13; 17:1–2; 18:4). Furthermore, as Richard Bauckham has shown, the practice of meeting on the Sabbath continued even after the first century, and the practice of meeting on Sunday as the "Lord's Day" only gradually became standard practice as the church became more gentile in makeup (Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday," 251–98). See also the helpful survey in Westerholm and Evans, "Sabbath," 1031–35.

In appropriating the Sabbath tradition for addressing his community's crisis, the author relates the Sabbath "rest" to the "rest" awaiting the children of Israel in the Promised Land, a promise that was unrealized because of their lack of faith.[155] However, this promised Sabbath rest remains a reality for God's people, and if the community follows Jesus, he will lead them there. The Sabbath thus takes on an eschatological character in Hebrews, representing the ultimate hope of the community and the goal of their perseverance. As Attridge notes, some Jewish writers used κατάπαυσις in referring to eschatological "rest" within the apocalyptic literature of Second Temple Judaism, sometimes referring either to a kind of spiritual or heavenly rest or to the new creation or new Jerusalem.[156] Such a theological development naturally arose out of Jewish experience in the exile when the temple and land had been lost. Hebrews certainly stands within this line of Jewish theology, though his use of the rest motif must be understood within the greater context of the other soteriological themes he develops in the letter (e.g., perfection, promise, inheritance) as well as his Christological framework (e.g., Jesus as divine Son, priest, perfecter).[157]

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[155] Hebrews's treatment of the theme of Land will be addressed in chapter 5 of this dissertation.

[156] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 127–28. Cf. *1 En* 39:4–9; 45:3–6; *T. Abr.* 7:9–16; *T. Dan.* 5:12; *4 Ezra* 8:52; *2 Bar.* 78–86. Also, see Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 252–358. Laansma argues convincingly that the "rest" described in Hebrews is both earthly (given the references to Jerusalem in Hebrews) and futuristic (in that it is eschatological). Lane, though, also observes that there is a personal/spiritual dimension to the promise of Sabbath rest in Hebrews and says: "The failure of the Exodus generation to enter the promised rest did not abrogate the reality and accessibility of that rest. The issue of entering God's rest must be faced by each generation" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:104).

[157] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 128.

Ancestry and Kinship in Hebrews

In tracing the theme of ancestry in Hebrews, we will examine portions of Hebrews where the author makes specific references to "ancestors" [οἱ πατέρες and similar language], and also to Israel's "patriarchs" [οἱ πατριάρχαι], especially Abraham. Kinship language will also be examined as well, especially language included in the Louw-Nida semantic category "Members of Groups of Persons Regarded as Related by Blood" both with and without reference to successive generations (LN 10.1–48).

While some scholars have argued that Hebrews does not focus much on issues of ancestry and kinship,[158] a closer reading of the text suggests otherwise. Ancestry and kinship are of particular importance for the Hebrews writer when addressing the following topics: Jesus the Son's kinship to God the Father and to Hebrews's recipients, Jesus's tribal lineage, and the recipients' kinship to the nation of Israel and Israel's ancestors.

As mentioned above in the section on monotheism, the author of Hebrews has a good deal to say regarding Jesus's filial relationship to God. Jesus is God's divine "son" [υἱός], and "son" is the favorite epithet for Jesus used by the Hebrews writer (Heb 1:2–3, 5, 8; 2:6; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 28; 10:29).[159] Jesus is also God's "firstborn" [τὸν πρωτότοκον] and is worshipped by God's angels (1:6). Jesus the Son even shares the divine name of his heavenly Father, being addressed as both "God" and "Lord" (1:8–10).[160] In fact, the familial relationship between the Father and the Son is so foundational to Hebrews that, as Amy Peeler notes, it "shapes the theology and Christology of the letter, and, in so doing, constructs the identity of the audience, legitimizes their present experience, and supports them in their endurance."[161] However, the author also asserts that the community are God's children and that a vital kinship relationship exists between them and Jesus as well, a theme which especially becomes prominent in chapter 2, though it appears elsewhere.[162] Jesus is said to be the community's salvific "originator" [τὸν ἀρχηγόν] who is bringing "many children" [πολλοὺς υἱούς] to glory (2:10). Jesus and the community are "all of one" [ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες],[163] and the community are called Jesus's "brothers and sisters"[164] [ἀδελφοὺς αὐτούς] (2:11–12, 17). In Heb 2:13–14, the author places the words of Isa 8:17–18 into the mouth of Jesus as he presents the community in heaven before God as his "children" [τὰ παιδία] with whom he shares "blood and flesh" [αἵματος καὶ σαρκός]. In 3:6, the writer also says that Jesus is a faithful Son over God's house, "whose house we are" [οὗ οἶκός ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς]. Later, in 12:5–9, the writer appeals to Prov 3:11–12 and casts his community's sufferings and their relationship with God in terms of a father's bringing up his children by way of disciplined instruction, a process

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[158] Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 9–21.

[159] See Matera, *New Testament Theology*, 337–41.

[160] On the familial context of the use of divine names for Jesus in the catena of Heb 1:5–13, Peeler comments: "God speaks to the Son in psalms that were originally addressed to God. He directs the worship of his angels to the Son. He promises his Son that he will remain the same forever. He addresses him by the

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name κύριος θεός. This exalted Christology is a relational Christology, attaining its height because of its integral and inseparable relationship to Hebrews' theology. Jesus' superiority stems from his relationship with God—from the reality that God is his Father and that he is God's Son" (Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 61).

[161] Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 8.

[162] Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 84–88.

[163] There have been a variety of interpretations offered for understanding the phrase "all of one", including: God as being the source of all (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 89; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:58); the union of Jesus with those he has sanctified (e.g., Vanhoye, *Situation*, 334); common ancestral descent from Abraham (e.g., Buchanan, *Hebrews*, 32); and common humanity from Adam (e.g., Moffitt, *Atonement*, 132–41). However, while Moffitt favors the interpretation of the phrase as referring to common humanity, he also notes that it might have been intentionally ambiguous in order to allow for these other readings (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 130–33). This seems to be an appropriate conclusion considering the writer's designation of the community as children of God (2:13); Jesus's coinheritors (1:14), mortals of "blood and flesh" (2:14), and "Abraham's descendants" (2:16).

[164] The likelihood that the writer's community included women as well as men justifies a gender-inclusive translation.

called *paideia* [παιδεία]. Just as Jesus the Son had learned obedience from what he had suffered, so the community must also share in those sufferings (cf. Heb 5:8–9).[165] This suffering, in particular, is a testament to Jesus's fitness as God's true heir, and to the fitness of the community as those who also stand to inherit God's promises through Jesus.[166] In this regard, Peeler rightly observes that the author views their sufferings as integral to the community's identity as God's legitimate children:

> Instead of being a source of discouragement, these difficulties should encourage the audience insofar as they are proof of their participation in the discipline that God brings upon his υἱοί. In other words, they are experiencing God's παιδεία *because they are* his sons and daughters.[167]

Jesus's tribal lineage is also a significant topic of discussion in Hebrews, especially in chapter 7. For instance, in Heb 7:13–14, the Hebrews writer, addressing the question of how Jesus could be a priest, recalls the well-known tradition of Jesus's descent from Judah, "a tribe about which Moses said nothing concerning priests." The writer appeals to Melchizedek, the first priest mentioned in the Pentateuch (Gen 14:18–20; cf. Ps 110:4), as a convenient Old Testament precedent and paradigm for Jesus's priesthood. According to some creative exegesis, Melchizedek was "without father or mother, without genealogy" [ἀπάτωρ ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος] and "remains a priest forever" [μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές] even though he "did not trace his genealogy" [μὴ γενεαλογούμενος] from Levi (Heb 7:3, 6).

The author of Hebrews also asserts that kinship exists between his community and Israel's ancestors. The Hebrews writer begins his letter by recalling how in the past God had spoken to "the ancestors" [τοῖς πατράσιν] by the prophets (Heb 1:1).[168] There is also a great deal of interest in Abraham the patriarch in particular (Heb 2:16; 6:13–15; 7:4–5; 11:8–19).[169] The writer more explicitly asserts that he and his audience share kinship with Abraham when in Heb 2:16 he states that Jesus has come to help them because they, too, are "Abraham's descendants" [σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ].[170] He also depicts the Holy Spirit as speaking the words of Ps 95:8 (94:8 LXX) directly to his audience, warning them in Heb 3:7–9 not to have hardened hearts like "your ancestors" [οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν] who tested God in the wilderness. In Heb 8:8–12, the writer quotes Jer 31 regarding YHWH's promise to make a new covenant with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah" [τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰούδα], and throughout the letter argues that his community are themselves the recipients of this new covenant, thus implicitly identifying them with the national/familial houses of Israel and Judah.[171] The author further identifies his community with Israel's patriarchal ancestors by saying that they share in the promises of

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[165] See the discussion in Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 151–62.

[166] Peeler, *You Are My Son*, 78–83.

[167] Peeler, You Are My Son, 158.

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[168] The phrase τοῖς πατράσιν often refers to physical ancestors in the LXX and in the New Testament. The author, notably, does not include the possessive plural pronoun "our" before "ancestors." Attridge believes the writer chose to leave this out because to include it would have nullified "the alliterative effect" of his prose (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 38). Vanhoye argues that the lack of possessive pronoun renders the text ambiguous and this tells us little about whether the audience was Jewish or not (Vanhoye, *Situation*, 58). However, the pronoun is not always necessary. For instance, Josephus also sometimes references Israel's "ancestors" without corresponding possessive pronouns (*Ant.* 4:54; 14:247; 15:95; *War* 1:17), and so the possibility of an implied pronoun in Hebrews should not be hastily ruled out. Indeed, Papyrus 12—a third-century fragment containing the text of Heb 1:1—contains the clarifying variant "*our* ancestors," a reading that is also attested in several early versions as well.

[169] E.g., see the comments in Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:150–54.

[170] The phrase "Abraham's descendants," is a phrase that almost always implies Jewish ancestry in both the LXX and the New Testament (e.g., 2 Chr 20:7; Ps 105:6; Isa 41:8; Luke 1:55; John 8:33, 37; 2 Cor 11:22).

[171] By my count the epithets οἶκος Ἰσραήλ ("house of Israel") and οἶκος Ἰούδα ("house of Judah") occur an estimated 154 times and 40 times respectively throughout the LXX and Apocrypha, and always refer to ethnic Jews. In the New Testament writings outside of Hebrews, these phrases seldom appear with "house of Israel" always referring to ethnic Jews (Matt 10:6; 15:24; Acts 2:36; 7:42) and "house of Judah" occurring nowhere else aside from the quotation of Jer 31:31 in Heb 8:8.

Abraham, and in the eschatological inheritance of those ancient Israelites who were looking forward to the heavenly city of God (Heb 6:12–20; 11:8–16, 40; 13:13–14).[172]

Summary: Ancestry and Kinship in Hebrews

Ancestry and kinship are important issues for the author of Hebrews. He identifies his community with the familial houses of Israel and Judah as recipients of the promised new covenant of Jer 31. He also repeatedly asserts that kinship exists between his community and Israel's ancestors. When he refers to them as "Abraham's descendants," he notably does not spend any amount of time arguing for a "nonracial" or universalizing interpretation of this phrase as Paul does (cf. Rom 9:6–8; Gal 3:29).[173] The writer even refers to the wilderness generation as their "ancestors" as well (Heb 3:7–9), and argues that their fate should serve as a warning for the community. The community also is said to share the same eschatological "inheritance" as the heroes of Israel's past, including the patriarchs, further implying kinship with them as well. The writer additionally emphasizes Jesus's Judahite lineage and his "blood and flesh" kinship to the community, which could possibly imply an ethnic relationship between Jesus, the community, and Israel.

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[172] Inheritance is a significant theme in Hebrews. In the context of the patriarchal narratives of the Old Testament, and in the ancient world generally, inheritance implies some form of kinship (e.g., Matthews, "Family Relationships," 295–97). See Harris, "The Eternal Inheritance in Hebrews," 194–206.

[173] Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 178. Indeed, the two main potential exceptions to the ethnic interpretation of the phrase "Abraham's descendants" are found in Paul's writings, Rom 9:6–8 and Gal 3:29. In Rom 9:6-8, Paul asserts that unbelieving Jews, though Abraham's physical descendants, were not part of true "Israel," and that believing Jews and Gentiles were. However, it is important to note that in this passage, Paul still uses the phrase in referring to ethnic Jews. Rather, the distinction Paul makes is between *some* of "Abraham's descendants" and "Israel." In Gal 3:29, Paul, writing to a congregation of mostly Gentile Christians, calls them "Abraham's descendants" ['Αβραὰμ σπέρμα] and asserts that their status of being in Christ has eliminated the distinctions between the "Jew" ['Ιουδαῖος] and the "Greek" ['Ελλην] (Gal 3:28). However, it is important to note that there is no indication that the Hebrews writer is dealing with the types of Jew/Gentile concerns that Paul addresses in Romans and Galatians, and thus there is nothing in Hebrews to suggest that the author is using this phrase in any way differently than how it is used in the LXX or the rest of the New Testament.

At this point, however, one must be careful not to overstate the implications of this language associating the community with Israel. Indeed, there are examples from the New Testament and other early Christian literature where kinship language is used to assert a fictive kinship[174] relationship between Gentile Christians and Israel. For example, the Apostle Paul, addressing Christians in Corinth, refers to the wilderness generation of Exodus as "our ancestors" [οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν] in 1 Cor 10:1. Clement of Rome, when also addressing the community in Corinth near the end of the first century, speaks to them of "our father Abraham" and "our father Jacob" (1 Clem 4:8; 31:2).[175] However, it is important to note that in instances where such fictive kinship is asserted, there are usually other indicators in the text that show kinship with Israel is being extended to Gentiles. For instance, elsewhere in 1 Corinthians, Paul seems to indicate that he is preaching to a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor 1:22–24) and even that the congregation is perhaps significantly Gentile at the time he is writing (e.g., the issue of food sacrificed to idols is significant in 1 Cor 8). However, it is notable that in Hebrews the writer gives no indication that the kinship he says exists between his community and Israel is fictive, even if he sometimes refers to that kinship only implicitly. While it is possible, and even likely, that there were at least some Gentile Christians among Hebrews's recipients as well, the author does not spend any time wrestling with the question of how Gentile

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[174] The term "fictive kinship" (also sometimes referred to as "social kinship") is commonly used in sociological and anthropological studies of family and refers to a type of kinship that is imagined (though not any less real), and is, therefore, not based on traditional kinship ties such as blood relationship (consanguinity) or marriage (affinity). See Fox, "Kinship," 109–12.

[175] See the discussion in Marohl, *Faithfulness*, 5–15.

Christians in the congregation could share kinship with Israel and the ancestors and shows no interest in addressing any of typical Jew/Gentile issues. The kinship language used throughout Hebrews which relates the community to the nation of Israel and to the ancestors is, therefore, suggestive of implied readers who were likely, at least predominantly, Jewish Christians.

The Hebrews writer is also keenly interested in the question of Jesus's ancestry as it pertains to the legal qualifications for priestly service in the Old Testament. This implies that the recipients were concerned to know how Jesus could possibly make atonement for them when his lineage disqualified him from serving as a priest in the Levitical tradition. To answer this question, the author spends an extensive amount of time doing creative exegesis to explain that Jesus was instead a priest like Melchizedek, and that his priesthood was not based upon claims of physical descent. The fact that the author takes such pains to address concerns over Jesus's tribal lineage further suggests the probability that Hebrews was addressed to a predominately Jewish-Christian audience for whom the Levitical priestly system held great significance, and that he was not just engaging in speculative theology.

Additionally, the writer is interested to establish a kinship relationship between God the Father, Jesus the divine Son, and the community as both God's children and Jesus's younger siblings. God disciplines and perfects his children just as he did his Son—through suffering. Jesus shares in the flesh-and-blood humanity of the community and is proud to be their elder brother. The recipients are not merely part of "the house of Israel and the house of Judah," they are God's house—God's family—with Jesus being both the originator of their salvation and the faithful Son ruling over God's house.

Covenant and Election in Hebrews

In this section we will examine Hebrews's use of the language of election [ἐκλεκτός, ἐκλέγομαι, etc.] (LN 30.86–107) and related phrases such as "people of God" and "his people." We will further examine specific usage of the word διαθήκη ("covenant") as well as other related language also categorized in the semantic domain "Establish or Confirm a Relation" (LN 34.42–49). Sections of Hebrews where the author uses socio-political language referring to Israel as a "nation" or "people," and related terminology, will also be considered as well (LN 11.55–89). Additionally, we will examine relevant references to other themes often associated with covenant in Second Temple Judaism, including texts that use language within the domain "Laws, Regulation, Ordinance" (LN 33.333–42), and references to election and circumcision as well.

The writer of Hebrews does refer to the process of "calling" [καλέω] or election. For instance, he recounts how Abraham was "called" (Heb 11:8) and the community is referred to as those "called" to receive an "eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:5). While the author never uses the term ἔθνος, the various references to "my people," "people of God," and "his people" scattered throughout Hebrews show that the writer and his recipients believe they are God's elect and that they are living within a covenantal framework (e.g., Heb 4:9; 6:10; 8:10; 10:30). Also, as mentioned, the author identifies his community as being included within "the house of Israel and the house Judah" (Heb 8:8–12), language which suggests some sense of kinship and possibly even nationality.

The theme of covenant comes to dominate the discussion in Hebrews explicitly in chapters 7–10. Two things become apparent. First, the author of Hebrews typically thinks of the Sinai covenant primarily in priestly or cultic terms.[176] Secondly, while the covenant of Abraham remains intact, the Hebrews writer believes the covenant of Moses is being succeeded by the new covenant of Jesus.[177] For instance, in Heb 7:18, the writer, referring to the Levitical law, says that the "former commandment" [προαγούσης ἐντολῆς] is being "set aside" [ἀθέτησις]. Jesus has also become the guarantee of "a better covenant" [κρείττονος διαθήκης] than the Mosaic covenant (Heb 7:22). In Heb 8:6, the use of superlatives is striking as the Hebrews writer asserts that Jesus has "received a more excellent ministry" [διαφορωτέρας τέτυχεν λειτουργίας] and is the "mediator of a better covenant" [κρείττονός ἐστιν διαθήκης μεσίτης] founded on "better promises" [κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις].

Hebrews is unequivocal in saying that Jesus's priestly ministry is "better" than the Levitical ministry and that his covenant is "better" than the Sinai covenant. However, does the writer really believe that the covenant of Moses was deficient in some way? The text of Hebrews seems to confirm this, at least in a limited sense. For instance, the writer states that the Law was inadequate for dealing with the sins of God's people in a permanent and lasting way. For this reason, in Heb 7:18 he says that the Law was being set aside because of its "weakness and ineffectiveness" [ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές]. The Hebrews writer goes on to add in Heb 7:19 that "the Law made nothing perfect" [οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος], and that Jesus has given the people a better hope by which worshippers can draw near to God. Elsewhere, in Heb 8:7–10, the author explains that the

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[176] See Lehne, *New Covenant*, 93–117.

[177] Paul appears to take a similar view when he argues that the promises of Abraham are separate from, and thus not contingent upon, the Law of Moses (Gal 3:15–18).

Sinai covenant was not "faultless" [ἄμεμπτος]. These are extraordinary statements for any Jew to make about the Torah; yet they also seem to be natural inferences from the scriptural promise of Jer 31, to which the writer refers.[178] The writer also clarifies his jarring statements about the Torah by saying the fault lay ultimately with the disobedient generation who broke faith with God and was sent into exile. Later, in Heb 10:1, the author says that the Law is a "shadow" [σκιά] of the heavenly realities that have come, and that this is why its sacrifices could never perfect those worshippers who would draw near to God. He also quotes Ps 40:6 in Heb 10:8–9, saying that even though the Law required animal sacrifices, God did not desire them, and that God has "done away with" [ἀναιρέω] the first covenant in order to establish the second, a restatement of what he says about the Law earlier in Heb 7:18.

For Hebrews, a new covenant is essential. In support of this idea, he refers to Jer 31:31–34 (38:31–34 LXX) where God promises to make "a new covenant" [διαθήκην καινήν] with the houses of Israel and Judah that will not be like the covenant made with "their ancestors" [τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν] (Heb 8:8–10). God will write his "laws" [νόμους][179] on their hearts, not on tablets of stone as he did at Sinai. In Heb 8:13, the author explains the logic of the Jeremiah passage and describes the Mosaic covenant as now "obsolete" [παλαιούμενον], "aging" [γηράσκον], and is "soon to be destroyed" [ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ].[180] This triad of descriptors highlights in striking terms the ephemeral nature of the former covenant and, by contrast, the permanence of the new. The Hebrews writer again references Jer 31 in Heb 10:16–17, saying that the new covenant will be different from the old, and that God will write his laws on the hearts of the people, remembering their sins no more. This new covenant also will not require animal sacrifices, because sins will have been removed through Jesus's once-for-all sacrifice (Heb 10:18). The new covenant is further said to be an "eternal covenant" [διαθήκης αἰωνίου] in Heb 13:20, again highlighting its permanence in contrast with the ephemeral nature of the Sinai covenant.

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[178] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 226–27. Attridge also notes that the Jeremiah passage, in its original context, is a message of hope, but that, as in other cases, the Hebrews writer "is not particularly interested in the original context of what he cites" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 227). For similar observations about Hebrews's appropriation of material from the LXX, see Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews*, 3–4.

[179] See Walser, *Old Testament Quotations*, 29–34. Walser argues that the LXX version of Jer 31:33 which uses the plural "laws" instead of the singular "law" is reflective of a Hebrew *Vorlage* predating the version found in the MT.

Whereas the old covenant was mediated by Moses, in Heb 9:15 the author reiterates that Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant and explains that Jesus died to set the people free from sins committed under the Sinai covenant so that they might receive the hope of an "eternal inheritance." In 9:16–17, the author compares the covenant to a last will and testament that is put into effect by the death of the one who made it (i.e., Jesus).[181] This also recalls how the Sinai covenant was put into effect with blood from animal sacrifices, and the author quotes Exod 24:8 where Moses says, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you" (Heb 9:18–20). However, the Hebrews writer goes on to say in Heb 10:29 that in the new covenant era, the blood of Jesus has now become "the blood of the covenant" [τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης], alluding once again to Exod 24:8. In Heb 10:28–29, the author, using an argument from lesser-to-greater, warns his people that if those who despised Moses's law were put to death, those who would "trample" the Son of God and "the blood of the [new] covenant" would face even more severe divine retribution.[182]

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[180] Regarding the translation of the phrase ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ, see p. 32 of this dissertation.

[181] See Behm, "διαθήκη," *TDNT* 2:106–34. Notably, the editors of the LXX chose to translate the Hebrew word ברית ("covenant, agreement") as διαθήκη ("last will, testament"). This allows the Hebrews writer to engage in some sophisticated wordplay by comparing the covenants of Moses and Jesus to a last will and testament being put into effect by death.

Hebrews does not spend much time discussing specific commandments or prescriptions of the Sinai covenant. In Heb 7:5, the writer refers to the Levitical "law to collect the tithe ["tenth"] from the people," and in 7:16 he mentions the law requiring physical descent from Aaron. He also refers to the priestly blood rituals for purification (9:19, 22). The author also makes reference to "regulations" [δικαιώματα] only twice. The first instance is in Heb 9:1 and refers broadly to Levitical worship regulations. The second, in 9:10, is another broad reference to regulations of food, drink, and the body. There are no references to festivals or circumcision in Hebrews. Instead, Hebrews approaches the issue of covenant from a cultic perspective and uses the old covenant of Moses as a way of highlighting the novelty and permanence of the new covenant of Jesus.

However, even while Hebrews does not spend much time addressing specific commandments, the writer does comment on the nature of the Mosaic Law. Specific references to the "law" [νόμος] occur 15 times throughout Hebrews, and all instances are found in chapters 7–10, where we find an extended discourse about Jesus's heavenly priesthood. In most instances, the writer talks about the Law as something that is being changed and surpassed by a new covenant. For example, he asserts that the commencement of Jesus's heavenly priesthood also entails "a change of the law" [νόμου μετάθεσις γίνεται] (Heb 7:12). In 7:19, the writer says that the Law “made nothing perfect” [οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος] but that the new covenant offers a better means of drawing near to God. He also asserts that “the law appoints priests who are subject to weakness,” but God’s oath (a reference to Ps 110:4) which came “after the law” [τῆς ὁρκωμοσίας τῆς μετὰ τὸν νόμον] appoints the Son who is “perfect forever.” In 10:1, the Law is called “a shadow of the good things that have come, not the exact form of the things themselves.” A final reference worth noting is Heb 10:8 where the writer quotes from Ps 40:6 (39:7 LXX) saying that God did not ultimately desire the sacrifices and offerings made “according to the law,” but that these pointed ahead to the definitive sacrifice of Jesus (Heb 10:9–10). Lehne is right, therefore, when she argues that Hebrews does not conceive of the new covenant as a reiteration of the first covenant.[183] Rather, the Mosaic Law is regarded by the writer as something that is liminal and definitive of an age in salvation history that has largely passed. In light of Jesus’s once-for-all sacrifice, therefore, the Hebrews writer argues that the Law was limited in what it could do for worshippers through its sacrifices. However, the writer also views the Law as prophetic in that it heralds the coming new order of Jesus, and a new law that is written on the heart (Heb 10:16).

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[182] Drawing a comparison to the blessings/curses motif common to ANE vassal treaties and Deut 28, Lehne notes that in Hebrews "consequences/'curses' for rejection of the [new covenant] are far more severe than under the old covenant," and that "the [new covenant] 'blessings' exceed those conveyed by the old order in quality, stability and duration" (Lehne, *New Covenant*, 106).

Summary: Covenant and Election in Hebrews

The issues of covenant and election in Hebrews are complex. The writer believes that he and his community are part of God’s elect and are living in a covenantal relationship with God based on the covenant of Abraham. He also believes that the covenants of Abraham and Moses have been definitive for the nation of Israel. However, the writer also argues that the coming of Jesus has changed the situation dramatically for the people of God. Thus, in Hebrews, readers are confronted with an ongoing tension between past and present, continuity and discontinuity, old and new which characterize how the writer treats these fundamental elements of Jewish identity.

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[183] Lehne, *New Covenant*, 99–100.

It is also evident that the Hebrews writer believes the Mosaic covenant has served its purpose and that it either is no longer, or soon will no longer be, in effect. Rather, the Hebrews writer views the Sinai covenant in terms of Old Testament prophecy, as yet another set of signs and symbols preparing the way for the reality of the new covenant of Jesus. While our author assumes that there is continuity between the elect people of God past and present, the covenant of Jesus represents something new and different from the old covenant of Moses. The author is in no way advocating for covenantal nomism, at least not as Sanders envisions it. Rather, the old has served its purpose as it has found its prophetic fulfillment in the arrival of the new. The shadow has passed, and the reality has come. The texts above thus pose a real challenge for Richard Hays and others who view Hebrews as only advocating for a sort of renewed covenantalism.[184]

However, it is also significant that the Hebrews writer never speaks abusively or derogatorily about the Sinai covenant, nor about any adherence to Jewish practices associated with it.[185] He also does not criticize his recipients for their faith in their status as God's elected people (cf. Rom 9–11). The Sinai covenant, though inadequate for taking care of sin once-and-for-all, is not something that is problematized for Hebrews's audience; nor is it something they see as threatening. Having served its purpose, it is simply regarded as obsolete. This, in turn, poses a serious interpretive challenge for those who would argue that Hebrews was written to castigate Jewish-Christians for some sort of inappropriate devotion to the Law.

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[184] Hays, "No Lasting City," 151–73.

[185] Again, it is remarkable how starkly Hebrews's treatment of Israel's covenantal tradition contrasts with the polemical way it is treated in some of the *Adversus Judaeos* literature from early Christianity such as the Epistle of Barnabas or Tertullian's *Against the Jews*. E.g., see Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide*, 117–82; Backhaus, "Das Bundesmotiv," 211–31.

Conclusions about Hebrews and the Law

Our analysis has shown that Hebrews has much to say about issues related to the Mosaic Law. The writer frequently addresses themes that are prominent in the Torah, including monotheism, ancestry and kinship, covenant and election, purity, and the Sabbath. On this basis, what sort of social situation is suggested by our author's presentation of these traditions related to the Law? Several observations can be made on this point. The Hebrews writer is a strident worshipper of YHWH, and his theology is deeply rooted in the liturgy and traditions of the Old Testament and Second Temple Judaism. He is also concerned for issues of purity that were common in Second Temple Judaism, including ritual, moral, and sexual purity. The writer is also highly preoccupied with the issue of atonement as prescribed in the Levitical sacrificial system. He reveres the tradition about the Sabbath as a gift of divine and human rest. He also believes that he and his community share real kinship with Abraham and the nation of Israel, evidenced by an abiding connection to the patriarchal narratives and the stories from Israel's past. The writer further believes that he and his community are part of God's elect and assumes that the covenants of Abraham and Moses have been definitive for the Jewish nation and Israel's relationship with God. Indeed, much of the author's treatment of themes related to the Law is consistent with typical Second Temple Jewish practice and belief and is suggestive of an author and a community who identify themselves, in some sense, as *Jewish* Christians.

However, while there is much in Hebrews that is consistent with early Jewish tradition regarding the Law, the writer also is innovative in how he appropriates the tradition about the Torah he has inherited from common Judaism.[186] For instance, even though the writer is a committed Yahwhist, he also believes Jesus Christ shares co-regency and divine status with God as his Son, and that Jesus is the rightful recipient of cultic devotion both from God's angels and God's people, a conviction his audience likely shares as well. While the author is concerned for issues of purity, he believes that the Old Testament regulations of *kashrut* are no longer binding in the new covenant era and that the Levitical system either is no longer, or soon will no longer be, in effect. The Hebrews writer also reinterprets the Sabbath as an eschatological rest that awaits the people of God who persevere faithfully to the end. He further argues that while the covenant of Abraham remains in effect, the covenant of Moses has been succeeded by the new and better covenant of Jesus Christ. This covenant, like the covenant of Abraham but unlike the covenant of Moses, is also said to be "eternal." These themes provide evidence of an emerging sectarian, Jewish-Christian identity influenced by an eschatological worldview.

Additionally, it is critical to note what Hebrews does not say about the Law. For instance, the author does not seem interested in engaging with contemporary halakhic debates regarding circumcision, food laws, or issues of Sabbath observance. While he argues that the Old Testament laws regarding *kashrut* are no longer operative in the new order, he also never spends time arguing that people in his congregation should not observe them. Concerning the writer's admonitions regarding sexual purity, it is not clear whether he is arguing for general sexual purity or for a type of endogamous monogamy which was common in much of Second Temple Jewish practice. Concerning the community's relationship with Israel's ancestors, the author also does not give any indication that this kinship is fictive. The author additionally does not criticize his community for having any misplaced faith in their status as God's elect. Finally, the writer never speaks of the Law as a problem for his community, though he believes the Sinai covenant was limited in its ability to purify the people from sin.

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[186] I thus concur with Steve Moyise's assessment that, much in the same way as the other catholic epistles, Hebrews's interpretive strategy is one of "both tradition and innovation," and at times involves "more innovation than tradition" (Moyise, *The Later New Testament*, 149).

The innovative ways in which the author of Hebrews handles issues pertaining to the Law amount to more than just superficial adjustments to, or appropriations of, common Jewish tradition. In some respects, they constitute substantial adaptations of traditions about the Law that reflect more sectarian forms of Judaism, and especially other early expressions of emerging Jewish Christianity. For instance, while the author's claims about Jesus's exalted status find parallels in textual and liturgical traditions from Second Temple Judaism, they find even closer parallels in texts like the Gospel of John.[187] Also, the author's understanding of Jer 31 as heralding a covenant which supplants the covenant of Moses does not find an exact parallel in Second Temple Judaism broadly but does bear similarities to the literary traditions of Qumran and the

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[187] For example, commentators have often drawn comparisons between John's *logos* Christology and Hebrews which similarly depicts Jesus as the pre-existent and divine Son, the conveyor of God's revelation *par excellence*, and as one who sustains the cosmos by his powerful word (e.g., Heb 1:1–4). For more comprehensive discussions regarding the similarities between the Fourth Gospel and Hebrews, see Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1.102–38; Hickling, "John and Hebrews," 112–16.

Apostle Paul (e.g., CD 6:19; 8:21; Rom 11:25–36; Gal 3–4). Notably, the author does not advocate for a renewed devotion to the Law—at least, not as Sanders understands it. Instead, the writer encourages his audience to strive for what may be regarded as a *new* covenantal nomism when he urges them, as the descendants of Abraham, to persevere in their faithful commitment to Jesus and the new covenant.[188] Additionally, in Hebrews, membership in the covenant of Abraham is tied to membership in the new covenant of Jesus the Messiah, not simply the old covenant of Moses the lawgiver. The author's focus on Jesus, as well as his emphasis on Christ-devotion and new covenantalism, therefore, clearly situates Hebrews as a text within the sectarian tradition of emergent *Christian* Judaism or Jewish *Christianity*, which at the time was still beneath the broad umbrella of Second Temple Judaism.

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[188] Here I draw from Hooker, "Paul and 'Covenantal Nomism'," 47–56. In her essay, Hooker elaborates on the similarities and distinctions between Paul's pattern of religion and Sanders's covenantal nomism, yet her insights could equally apply to Hebrews on this matter as well. For example, she states: "The covenantal nomism which Sanders traces in Judaism is only one form of a more fundamental pattern, in which divine election and promise lead to human acceptance and response . . . The covenant on Sinai and the Mosaic Law, which form the heart of Judaism, are now seen as an interlude, sandwiched between the promises and their fulfillment. But the election of Abraham, and the promises made to him—which cannot fail—are part of God's covenant with Israel, and come to their conclusion with the 'new' covenant in Christ's death. The pattern begins with Abraham, who believed the promises of God . . . it reaches fulfilment in Christ, the true son of Abraham, and in those who live 'in Christ'" (Hooker, "Paul and 'Covenantal Nomism'," 52).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TEMPLE IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND IN HEBREWS

In the preceding chapter, we examined the Law in both Second Temple Judaism and in Hebrews. Our inquiry, guided by frameworks of social history and semantic domain theory, has demonstrated that the Hebrews writer has much to say regarding Law-related issues that were important for Jewish social identity in the Second Temple era. We also concluded that Hebrews's treatment of Law-related themes such as monotheism, purity, Sabbath, ancestry, election and covenant characterize Hebrews as a Jewish-Christian text that exhibits patterns of both tradition and innovation in how it appropriates traditions from the Law that were significant in common Judaism.

In this chapter we will turn our attention to the Temple. Even as Jewish religion became more democratized following the Babylonian exile, the rebuilt Jerusalem temple remained a vital symbol of religious and social identity for most Jews in the Second Temple era. In this chapter we will examine the following temple-related themes in Second Temple Judaism and in Hebrews: sacred space (Israel's tabernacle, the first and second temples, and various sacred artifacts and furnishings) and the priesthood (including the high priests, sacrificial rituals, and Old Testament persons associated with priesthood). The cumulative weight of the evidence to be considered in this section will demonstrate that Hebrews's treatment of Temple-related themes suggests the writer was addressing a Jewish-Christian community who was deeply concerned for issues pertaining to the Levitical priesthood and worship at the Jerusalem temple. It will be further argued that Hebrews reflects a situation where this community has become disconnected from the temple and its rituals, and that the writer seeks to address this situation by showing the recipients how Jesus, their messianic priest, meets their needs for atonement and mediation in an unprecedented way in the heavenly sanctuary.

Sacred Space

Sacred Space in Second Temple Judaism

Throughout the history of Israel, the worship of YHWH was largely defined by the people's relationship to a central sanctuary shrine. In ancient Israelite history, this shrine was the tabernacle. For much of Jewish history from the time of the monarchy until the first century CE, however, the central shrine was the temple at Jerusalem. As will also be shown later, regarding Hebrews, the tabernacle and Israel's temple are relevant for our author. Here we will proceed to examine both the tabernacle and the first and second temples, including their design, furnishings, and cultural significance.

The Tabernacle

The tabernacle was the early nomadic sanctuary Israel carried with them as they wandered in the wilderness from Sinai to the land of Canaan (Exod 13–18; Num 10–21).[1]

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[1] Wellhausen argued that the tradition about the tabernacle is fictional, inserted later by someone associated with the Priestly (P) tradition to show that the Jerusalem priesthood and cult had its origins with Moses (*Prolegomena*, 44–46). However, most of scholarship has tended to side with Frank Moore Cross who argued that it was a pre-Solomonic structure used for worship before the construction of the Temple. Much of the following information is detailed in Averbeck, "Tabernacle," 807–27.

This early sanctuary was referred to in a few different ways throughout the Old Testament which highlight the various practical functions it served. It was often called God's "dwelling" or "tent" [משכן, σκηνή (LXX)] because it was literally a tent which could be set up and transported, unlike the later Jerusalem temple or other stationary worship sites (Exod 26). It was also referred to as a "sanctuary" [מקדש; ἁγίασμα] because it was the center for early Israelite worship of YHWH (Exod 25:8; 36:1). It was also known as the "tent of meeting" [אהל מועד] or "tent of testimony" [ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ μαρτυρίου (LXX)] since it was the place where Moses and Aaron met with YHWH and where the elders of the people met with Moses and Aaron to hear YHWH's words and receive YHWH's decisions (Exod 29–30).[2] The tabernacle was also the place where God caused his presence to dwell among his people. YHWH was, therefore, a nomadic God living in a tent as they did, leading his people through the wilderness in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exod 40:34–38; Num 9:15–23).

The tabernacle consisted of a primary sanctuary structure divided into three main chambers and surrounded by a large courtyard area.[3] These various chambers represented progressive "zones of holiness,"[4] and contained elaborate furnishings and sacred artifacts related to worship activities. In the outer courtyard were the bronze "basin" or "laver" [כיור נחשׁת; λουτῆρα χαλκοῦν καὶ βάσιν (LXX)] and "the bronze altar" for sacrifices [מזבח הנחשׁת; τὸ χαλκοῦν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου] (Exod 30:17–21; 39:9). Moving into the sanctuary, in the "holy place" [הקדשׁ; τὸ ἅγιον] resided the "altar of incense" [הקטרת מזבח; τὸ θυσιαστήριον τοῦ θυμιάματος] (Exod 30:27; 37:25–29), the "table of presented bread" [השׁלחן לחם; τὴν τράπεζαν ἄρτους ἐνωπίους] (Exod 25:23–30), and the seven-branched "lampstand" or "Menorah" [המנורה; λυχνία] (Exod 25:31–40). Finally, within the innermost sanctum known as "the Most Holy place" [קדשׁ הקדשׁים; τὸ ἅγιον τῶν ἁγίων] sat the "ark of the covenant" [הארון ברית; ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης] or "ark of the testimony" [הארן העדת; κιβωτὸς μαρτυρίου] (Exod 25:10–16; Num 10:33) which contained the tablets of Moses and some of the manna with which God miraculously fed his people (Exod 16:32–36; 37:1–9; Num 17:10).[5] The ark was covered with a golden lid known as "the mercy seat" [הכפרת; τὸ ἱλαστήριον] on which the blood of sacrifices was poured during the annual Day of Atonement ritual (Exod 25:21). The ark was also overshadowed by statues of golden "cherubim" [כרבים; χερουβιμ] who protectively watched over the ark (Exod 25:22). The following diagram illustrates the layout of the sanctuary and its furnishings, based on information from the biblical text:

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[2] This is not to be confused with the other "tent of meeting" which was set outside the camp, where Moses would meet with YHWH and deliver oracles (Exod 33:7–11). See below.

[3] If the amount of text dedicated to discussing the tabernacle is any indication, then it must have been considered very important by the Priestly editors. Mark George comments on this: "The tabernacle narratives are unlike any other building text in the Hebrew Bible, because they are both longer and more detailed than them. These narratives consist of 13 chapters, or 457 verses, in two blocks of text in the second half of the book of Exodus. Instructions for the creation and construction of the tabernacle are given in Exodus 25–31, with their fulfillment (somewhat changed) in Exod 35–40. By contrast, the construction narratives for Israel's temples, both of which figure so prominently in the theology and imagination of the people and the biblical writers, are far shorter. The construction of Solomon's Temple is narrated in less than three chapters in 1 Kings (1 Kgs 5–7), a mere 94 verses. The Second Temple's construction is narrated in parts of six chapters, for a total of (a relatively paltry) 54 verses. It is rather paradoxical that a space with no physical permanence—no foundation, mere curtains for walls, poles to carry certain tabernacle objects—obtained more permanence and presence in the literary traditions of Israel than either temple." (George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 1–2).

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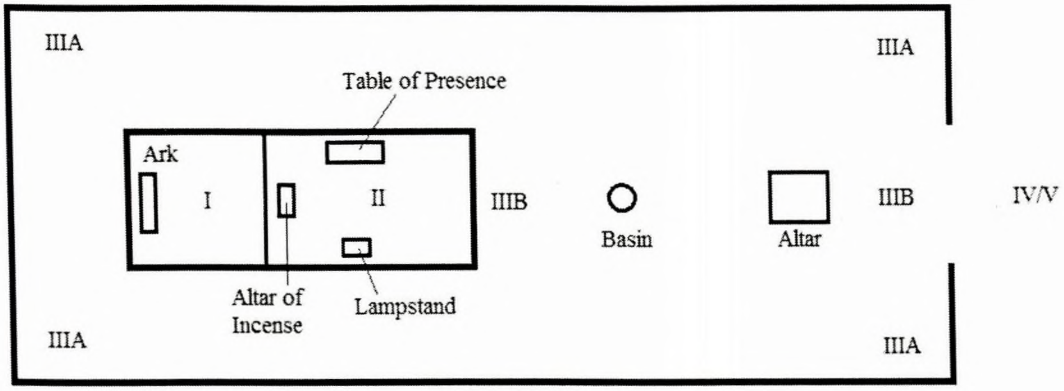
[4] Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 89. See also Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 70–72.

[5] Averbeck, "Tabernacle," 814–15.

Table 1: The Tabernacle's "Zones of Holiness"[6]



	Zone	Description	References
Inside			
	I	The most holy place (קדש הקדשים | τὸ ἅγιον τῶν ἁγίων)	Exod 26:33; Num 4:4, 19
	II	The holy place (הקדש | τὸ ἅγιον)	Exod 26:33; 29:30; Lev 6:30; Num 3:28
	I-II	The tabernacle (משכן | ἡ σκηνή)	Exod 25:9; 26:1, 7, 15, 26
	IIIA	The courtyard (חצר | ἡ αὐλή)	Exod 27:9–19; Num 4:26, 32
	IIIB	Sanctuary entrances \ Door to the tent of meeting (פתח אהל מועד | ἡ θύρα τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου)	Exod 29:4, 32; Lev 1:3; 3:2
	I-III	The sanctuary (מקדש | τὸ ἁγίασμα)	Exod 25:8; Lev 12:14; Num 3:28
Outside			
	IV	A clean place (מקום טהור | τόπος καθαρός)	Lev 4:12; 10:14; Num 19:9
	V	An unclean place (מקום טמא | τόπος ἀκάθαρτος)	Lev 14:40–41

The tabernacle was situated within the midst of the Israelite encampment. Douglas Davies notes that the theology of Leviticus distinguishes between the cosmic orderliness that existed inside the camp and the chaotic disruption and profaneness that existed outside the camp.[7] However, the Pentateuch also contains a tradition about another sacred area located “outside the camp”—a second “tent of meeting” or “tent of testimony” [σκηνὴ μαρτυρίου] as in the LXX—which differed from the tabernacle but was closely associated with it. This structure is briefly described in Exod 33:7–11a:

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[6] Adapted from Averbeck, "Tabernacle," 808 and Jenson, *Graded Holiness*, 90, with changes.

[7] Davies, "An Interpretation of Sacrifice in Leviticus," 387–99.

> Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would rise and stand, each of them, at the entrance of their tents and watch Moses until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would rise and bow down, all of them, at the entrance of their tent. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend.[8]

The structure was distinct from the tabernacle itself. The ark of the covenant was not housed there, and there appear to have been no sacrifices associated with it. As mentioned, unlike the tabernacle this second tent of meeting was positioned “outside the camp” [מחוץ למחנה; ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς] of Israel (Exod 33:7), and is described as the place where YHWH would speak with Moses, and where people would go to hear oracles from God. The tabernacle would come to serve a similar purpose as well, in addition to hosting sacrifices and offerings for the nation (cf. Exod 29:38–46).

The tabernacle was generally reminiscent of other ancient Near Eastern worship sites. For instance, like many other sanctuaries, it was built as a three-part structure with the deity’s dwelling located in the innermost chamber (Exod 26:33).[9] It was also positioned facing East towards the rising sun, as was customary (Exod 27:13–16). Tented, portable religious sites also were not unheard of in the ancient Near East either.[10]

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[8] NRSV translation.

[9] Hundley, *God in Dwellings*, 51–56.

[10] Averbeck, “Tabernacle,” 818–19; Parry, “Garden of Eden,” 134–35.

The tabernacle's symbolism was rooted in Israel's primeval history as it contained numerous visual reminders of the cosmos and YHWH's first earthly sanctuary, the Garden of Eden.[11] For instance, its eastward orientation recalled the eastern location of Eden (Gen 2:8; Exod 27:13-16). The cherubim guarding the ark of the covenant and the entrance to the tabernacle were an allusion to the cherubim guarding the entrance to Eden (Gen 3:24; Exod 25:18–22; 26:31–33). The menorah with its floral buds also was reminiscent of the Tree of Life (Gen 2:9; Exod 25:31–40). The association between the tabernacle and Eden and the cosmos was also well known in Second Temple Jewish tradition as well.[12]

More significant, however, is the fact that the tabernacle also served as a "movable Mount Sinai."[13] The narrative of the encounter at Sinai in Exod 24 is significant because it immediately precedes God's directive to build the tabernacle in Exod 25 and, therefore, sets a pattern for Israel's worship of YHWH. For instance, the base of the mountain is where Israel's tribes gather to sacrifice and listen to Moses recite from the Book of the Covenant (Exod 24:3–8). From there, Moses, Aaron and his sons, and Israel's elders move higher up the mountain where they see God and share a meal together (Exod 24:9–12). Finally, Moses, escorted by Joshua, begins his ascent to the top of Mount Sinai (Exod 24:13). Once he reaches the summit, Moses alone enters the cloud where he spends forty days and nights in communion with YHWH (Exod 24:15–18). The cloud of God's glory "dwells" [שׁכן] on the mountain just as it does later in the tabernacle (Exod 24:16; 40:35). Moses mediates between God and the people at Sinai just as he does later at the tabernacle (Exod 29:42–46). The zones of holiness described in the Sinai account of Exodus (Exod 24) are thus replicated in the layout of the tabernacle:

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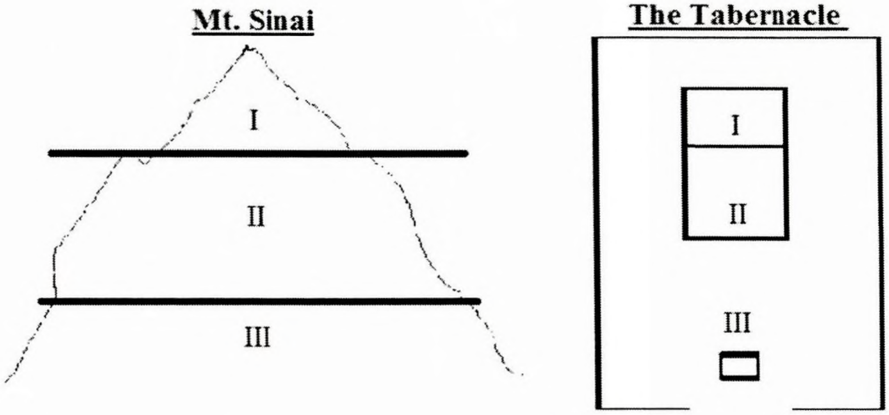
[11] Most scholars now acknowledge that the Genesis depicts the Garden of Eden as a sanctuary for YHWH, and that Adam and Eve served as priestly caretakers of the Garden. This is made even more explicit by the author of *Jubilees* in his own rendition of the Genesis narrative. See Walton, *Lost World*, 81–83; Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism," 399–405; van Ruiten, "Eden and the Temple," 63–81.

[12] E.g., see Sir 24; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:180; Philo, *Mos.* 2:79–89.

[13] Averbeck, "Tabernacle," 824. See also Morales, *Who Shall Ascend*, 95–100.

Table 2: Sinai and the Tabernacle[14]



Zone	**People Allowed Access**
I	Moses or the High Priest
II	(Sinai) Israel's elders, Aaron, and Aaron's sons; (Tabernacle) the Levites
III	Israelites

As mentioned previously, the tabernacle narratives are primarily concerned with describing the creation of a sacred space for Israelite worship. However, Mark George argues that the concept of *space* should be differentiated from *place*, and that this should inform how we understand the significance of the tabernacle.[15] While these two ideas are related, a *place* is confined to a specific location while *space* is something more. Places, according to George, are fixed within a permanent locale and are defined with permanent structures and features (e.g., foundations, walls). Spaces, however, are not immutable, nor are they necessarily fixed within one location, but are sometimes movable and transposable. George, drawing an analogy from Michel Foucault, elaborates on this observation and the tabernacle's relevance for Jewish identity:

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[14] Adapted from Rodriguez, "Sanctuary Theology," 133, with changes.

[15] See the discussion in George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 7–9.

> Instead, [the tabernacle] is free to move about within the larger space of creation and the cosmos. In this regard, the tabernacle is like a boat on the ocean, "a floating piece of space, a place without a place." It has its own internal logic and order that operate wherever it goes. That organization gives the tabernacle its particular Israelite identity. It consists of Israel's objects, is staffed by Israelites, is infused with social meanings particular to Israel, and includes Israel's understanding of how to relate to its God and the rest of creation. The tabernacle is, in other words, a space expressing something of the social identity of Israel. The tabernacle *is* Israel in the world. [16]

The tabernacle, therefore, was far more than just a religious shrine. It served as a physical embodiment of Israelite ideals about the cosmos, of worship in heaven and on earth, and the nation's covenant relationship to YHWH. These ideals would continue to be represented in future sanctuaries like the first and second temples and would remain central even for Jews who would eventually become disconnected from the sanctuary shrine after the temple's destruction.

The First Temple

According to biblical sources, the tabernacle remained in use by the nation of Israel until the reign of King Solomon in the tenth-century BCE when it was replaced by the newly constructed temple at Jerusalem (1 Kgs 6). Yet, as will be shown, there was continuity between Solomon's temple and its predecessor in terms of the sanctuary's layout, its furnishings, and its function within Israelite society.[17]

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[16] George, *Israel's Tabernacle*, 8 (brackets mine).

From the time of its founding until its eventual destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, Solomon's temple "was the embodiment of Israel's religious and national identity."[18] Its construction also meant the centralization of both religious and political power within the city of Jerusalem. Mount Zion, north of the city, became "the archetypal cosmic mountain" and the dwelling place of Israel's God.[19] Solomon's temple thus served as a symbolic reminder of Israel's history and of the past sanctuaries of YHWH. Monson elaborates on this point:

> The cosmic significance of the temple was reflected in its grandeur and elevation, positioned above the city on a higher part of the same mountain ridge. This ridge, defined by deep canyons, lay in the midst of a large natural theater in which higher mounts gazed down with envy on Mount Zion, "the joy of the entire world." The lush gardens which surrounded the site were watered by primordial "living water" issuing forth into the valley from the area's sole intermittent spring and an adjacent system of water channels (2 Kgs 25:4; Ps 48; 125:1–2). Together these images evoked memories of Eden and Sinai.[20]

As with the tabernacle, the temple also was known by a variety of names. It was frequently called "the house of YHWH" [בית יהוה; οἶκός τοῦ κυρίου] and "the house of God" [בית האלהים; οἶκός τοῦ θεοῦ]. Like its carriageable predecessor, it also was a "sanctuary" [מקדש; ἁγίασμα]. Additionally, in the Hebrew Bible, the temple was often referred to by the biblical writers as God's "palace" [היכל]. These names allude to the fact that this was a stationary place of worship on Mount Zion which served as YHWH's cosmic mountain and royal throne.

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[17] The correspondence between the tabernacle and the temple was also recognized by several Jewish authors in the Second Temple era. For instance, the author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* portrays Solomon as declaring "You have given a command to build a holy temple on your holy mountain, and an altar in the city where you dwell, a copy of the holy tent [μίμημα σκηνῆς ἁγίας] you prepared from the beginning" (Wis 9:8).

[18] Monson, "Solomon's Temple," 929.

[19] Monson, "Solomon's Temple," 929.

[20] Monson, "Solomon's Temple," 929.

While modern archaeological studies of the temple mount have yielded little additional information about the temple of Solomon's day, the biblical text provides a clear depiction of its design.[21] The construction efforts are detailed in 1 Kgs 6–7 and in 2 Chr 3–4. Like its predecessor, the temple was built facing East. The temple was also located within a larger courtyard area, and like the tabernacle it was divided into three main chambers with YHWH's dwelling located within the innermost chamber, the Most Holy place. The similarities with the tabernacle have even led some scholars to speculate that perhaps portions of the tabernacle were used in its construction.[22]

Solomon's temple was essentially a larger replica of the tabernacle, even though it differed from its predecessor regarding both its scale and the scope of its opulence. The main sanctuary was situated within a massive courtyard surrounded by gated entrances, and the total area of the temple complex was about twice the size of the original tabernacle. The building itself measured an impressive 70 x 20 cubits with a height of 30 cubits, making it one of the largest temples ever constructed in that part of the world.[23] Its furnishings also resembled those in the original tabernacle, but on a grander scale. In the outer courtyard sat a large basin known as "the sea," the bronze altar, and ten wheeled basins used for sacrificial rituals (1 Kgs 7:23–38). The temple entrance also featured two massive, bronze columns named Jachin and Boaz (1 Kgs 7:15–22). Inside the first section of the temple building, the hall featured ten golden lampstands (1 Kgs 7:49–50). In the second chamber, the holy place, sat the gold-covered Table of the Presence, the seven-branched Menorah, and the altar of incense. Inside the Most Holy place resided the ark of the covenant. However, in Solomon's version, the ark was seated between two enormous cherubim measuring over 5 m in height. The doors, walls, ceilings and floors of the temple structure were all ornate and expertly crafted on a far grander scale than those of the old sanctuary. The temple's chambers were also sumptuously decorated with gold, silver, finely carved floral patterns, palm fronds, and cherubim. The temple of Solomon would remain the center of Jewish worship in Jerusalem for over 400 years until its tragic destruction by the Babylonians.

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[21] Monson avers: "The primary description of Solomon's temple, found in 1 Kings 6–7, represents one of the most detailed building accounts of the ancient Near East. It provides a meticulous and technical word picture of the temple's architecture along with descriptions of decoration and iconography. The specificity of the account and the obscurity of the vocabulary give the impression that it was based on administrative documents that were contemporary with Solomon's construction efforts" (Monson, "Solomon's Temple," 929–30).

[22] E.g., see Friedman, "The Tabernacle in the Temple," 241–48.

[23] This assumes the use of the royal cubit of 52.5 cm. As Monson notes, this would make the temple structure 12 x 40 m with a height of 15 m. See Monson, "Solomon's Temple," 930.

The Second Temple

King Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BCE.[24] That same year, Cyrus allowed Jewish exiles to go back to Jerusalem in order to rebuild the city and the temple, and even assisted them financially in the effort (Ezra 1:1–4; 6:1–5). Work on the new temple was significantly delayed but was finally completed in 516 BCE. It is clear from the Old Testament accounts of the temple's reconstruction that it was not an exact replica or a restoration of the first temple. The most notable difference between this temple and its predecessor, however, was the fact that the ark of the covenant had been lost and no longer resided within the Most Holy place.[25] The moment of the construction's completion was bittersweet as the people rejoiced that the work was finally finished but were saddened at how the new temple paled in comparison to the grandeur of the former edifice of Solomon (Ezra 3:1–13).

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[24] Much of the following is recounted in Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1281–91. See also the discussion in VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 1–18.

In the Hellenistic era, and especially following the Maccabean Revolt, a renewed focus was placed on the Jerusalem temple and its rituals. The Oniad priests and the Hasmoneans who came after them performed religious rites at the temple and sponsored significant renovations and expansions of its grounds. The Second Temple saw its greatest expansion, however, during the reign of Herod the Great (r. 37 BCE–1 CE). While it is commonplace for scholars to refer to Herod's work on the temple as a "refurbishing" or a further "renovation" of the temple of Zerubbabel,[26] this is somewhat misleading. In fact, Herod's project amounted to a complete expansion and rebuilding of the entire temple mount. Zerubbabel's temple was a relatively small structure made of wood and stone, and it did not come close to resembling the magnificent temple of Solomon that had preceded it. Also, Zerubbabel's temple had been looted previously by the Seleucids and the Romans and had already gone through subsequent renovations under the Oniads and the Hasmoneans. Starting at around 19 BCE, however, Herod began dismantling the old temple structure, and started elevating and expanding the foundation of the temple complex. Afterwards, he would go on to completely replace the former wooden and stone structure with a massive new temple made of stone. The main construction was, for the most part, completed around 4 BCE, near the end of Herod's life. However, construction on the temple continued long after Herod's death and lasted until around the year 64 CE, just a few years before its eventual destruction by the Romans.[27] The project was so massive that some scholars consider Herod's temple to be a third temple entirely distinct from that built by Zerubbabel.[28] By the end of the construction, Herod's temple mount was twice the size of Solomon's. Herod's massive building programs, and those continued by his successors, transformed the temple mount into a beautiful and imposing structure that became one of the wonders of the ancient world. In the tractate *Baba Batra*, early rabbinic tradition compliments Herod by saying, "Whoever has not seen Herod's building has not seen a beautiful building in his life."[29]

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[25] The text of Jeremiah notably alludes to the absence of the ark from Jewish worship (Jer 3:12–16). Also, the author of 2 Maccabees records the tradition that Jeremiah had hidden the ark in a cave on Mount Nebo, but that the cave's whereabouts were unknown (2 Macc 2:1–6). A similar tradition is found in *2 Bar* 6:7 where an angel comes down from heaven to take away the ark and the incense altar before the temple is destroyed.

[26] E.g., see the description in Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 44–45.

Regarding the design of the Second Temple, very little data has been preserved from the Persian era aside from the biblical material itself. Much of what we know about the Second Temple comes to us from Mishnah *Middot* and sources dating from the Hellenistic and Roman eras, with Josephus usually considered to be the most reliable of all extant sources.[30] Levine describes the care taken in the construction process undertaken during Herod's reign, based on details from Josephus's account:

> Owing to the extreme sensitivity about everything associated with the building of the Temple, especially the fears of some that the old edifice might be torn down and not replaced due to the lack of funds, Herod took all possible precautions to

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[27] The Fourth Gospel's account of Jesus's cleansing of the temple mentions how it had taken "forty-six years" [τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἓξ ἔτεσιν] to complete the temple (Jn 2:19).

[28] See the discussion in Goldhill, *The Temple of Jerusalem*, 57–63.

[29] b. *B. Bat.* 4a, as translated in Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1282. The temple's beauty was notorious in Second Temple Judaism (e.g., Mark 13:1; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:72; Josephus, *Ant.* 15:298).

[30] See the helpful discussion of sources on the physical dimensions of the second temple in its various phases in Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1283–85. Levine notes several discrepancies between details preserved in the *Middot* and in the writings of Josephus. However, these contradictions within the sources, and especially the *Middot*, probably reflect traditions stemming from different construction periods within the history of the second temple, as we know that construction and renovations to the temple mount were made throughout the Hasmonean era and well into the reign of Herod Agrippa II in 64 CE. See also the comprehensive discussion in Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 51–69.

> gain widespread support from the populace at large no less than the priestly leadership. He promised to have all the materials required for the new building in place before the old one was destroyed. Preparing 1,000 wagons and 10,000 skilled workers for his massive undertaking, Herod had 1,000 priests trained as masons and carpenters to do the actual work in the Temple so as not to engage nonpriests who were forbidden to enter the sacred area. Construction of the Temple edifice itself lasted eighteen months, and upon is completion (ca. 18 BCE) the king organized lavish festivities (*Ant.* 15:388–390, 421–423).[31]

In *War*, Josephus also notes that by the end of the construction, the temple mount had nearly doubled in size to around 1,200 m (*War* 1:401; 5:192), while archaeological finds suggest the total circumference was closer to 1,550 m. The porticoes of the temple measured 9 m in height, and Herod also constructed a massive basilica which contained 162 stone pillars (Josephus, *Ant.* 15:411–417). The area outside the main temple complex served as an *agora* which hosted commercial activity, especially commercial activity generated by pilgrims visiting Jerusalem to participate in the sacrificial cult.[32] Gentiles could also enter this temple precinct, but could not proceed to the inner areas of the temple.[33] The temple complex additionally served as a center for banking, adjudicating legal matters, and for public proclamation and debate. It was frequently buzzing with activity, especially during the major festivals when mass influxes of Jews from all over the Roman world would join together with pilgrims from various parts of Judea for sacrifices and worship.

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[31] Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1283.

[32] See the discussion of the temple's economic significance in Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 23–27.

[33] This is confirmed by the discovery of two famous Greek inscriptions, found among the remains of Herod's temple, which forbid Gentiles from entering temple's inner courts on pain of death. See Barrett, *New Testament Background*, 53.

Reactions to the Temple in Second Temple Judaism

Various factions within Judaism like the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Essenes had their own ideas about how the temple should operate, and some like the Qumran community were critical of the priesthood in Jerusalem. Yet evidence suggests that most Jews of this era considered the temple to be indispensable to their faith and identity, regardless of how it was perceived to have been managed. For instance, even while the Qumran community vehemently opposed the priestly leadership in Jerusalem and the temple rituals which they saw as tainted, it appears that they still believed that the temple mount in Jerusalem itself remained God's legitimate dwelling place.[34] Likewise, even though there was another temple for Egyptian Jews in Leontopolis,[35] it does not appear that this temple was viewed as a replacement for the temple in Jerusalem. Rather, it is more likely the case that the Leontopolis temple was built out of pragmatic concerns. For instance, there were more Jews living in Egypt than anywhere else in the Greco-Roman world, and many Egyptian Jews simply could not financially afford to make pilgrimage to Judea for every festival, and needed a practical way to stay connected to the Jerusalem rites.[36] The tendentious, and at times perilous, nature of Jerusalem under Seleucid control was also a significant concern which motivated those who built and maintained the Leontopolis temple as a secondary center for Israelite worship.[37] Similarly, the small temple to Yahu (=YHWH) discovered at Elephantine was built to serve the needs of a colony of Jewish mercenaries who, because of their military obligation to guard the southern border of the Persian empire, could not easily make pilgrimage (Jerusalem was over 1,100 km away) and needed a means of staying connected to the Jerusalem rites.[38] This differs drastically from the situation with the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, however, as that temple was clearly viewed by Jews as a competitor with the one in Jerusalem. The Gerizim temple was eventually destroyed along with the city of Samaria by the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus in 112 BCE.[39]

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[34] It is well known that the Dead Sea Scrolls contain literature that is frequently critical of the Jerusalem priests and their practices, especially regarding disputes over purification rituals and the liturgical calendar. Texts and archaeological evidence from Qumran also confirm that the community viewed themselves as a new temple community and as the custodians of the authentic temple purity rituals (e.g., see Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 127–29). However, the legitimacy of Jerusalem itself as the center for Israelite worship does not appear to have been questioned. For instance, the writer of the *Temple Scroll*, which contains the lengthiest exposition about the temple out of any of the Qumran texts, depicts God as declaring, "The city which I will sanctify, causing my name and my sanctuary to abide in it, shall be holy and pure of all impurity with which they can become impure. Whatever is in it shall be pure" (11QT^a 47:5, Vermes's translation). Indeed, while the author of the *Temple Scroll* evidently wanted to reform and redesign the temple structure, as Lawrence Schiffman rightly notes, the Jerusalem temple still constituted "the physical and spiritual center of the author/redactor's universe" (Schiffman, "Construction of the Temple," 556). Sanders likewise observes that such fierce denunciations of the Jerusalem priesthood found in the Qumran literature "prove that the authors held the temple and its sacrifices in respect" and constitute an attack upon "those who, in their view, were unworthy to hold their offices and to conduct the sacrificial worship of God" (Sanders, *Judaism Practice and Belief*, 54).

[35] For a review of the archaeological and literary evidence, see Taylor, "A Second Temple in Egypt," 297–321. Taylor also raises intriguing questions about the possibility of a Zadokite connection between the Leontopolis temple and the Qumran community.

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[36] See Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 35–36. Josephus depicts Onias IV as designing the Leontopolis temple to be "similar to the one in Jerusalem, but smaller and more austere" [ὅμοιον τῷ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις, μικρότερον δὲ καὶ πενιχρότερον] (Josephus, *Ant.* 13:69–77). In *War*, Josephus also says that he suspects Onias had personally hoped to draw followers away from the Jerusalem temple since his was the legitimate high priestly family, forced to live in exile (*War* 7:431). However, in his account in the *Antiquities*, Josephus notes that Egyptian Jews who worshipped at the Leontopolis shrine were deeply concerned not to detract from the central importance of the main temple in Jerusalem (*Ant.* 13:77). The relationship between the temples in Leontopolis and Jerusalem is also highlighted by the fact that after the Jerusalem temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the Leontopolis site was closed soon after in 73 CE.

[37] So argues Gruen, *Identity in Hellenistic Judaism*, 359–82. Gruen also observes that Onias's refusal of the title of "high priest" in Egypt suggests he wished to avoid conflict with Jerusalem (Gruen, *Identity in Hellenistic Judaism*, 382). This poses a significant challenge to the arguments of scholars like Wardle who insists that the Leontopolis temple was a competitor to the one in Jerusalem (e.g., see Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 136–39).

[38] Botta, "Elephantine, Elephantine Papyri," 574–76.

[39] Josephus, *Ant.* 13:275–281. See Bourgel, "The Destruction of the Samaritan Temple," 505–23 where Bourgel argues that Hyrcanus's act of destroying the Samaritan temple was an attempt to force the Samaritans to assimilate into Judean culture, as Hyrcanus had done with the Idumeans. The dispute over which sanctuary was correct, Mount Zion or Mount Gerizim, remained a central point of division between Jews and Samaritans well into the first century CE (e.g., John 4:20–26).

Indeed, there was, in general, a great deal of support for the Jerusalem temple among Jews living throughout Judea and the Diaspora.[40] For instance, it was normal for Jews to support the temple financially by paying the half-shekel temple tax.[41] Jews, as they were able, also did their best to make pilgrimage to the Jerusalem temple during the festivals of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles even though pilgrimage often meant serious financial hardship.[42] In the Diaspora, Jews sometimes ate special "fellowship meals" that were sacrificial in nature and modeled after some of the meals associated with the temple.[43] Also, it appears that most Jews throughout the Greco-Roman world believed in the sanctity of the temple[44] and were aghast at the various attempts by pagan rulers to defile it, such as when the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV, desecrated the temple,[45] or later in the Roman era when Caligula tried to erect a statue of himself within the Most Holy place.[46] The festival of Hanukah also was a yearly celebration of the Jerusalem temple and its vital importance for Jews everywhere.[47] As Levine says, the Jerusalem temple was "the Jewish *locus sanctus* par excellence."[48]

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[40] Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 47–54; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 418–21.

[41] See Matt 17:24–27; Philo, *Legat.* 156–157; Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:76–78; Josephus, *Ant.* 14:110; 18:312–313.

[42] There is some uncertainty as to the average number of people who made pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the annual festivals, though the crowds must have been extraordinary (e.g., see the discussion in Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1290). Philo notes that there were "countless multitudes from countless cities" [μυρίοι γὰρ ἀπὸ μυρίων ὅσων πόλεων] who travelled to Jerusalem each year for the feasts (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:69). Josephus estimates the number of pilgrims to have been between 2.5 million and 3 million (Josephus, *War* 2:280; 6:423–425). E. P. Sanders, however, believes that Josephus is exaggerating and that the actual number was somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 (Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 128). Joachim Jeremias has argued for an even more conservative figure of around 180,000, and Levine has suggested a comparable figure ranging from 125,000 to 200,000 (see Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 77–84; Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1290).

[43] Josephus, *Ant.* 14:213–215. See also the comments in Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:534.

[44] E.g., see Sir 24:1–22; *Let. Arist.* 83–99.

[45] E.g., 2 Macc 5:15–20.

[46] Philo, *Legat.* 188–91; Josephus, *Ant.* 18:257–301.

[47] 1 Macc 4:36–59; 2 Macc 1:10–2:18; John 10:22; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:323–325. See also the discussion in Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 36–57.

[48] Levine, "Temple, Jerusalem," 1289.

Within Second Temple Judaism, there was also a great deal of theological speculation about the temple and its relationship to God's dwelling in heaven, thus heightening the importance of the earthly sanctuary and its significance for Jewish worship.[49] For instance, Ps 11, a psalm later attributed to David and believed to have been composed at time when there was no standing temple, says "YHWH is in his holy temple" [בהיכל קדשׁו] and that "YHWH's throne resides in heaven" [בשׁמים כסאו] (Ps 11:4). Ben Sira viewed the temple in Jerusalem as the nexus between heaven and earth, and that to worship in the earthly temple was to experience the presence of God and his divine wisdom just as one would in heaven (e.g., Sir 24:1–15).[50] The writer of *4 Ezra*, writing after the destruction of the second temple, believed that while the earthly temple and city lay in ruins, the heavenly sanctuary remained a present reality (e.g., *4 Ezra* 5:21–6:34; 10:27–44).[51] The writer of Revelation likewise depicts both the earthly temple in Jerusalem (Rev 11:1–2) and a heavenly new Jerusalem/temple (the entire city is a temple) that comes down from heaven to earth at the end of days (Rev 3:12; 20:1–3, 22). At times the temple was also portrayed as a cosmic temple such as that described in Ezekiel 40–43 or in the heavenly throne room of *1 En* 14. Philo of Alexandria also believed that there was an intimate connection between the temple on earth and God's heavenly temple:

> The highest, and in the truest sense the holy temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the most sacred part of all existence, even heaven, for its votive ornaments the stars, for its priests the angels . . . There

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[49] See the comprehensive discussion in Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 112–44. Klawans, by a thorough study of relevant Second Temple sources, establishes that the Jerusalem temple was widely viewed as the earthly analogue to God's cosmic sanctuary. See also Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 144–46.

[50] Cf. Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 31–43. Curiously, while Church argues this very point, he nevertheless doubts that Ben Sira viewed the Jerusalem temple as an analogue of the heavenly sanctuary.

[51] Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 203.

> is also the temple made by hands; for it was right that no check should be given to the forwardness of those who pay their tribute to piety and desire by means of sacrifices either to give thanks for the blessings that befall them or to ask for pardon and forgiveness of sins.[52]

However, looking only at the broad historical picture risks leaving one with an oversimplified view of a complex situation. While it is evident that most Jews supported the temple, there nevertheless existed a diversity of opinions about the second temple and its administration. An examination of Jewish literature from that time reveals that some Jewish writers like the writer of Ezra-Nehemiah, or Ben Sira, or Aristeas had generally positive attitudes towards the temple of Zerubbabel and Herod, while others, such as the author of *Jubilees* or Jews living at Qumran did not.[53] Some writers, like Philo, looked to the past and hailed the tabernacle as the ideal sanctuary for Israel, while others such as the author of the *Temple Scroll*, the writer of *4 Ezra*, or even the writer of Revelation looked forward to a day when God would establish a renewed or new temple in Jerusalem.[54] Many writers, however, seem keenly aware of the fragile nature of the temple and its impermanence—a natural reaction to Israel's extensive history of occupation which included multiple desecrations of the sacred temple space, and even its destruction. The writer of 2 Maccabees, therefore, poignantly captures this sentiment when he says, "For the Lord did not choose the nation for the sake of the holy place, but the holy place for the sake of the nation" (2 Macc 5:19).

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[52] Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:66–67 (LCL, Colson's translation).

[53] Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 79–143

[54] Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 144–98.

The Priesthood

The Levitical Priesthood in Ancient Israel

The institution most closely connected to the temple was the Levitical priesthood. The basis for the priesthood is established in the Pentateuch, especially the book of Leviticus which is the primary body of priestly law in the Old Testament. All priests in Israel were required to be descended from the tribe of Levi, from whence the order gets its name (Gen 29:34; Num 18:2–6). The Levites were thus a tribe wholly dedicated to sanctuary service in facilitating the worship of YHWH, evidenced by the fact that they were the only tribe not allotted land in Canaan since "the Lord God of Israel himself is their inheritance" (Josh 13:33). Non-priestly Levites variously served as teachers of the law (Deut 33:10), worship leaders (1 Chr 25:1–7), and as guardians of the sanctuary shrine (Num 3:21–26). Levites who did serve as priests, and especially those individuals who were appointed to serve as high priest, were also required to be descended from Zadok and his ancestor, Aaron, Israel's first high priest[55] and the brother of Moses (Exod 28:1–4; 2 Sam 8:17; Ezek 44:15-16). Thus, the Old Testament sets genealogical ancestry as the primary qualifier (or disqualifier) for priestly service at the temple.

Additionally, the Pentateuch delineates the boundaries of authority and responsibility for the priestly class. For instance, the seat of Israelite political power is said to reside with the descendants of the tribe of Judah, not Levi (Gen 49:10; cf. Mic 5:2). The Levitical priests were also supposed to be completely dependent upon the charity of the people of Israel and were not supposed to acquire land or amass personal fortunes (Deut 18:1–8). Levites were also responsible for teaching the law of YHWH in designated towns throughout Israel and for adjudicating legal matters for the people as necessary (Deut 17:8–13; 33:10). Priests enforced the distinctions between the holy/common and clean/unclean, and taught others to do so as well (Lev 10:10–11). They also carried out the various rites of purification within the temple and cared for its sacred objects (Num 3:5–4:33). The fact that Israel was conceived as "a kingdom of priests" in Exod 19:5–6 suggests that the priests held a position of special honor in Jewish society as those whose task it was to make the nation holy.[56] Priests and Levites were thus expected to be the exemplars of purity and piety within Israel.[57]

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[55] Although Aaron is never specifically called "high priest" in the Hebrew Bible, the fact that he is referred to as "Aaron the priest" [אהרן הכהן] 21 times throughout the Pentateuch shows that he was regarded as the prototypical priest for all priests of Israel to follow.

The most significant dimension of priestly ministry in ancient Israel, however, was the priests' administration of the sacrificial cult and their intercession for the people of YHWH.[58] The priests occupied the middle-space between heaven and earth in order to represent God to the community and the community to God.[59] Therefore, the act of mediation characterized the ministry of the priesthood. Prior to the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE, "its services and priesthood lay at the heart of any identifiable 'common' Jewish vision of Israel's life rightly ordered before God."[60] Thus, while the synagogue had developed in order to address the needs of Diaspora Jewish communities, the Jerusalem temple and priesthood largely remained the religious focal point for first-century Jews, including those belonging to the earliest Jesus movement.[61]

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[56] Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests*, 1–10.

[57] This enhances the scandalous nature of some of the shocking stories about Levitical priests in the Old Testament such in Numbers 3 where Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu were killed by God for offering "strange fire," or the dual narratives in Jdg 17–19 about Moses's idolatrous grandson, Jonathan, and of the unnamed Levite and his concubine.

[58] Reid, "Sacrifice and Temple Service," 1040–44.

[59] Duke, "Priests, Priesthood," 652.

[60] Reid, "Sacrifice and Temple Service," 1036.

[61] See Scott, *Jewish Backgrounds*, 52–53, 63–72, 139–62.

Information about the various sacrificial rituals and festivals practiced within ancient Israel is found throughout the Pentateuch, though Leviticus provides much of this information since it served as a kind of handbook for priests.[62] The following table provides a synopsis of the various individual and communal sacrifices and their purpose within Israelite worship.

Table 3: Levitical Sacrifices and Offerings[63]

Type (MT/LXX)	Summary	References
Sin or Purification Offering [חטאת / ἡ θυσὶα περὶ ἁμαρτίας]	Provided expiation for individual sins and ritual impurity for which reparation could not be made. Offering depended upon the one for whom atonement was being made: the high priest or the congregation/nation (bull), an Israelite ruler (male goat), and a common individual (female goat). The priest pronounced forgiveness over the worshipper. The fatty portions were offered to God by fire as "a pleasing aroma." Priests ate what was left.	Lev 4:1–5:13
Burnt Offering [עלה / ἡ ὁλοκάρπωσις]	Was offered morning and evening each day, sometimes with other offerings, and made atonement for the one who offered it. The clean animal (ox, sheep, goat, or pigeon) was wholly consumed by fire and was also said to be "a pleasing aroma."	Lev 1:1–17; 6:8–13
Guilt or Reparation Offering [אשם / ἡ πλημμέλεια]	To make expiation for unintentional sins or religious violations. Also meant for expiation of sins for which restitution could be made (e.g., cheating, stealing). Restitution was also required. Priests received what was left.	Lev 6:1–7; 7:1–10

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[62] Reid, "Sacrifice and Temple Service," 1038.

[63] This table is adapted from summary information found in Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (OT)," ABD 5:870–86; Reid, "Sacrifice and Temple Service," 1036–50. See also Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 103–18.

Grain Offering [מנחה / ἡ θυσὶα ἥτις ποιηθήσεται ἐν τῷ κλιβάνῳ]	Offered as a way of giving thanks to YHWH and for asking for divine favor. Usually presented with whole burnt offerings and could be offered by the poor instead of animal sacrifices. Priests received what was left.	Lev 2:1–16
Drink Offering [נסך / ἡ σπονδή]	An offering often presented with grain offerings and whole burnt offerings.	Lev 23:13; Num 15:1–11
First Fruits Offering [בכורים / αἱ ἀπαρχαὶ τῶν πρωτογενημάτων]	Israelites were to consecrate the first fruits of the year's harvest as well as first-born males—both human and animals—to God. Harvest offerings were brought to the priests and first-born sons were to be "redeemed" with payment. Unclean animals could also be redeemed at a price, while clean animals were to be presented as a sacrifice with the meat given to the priests.	Exod 22:29–30; Num 18:12–19
Peace Offering [שׁלם / ἡ θυσὶα τοῦ σωτηρίου]	Was given as a thanksgiving offering [תודה] or offered upon completion of a vow [נדר] or as a "free-will" offering [נדב]. The offering was shared between the priests and the people.	Lev 3:1–17; 7:11–38; 19:5–8; 22:18; 23:28

The sacrifices and offerings listed above were offered as ritual circumstances dictated. However, there were other sacrifice rituals that were not casuistic, but instead were performed with regularity throughout the year by the priests on behalf of the entire nation. These were mostly expiatory sacrifices that emphasized the use of burnt offerings and sin offerings, and included: the "daily" [תמיד] offerings where a lamb was to be sacrificed each morning and evening (Exod 29:38–43; Num 28:3–8), the Sabbath sacrifices (Exod 20:8–11; Num 28:9–10), and the great sacrificial feasts of Passover (Lev 23:4–8; Num 28:16–25), Tabernacles (Lev 23:34–44), and the Day of Atonement (Lev before entering the Most Holy place, would burn incense in the outer room before the entrance veil in order to shield his eyes from the presence of YHWH (Lev 16:13). The high priest then would enter through the veil into God's presence and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the atonement cover or "mercy seat" which sat atop the ark of the covenant (Lev 16:14–15). Blood was then taken outside and sprinkled on the horns of the main altar. This blood ritual purified the sacred temple space from all the pollution caused by Israel's sin (Lev 16:16, 18), and thus reordered the cosmos by setting right again the relationship between the people and YHWH. After this, the priest was to take the other live goat for Israel, lay hands on its head and confess over it the sin and rebellion of the Israelites, thus identifying the nation's sin with the animal. The goat was then to be taken far away from the community and released, symbolizing the release of the nation from their sin (Lev 16:20–22).[70] After these rituals were complete, the high priest washed himself, dressed in his sacred attire, and then proceeded to sacrifice burnt offerings for himself and for the nation, heralding the beginning of the new liturgical calendar year for Israel (Lev 16:23–24).

The destruction of the first temple, however, meant the "eradication of the center"[71] of Israelite religion and precipitated a series of social and political events that would forever change the Levitical priesthood, and especially the high priestly office. Due to the fragmented nature of historical sources from the Second Temple era, however, there have not been many modern studies which have attempted to trace the evolution of the high priesthood throughout Second Temple Judaism. Instead, most studies have focused on the priesthood within ancient Israel, individual priests in the post-exilic period, or on aspects of the high priesthood during the first century CE.[72] However, James VanderKam has meticulously traced the development of the high priesthood throughout four epochs of the Second Temple era: the Persian Period (538–330 BCE), the Early Hellenistic period (330–152 BCE), the Hasmonean Period (152–37 BCE), and the Herodian Period (37 BCE–70 CE).[73] Taking a cue from VanderKam, therefore, we will here discuss some of these important developments.[74] While admittedly the following treatment will address issues broadly, various themes will emerge which will be relevant for our understanding of the Jerusalem priesthood and its significance for Second Temple Judaism.

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[70] Rabbinic tradition says that the goat would then be hurled off a cliff to prevent sin from ever returning to the camp (*m. Yoma* 6.3–6).

[71] Gruen, "Judaism in the Diaspora," 30.

The High Priesthood in the Persian Period

In the Persian period, the Jewish return from exile was accompanied by the building of the second temple in Jerusalem. The construction of the temple was initially overseen by the Davidic governor, Zerubbabel, and the sacrificial cult was reinstituted by the high priest, Joshua ben Jehozadak (Ezra 3; Hag 1–2; Zech 3:1–10; 6:9–14). At this point, Jewish society in Jerusalem was governed by the two primary family lines: the line of David and the line of Zadok.

Joshua's influence on the rebuilding of the second temple and its cult is highly significant within the latter Old Testament and other Second Temple literature. For instance, in Ezra 3:3–9, Joshua works with Zerubbabel to "set the altar on its foundation"

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[72] E.g., see the discussion in Babota, *Hasmonean High Priesthood*, 1–4.

[73] See VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, x–xi.

[74] The following description follows much of the reconstruction provided in VanderKam, *Joshua to Ciaphas*.

[ויכינו המזבח על־מכונתיו], reinstitutes the daily offerings for mornings and evenings, and with help from the Levites supervises the construction of the temple. Zechariah the prophet also delivers an oracle where Joshua is called "the high priest" and is described as the one who builds the temple (Zech 6:11–12). In a manner reminiscent of the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, Zech 6:12–13 describes Joshua as the "Branch" (cf. Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5–6) who is seated on a throne and given a royal crown to wear on his head. While the "Branch" reference perhaps also implies a future ruler who was expected to come from David's line—Zerubbabel and Joshua were contemporaries after all—the details about Joshua recorded in Zechariah suggest that Joshua ben Jehozadak probably assumed some sort of regal or political authority in addition to his normal responsibilities as high priest.[75] Indeed, while political power and priestly power were separated in the monarchial period, VanderKam observes that "in the new situation, after the return from exile, governor and high priest are equals."[76] Other evidence indicates that throughout much of the Persian period governors and high priests worked in tandem pairs such as Nehemiah and Eliashib (Neh 12:10, 22), Bigvai and Johanan (known from the Elephantine Papyri), and Hezekiah and Jaddua (mentioned on coins and by Josephus).[77]

It is important to note, however, that following the Edict of Cyrus, most Jews, for a variety of reasons, opted not to return to the land of Israel, and this included several members from the line of David. Even though the Persian period begins with hopes of restoring David's line through Zerubbabel, governors eventually disappear from the historical record and the potential for a restored monarchy in Jerusalem gradually evaporates. Additionally, there also appears to have been a decline in the role of prophets and prophecy during this time as well.[78] This situation thus created a power vacuum which eventually came to be filled by the high priest and the leading priestly families. It is also during this era when we see the rise of the *Gerousia*, which was the local ruling body in Jerusalem comprised of principal priests and wealthy tribal leaders.[79] Thus, by the end of the Persian period, the high priestly family was left with, as Stern notes, "almost exclusive control of Judaea."[80] Indeed, as Wardle similarly observes, while Judea remained under foreign imperial control, a "hierocratic governmental structure" took hold during the Persian era and remained the primary force of civic government in Judea throughout much of the Second Temple Period.[81]

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[75] VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 27, 31.

[76] VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 37. See also Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 59.

[77] VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 55–85, 97–111.

The High Priesthood in the Early Hellenistic Period

The Hellenistic period begins with the defeat of Darius III by Alexander the Great at the Battle of Gaugamela in 333 BCE. As the Hellenic forces began swallowing up the Persian Empire, Alexander eventually conquered Judea as well, entering Jerusalem the following year. Josephus, in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, provides an account of Alexander's meeting with the high priest, Jaddua, which we can summarize here.[82] According to Josephus, as Alexander was conquering Syria and working his way to the cities of Tyre and Sidon, the Macedonian warlord sent a letter to Jerusalem asking Jaddua to abandon his alliance with the Persians and provide military aid and tribute to him instead. Jaddua, however, replied that he could not violate his agreement with Darius, and this response greatly angered Alexander who then made plans to march on Jerusalem. However, Sanballat, the governor of Samaria and descendant of the Sanballat who opposed Nehemiah's efforts to rebuild the Jerusalem wall several years earlier, intervened.[83] He persuaded Alexander to allow his son-in-law, Manasseh—who also happened to be Jaddua's brother—to build a rival temple in Samaria in order to stymie the consolidation of religious and political power in Jerusalem and prevent any future attempts at installing a Davidic king. Alexander agreed with this plan, and later went to Jerusalem. Jaddua, fearing the worst, offered sacrifices and declared a time of mourning and prayer. However, Jaddua had a vision from God commanding him to don his priestly robes and meet Alexander. When the new overlord arrived near the city, Jaddua went out to meet him and was accompanied by the priests. Alexander was so impressed at the sight of the priests in their white robes and Jaddua in his high-priestly vestments that he paid homage to the high priest and declared that God had appointed Jaddua to serve in that role. Jaddua then escorted Alexander into the city where Alexander offered a sacrifice at the temple.

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[78] Texts from the Hellenistic and Roman eras, however, confirm that there was a resurgent interest in prophecy later in the Second Temple era (e.g., 1 Macc 4:45–46; 14:41; *4 Ezra* 1:35–37; Josephus, *Ant.* 20:97–99; Acts 21:10). See Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 31–32; Sommers, "Did Prophecy Cease," 31–47.

[79] Hengel, *Judaism and Hellensim*, 1:25–26. Several scholars have theorized that the Gerousia was likely the predecessor of the Sanhedrin (see the discussion in Saldarini, "Sanhedrin," ABD 5:975–80).

[80] Stern, "Aspects of Jewish Society," 561.

[81] Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 33.

[82] The account is found in Josephus, *Ant.* 11:317–339.

It should be noted that the authenticity of some details in Josephus's account of Alexander and Jaddua are disputed in modern scholarship.[84] However, VanderKam, who takes a more charitable view towards Josephus in this regard,[85] identifies six ways in which this account and its surrounding details coincide with information we know about the high priesthood from other extant sources.[86] (1) The high priesthood was still based on hereditary succession at this time. (2) The high priestly family was aristocratic and intermarried with other aristocratic families like that of Sanballat. (3) The high priest was the top governing authority in Jerusalem, even if the elders were also influential. (4) Jews were opposed to the idea of a rival priesthood like the one in Samaria. (5) The high priest, at this time, had authority to conduct diplomacy and command military affairs on behalf of Judea. (6) The high priest is also depicted as the person to whom God speaks, confirming the idea that the office of prophet had diminished during this time.

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[83] See Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:49, 61.

[84] E.g., Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians*, 6–7; Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism*, 189–202.

[85] VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 65–85.

Jaddua would eventually be succeeded by his son Onias I, which marks the beginning of the Oniad priesthood.[87] The Oniads, as descendants of Zadok, would continue serving as the primary civic and religious leaders in Jerusalem under Hellenistic rule. The Oniad priests oversaw a number of important projects during this period, including renovations to the temple under Simon I (Sir 50), the translation of the Septuagint during the tenure of Eleazar (*Letter of Aristeas*; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:44–49), and the building of the Leontopolis temple under Onias IV (Josephus, *Ant.* 13:69–77).

Some of the Oniad priests appear to have been well-liked by the people also. For instance, the writer of 2 Maccabees expresses the popular outrage that was felt when Onias III, a priest described as "a zealot for the law" (2 Macc 4:2),[88] was murdered by Menelaus (2 Macc 4:34–38). Another interesting example comes from Sir 50:1–20 where

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[86] The following is a summary of VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 82–83.

[87] See Bohak, "Oniads," 1006–7.

[88] This description of Onias's "zeal" for the law hearkens back to the description of Phineas the priest in Num 25:1–15.

Jesus ben Sira praises Simon ben Onias (likely Simon I, also known as "Simon the Just" [Josephus, *Ant.* 12:43])[89] for repairing the temple and fortifying Jerusalem:

> The leader of his brothers and the pride of his people was the high priest, Simon son of Onias, who in his life repaired the house, and in his time fortified the temple. He laid the foundations for the high double walls, the high retaining walls for the temple enclosure. In his days a water cistern was dug, a reservoir like the sea in circumference. He considered how to save his people from ruin and fortified the city against siege . . . Finishing the service at the altars, and arranging the offering to the Most High, the Almighty, he held out his hand for the cup and poured a drink offering of the blood of the grape; he poured it out at the foot of the altar, a pleasing odor to the Most High, the king of all. Then the sons of Aaron shouted; they blew their trumpets of hammered metal; they sounded a mighty fanfare as a reminder before the Most High. Then all the people together quickly fell to the ground on their faces to worship their Lord, the Almighty, God Most High.[90]

Ben Sira then delivers an encomium honoring the high priest:

> How glorious he was, surrounded by the people, as he came out of the house of the curtain. Like the morning star among the clouds, like the full moon at the festal season; like the sun shining on the temple of the Most High, like the rainbow gleaming in splendid clouds; like roses in the days of first fruits, like lilies by a spring of water, like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day; like fire and incense in the censer, like a vessel of hammered gold studded with all kinds of precious stones; like an olive tree laden with fruit, and like a cypress towering in the clouds. When he put on his glorious robe and clothed himself in perfect splendor, when he went up to the holy altar, he made the court of the sanctuary glorious. When he received the portions from the hands of the priests, as he stood by the hearth of the altar with a garland of brothers around him, he was like a young cedar on Lebanon surrounded by the trunks of palm trees.[91]

Not all pre-Hasmonean priests were so beloved, however. For instance, Jason, the brother of Onias III, obtained the high priesthood by bribing Antiochus IV, and was widely regarded as a traitor who was "ungodly and no true high priest" (2 Macc 4:13). Other priests like Menelaus and Alcimus also developed well-deserved reputations for corruption as well. Indeed, as Regev observes, "Substantial portions of the Zadokite high priesthood and other priestly circles had been proven greedy, manipulative and violent."[92] The theme of priestly corruption would continue into the Hasmonean era as well.

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[89] Most scholars of Second Temple Judaism have followed G. F. Moore's conclusions in identifying "Simon the Just" as Simon II who served as high priest after 200 BCE (Moore, "Simon the Righteous," 348–64; cf. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 16; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:52). However, VanderKam criticizes Moore's reliance upon later rabbinic tradition that is inconsistent and historically dubious on this point, and instead has argued persuasively that Josephus is more reliable in identifying Simon the Just as Simon I, the son of Onias I. See the detailed discussion in VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 137–57.

[90] Sir 50:1–4, 14–16, NRSV.

[91] Sir 50:5–12, NRSV.

Another important source from this period is Hecateus of Abdera.[93] In his work *On the Egyptians*, fragments of which are preserved in the writings of Diodorus Siculus, Hecateus recounts Moses's role in the founding of the Jewish nation and the establishment of the priesthood:

> He picked out men of the most refinement and with the greatest ability to lead the entire nation, and appointed them priests; and he ordained that they should occupy themselves with the temple and the honours and sacrifices offered to their god. These same men he appointed to be judges in all major disputes, and entrusted to them the guardianship of the laws and customs. For this reason the Jews never have a king, and authority over the people is regularly vested in whichever priest is regarded as superior to his colleagues in wisdom and virtue. They call this man the high priest, and believe that he acts as messenger to them of God's commandments. It is he, we are told, who in their assemblies and other gatherings announces what is ordained, and the Jews are so docile in such matters that straightway they fall to the ground and do reverence to the high priest when he expounds the commandments to them.[94]

While Hecateus's account perhaps romanticizes the priesthood, it remains valuable because he corroborates some details about popular perceptions of the priesthood during the Hellenistic period that are discussed in other sources.[95] In spite of its problems, the priesthood was widely viewed as a foundational institution for Jewish society. The priests were largely responsible for interpreting and enforcing the Mosaic law as it pertained to religious and civic matters. The high priest was viewed as the supreme mediator between God and Israel and was responsible for speaking the words of God. The high priestly office was also widely respected, and whoever occupied that office functioned as the *de facto* governmental leader in Jerusalem in the absence of a Davidic king.

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[92] Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 15.

[93] See also the discussions in VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 113–22; Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 33–34.

[94] Quoted in Diodorus, *Lib. Hist.*, 12:40.3, 5–6 (LCL, Francis Walton's translation).

[95] See the discussion and references in Wardle, *The Jerusalem Temple*, 34.

The High Priesthood in the Hasmonean Period

The Hasmonean era is an era of extreme turmoil in Jewish history. It begins with the deposition of the high priest Onias III by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 175 BCE. Jason, Onias's brother and a philhellene, offered money and the promise of a plan to transform Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city, and this led Antiochus to name him as the high priest. Jason instituted a host of controversial reforms to Hellenize Jerusalem and encourage Judeans to assimilate more with Greek culture (2 Macc 4:7–15). However, Jason's tenure was cut short when Antiochus deposed him just three years later in favor of Menelaus who presented a more lucrative offer in exchange for the high priestly office (2 Macc 4:23–26).

The appointment of Menelaus was scandalous since, unlike Jason, he was not a Zadokite, and thus did not meet even the most basic qualification to serve as the high priest. His behavior in office was equally scandalous as well. Menelaus is portrayed as having robbed the temple treasury and as selling some of its sacred artifacts for personal gain (2 Macc 4:32, 39). His most egregious act, however, was when he orchestrated the murder of Onias III whom many Jews still considered to be the rightful high priest (2 Macc 4:34–38). Onias's son, Onias IV, fled Jerusalem for Egypt where he eventually would establish the temple at Leontopolis (Josephus, *Ant.* 13:69–77). However, during this time Jason, capitalizing upon Menelaus's growing unpopularity and rumors of Antiochus's death, commanded a modest military force to lay siege to Jerusalem, but was ultimately unsuccessful in taking the high priesthood back from Menelaus (2 Macc 5:5–10).

The civil unrest caused by the feud between the supporters of Jason and Menelaus raised the ire of Antiochus who was off waging a military campaign against Ptolemaic Egypt. Believing Judea was in a state of open revolt, in 168 BCE Antiochus returned to Jerusalem, looted the temple, and reportedly killed thousands of Jews in the holy city (1 Macc 1:11–15; 2 Macc 5:11–21). Antiochus then established a pagan cult in Jerusalem and launched an aggressive campaign of Hellenization (1 Macc 1:41–53; 2 Macc 6:1–9). He also constructed a fortress, the Akra, and installed a garrison (1 Macc 1:33–34).[96] This drastic situation reached a fever pitch a year later when Antiochus, returning from a second campaign in Egypt, marched on Jerusalem and desecrated the temple by erecting an altar to Zeus and sacrificing a pig (Dan 11:31; 1 Macc 1:54). Antiochus also ended sacrifices to YHWH in the temple, prohibited circumcision of infant Jewish boys, and ordered that Torah scrolls be confiscated and destroyed (1 Macc 1:56–58; Josephus, *Ant.* 12:253–256).

The dramatic events described above precipitated what has come to be known as the Maccabean Revolt, when Mattathias Hasmonai, a priest from Modein, and his sons

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[96] The author of 1 Maccabees indicates that the Akra was built in "the City of David" (1 Macc 1:33). Josephus, however, instead asserts that the Seleucid-era fortress was "attached to the temple" (Josephus, *Ant.* 12:362). The disparity between these accounts led to a great deal of speculation in biblical scholarship over the exact location of the Akra (e.g., see Decoster, "Josephus and the Seleucid Acra," 70–84). However, in 2015, archaeologists working with the Israeli Antiquities Authority discovered the remains of the Akra in the old City of David, corroborating the testimony of 1 Maccabees. See Hasson, "The Akra, Epiphanes' Lost Stronghold."

Judas, Simon, and Jonathan led an armed resistance against their Seleucid overlords. Mattathias, joined by a group of religious zealots known as the Hasidim ("pious ones"),[97] fought back against the Syrian forces who were pursuing them. They also went throughout Judean villages destroying pagan altars, circumcising young boys by force, and killing apostate Jews (1 Macc 2:42–48). While the revolt had begun with Mattathias and his rejection of paganism (1 Macc 2:19–22), after his death in 165 BCE his son Judas soon came to prominence as the spiritual and military leader of the resistance. Judas and his freedom-fighters, using guerilla tactics, managed to win several strategic victories against superior Seleucid forces. Before he could retaliate, however, Antiochus died in 164 BCE. Eventually the Maccabean forces would retake Jerusalem and restore worship at the temple as well (1 Macc 4:36–61; 2 Macc 10:1–9). The heroic military victories of Judas, the reclaiming of the Jerusalem temple, and the death of Antiochus IV "solidified the Maccabean movement and gave it popular credibility."[98]

The purification of the temple and the reinstitution of its sacrifices was a cause for celebration for Jews everywhere, and led to the creation of the festival of Hanukkah (1 Macc 4:36–59; 2 Macc 1:10–2:18).[99] Yet the conflict between Judean and Syrian forces would continue for another two decades. Judas would be killed in battle at Elasa in 160 BCE, and leadership of the revolution would pass to his brothers Jonathan and Simon (1 Macc 9:11–22). The high priest Alcimus, who had conspired with the Seleucids against the Maccabean forces, died in 159 BCE leaving the high priestly office unoccupied, but later assumed by Jonathan (1 Macc 9:54–57). Judeans would finally gain their political independence, however, when in 141 BCE Simon took control of the Akra and expelled the Syrian garrison stationed there (1 Macc 13:49–52).

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[97] Kampen, "Hasideans," 704–05; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:175–80.

[98] Harrington, "Maccabean Revolt," 901.

[99] See the discussion of the role of Hanukkah in the political ideology of the Hasmoneans in Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 36–57.

In addition to the massive political changes introduced by the Maccabean Revolt, these events brought about significant religious changes for Jews as well, especially regarding the high priesthood. The Oniads had fled to Egypt, which meant that the Zadokite priests were no longer in control of the Jerusalem temple. In the absence of a high priest following the death of Alcimus, a period known as the *intersacerdotium*,[100] Jonathan was declared by Alexander Balas to be the high priest (1 Macc 10:17–21). After Jonathan's death, his brother Simon would assume the high priestly office, thus beginning the Hasmonean priestly line of succession (1 Macc 13:4). However, while Mattathias and his sons were indeed priests, and although they were widely regarded as heroes for their role in the revolt, the fact remained that they were descended from the line of Joarib, not Zadok (1 Macc 2:1; cf. 1 Chr 24:7). This eventually became a source of some controversy as many Jews still believed the Oniads were the rightful high priestly family (e.g., 2 Macc 4:34–38). For instance, it is highly probable that Jonathan the Hasmonean is actually "the Wicked Priest" mentioned in the pesher commentary on Habakkuk discovered at Qumran (e.g., 1QpHab 8:8–13; 11:4–8; 12:2–10).[101] A group of Pharisees would later implore John Hyrcanus to divest himself of the high priesthood because of popular concerns over his legitimacy.[102] Some groups like the Qumran community even longed for a priestly messiah who would someday restore right worship at the temple (e.g., 1QM 9:10; 11QMelch; cf. *4 Baruch*).

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[100] VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 250.

[101] Babota, *The Hasmonean High Priesthood*, 121–22; VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 264–70; Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 95.

[102] Josephus, *Ant.* 13:289–292. See also Regev, *The Hasmoneans*,155–60.

The Hasmonean priests changed the priestly office itself. They practiced sacral kingship, combining the priesthood with Hellenistic kingship in a manner unprecedented in Jewish history.[103] For instance, when Jonathan was appointed "high priest" (ἀρχιερέα) he was also given a purple robe to wear and was named "general and provincial governor" [στρατηγὸν καὶ μεριδάρχην] by Alexander Balas (1 Macc 10:20, 65). Later, Aristobulus I in 104 BCE officially claimed the title "king" [βασιλεύς] in addition to serving as the high priest, a practice that future Hasmonean rulers would adopt as well.[104] While the Hasmoneans were often lionized for their role in fighting for Judea's political independence, some Jews evidently came to view the Hasmoneans as usurpers who stood in the way of the appointment of a rightful Davidic heir (e.g., *Ps. Sol.* 17:4–10).[105]

The Hasmoneans also militarized the priesthood. Thus Jonathan, Simon, and John Hyrcanus can aptly be described as "warrior priests" who commanded armies, forcibly converted neighboring peoples like the Idumeans to Judaism, expanded the land of Judea through conquest, and oversaw the administration of the temple cult.[106] Some of the Hasmonean rulers also developed a reputation for cruelty, like Alexander Janneus who killed 800 Pharisees who had opposed him, along with their wives and children.[107]

In a twist of irony, while the Hasmoneans had fought against Hellenization, in the end they embraced it when they came to power. Hasmonean rulers took on Greek names and Greek dress, practiced polygamy, amassed wealth, minted coins with Hellenistic imagery, and engaged in a form of politics that was every bit as ambitious and conspiratorial as those practiced by the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.[108] One way in which the Hasmoneans continued to reject Hellenism, however, was by their strict adherence to their exclusively monotheistic faith in YHWH, the centrality of the Jerusalem temple, and observance of the Mosaic Law. Indeed, as 1–2 Maccabees and the writings of Josephus show, the Hasmoneans and their supporters had gained a reputation as people who would give their lives to preserve their faith and sacred traditions.

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[103] Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 129–55; Heim, "Kings and Kingship," 610–23. See also Rooke, "Jesus as Royal Priest," 81–94.

[104] Josephus, *Ant.* 13:301; 20:240–41.

[105] Regev notes that while evidence of widespread expectation of a Davidic king is sparse in Second Temple sources just prior to the Hasmonean era, "general opposition to the Hasmoneans and the disappointment stemming from their later decline itself sparked the eschatological Davidic hopes found at Qumran and in the *Psalms of Solomon*" (Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 150). See also Atkinson, "Herod the Great," 313–22.

[106] Babota, *The Hasmonean High Priesthood*, 119.

[107] Josephus, *Ant.* 13:380.

The High Priesthood in the Herodian Period

As Daniel Harrington notes, the Hasmoneans sowed the seeds of their own destruction through their fratricidal schisms and by making an alliance with the Romans that unwittingly opened the door to conquest.[109] In 63 BCE, in the midst of a civil war between Aristobulus II and his brother Hyrcanus II over who should control the priesthood, the Roman general Pompey conquered Jerusalem.[110] He imprisoned Aristobulus II, forced Jerusalem to pay tribute, and defiled the temple by entering the Most Holy place.[111] Pompey then installed Hyrcanus II as high priest and governor, but according to Josephus he "prohibited [Hyrcanus] from wearing the royal crown" [διάδημα δὲ φορεῖν ἐκώλυσεν] (Josephus, *Ant.* 20:244). Nevertheless, Aristobulus and his son

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[108] Regev, *The Hasmoneans*, 23–25.

[109] Harrington, "The Maccabean Revolt."

[110] See VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 340–45. The feud between Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II was also commented on by Dio Cassius who notes that they "were quarrelling themselves, as it chanced, and were creating factions in the cities on account of the priesthood (for so they called their kingdom) of their god, whoever he is" (Dio, *Hist. Rom.*, 37.15.2, LCL, Earnest Cary's translation). Credit goes to James VanderKam for calling attention to this reference (VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 343–44).

[111] Josephus, *Ant.* 14:54–76.

Antigonus II continued trying to unseat Hyrcanus from the priesthood. However, in 48 BCE, during the Roman Civil War, Julius Caesar defeated Pompey in Egypt, and with the help of Antipater, the Idumean governor allied with Hyrcanus, Caesar was able to take control of Jerusalem where he confirmed Hyrcanus II as high priest and "ethnarch" (ἐθνάρχης) (Josephus *Ant.* 14:190–195).

Antipater's son Herod would eventually marry Hyrcanus's granddaughter Mariamme and gain prominence as a Roman-sponsored tetrarch over Galilee. Some in Judean society felt threatened by Herod, however, and at one point he was even called before the Sanhedrin for possible prosecution. Yet, Hyrcanus defended Herod at every turn in an attempt to appease their Roman overlords. Antigonus finally succeeded in overthrowing Hyrcanus, however, by eliciting help from the Parthians, after which he mutilated Hyrcanus's ears so that he could no longer serve as priest (Josephus, *War* 1:269–270). The Parthians, who were allied with Antigonus, then took control of Judea for a brief period until Herod went to the Romans for aid. Marc Antony, because of his longstanding commitment to Antipater, elevated Herod from tetrarch to "king of the Jews" [βασιλέα καθιστᾶν 'Ιουδαίων] and agreed to provide assistance (Josephus, *War* 1:282–285). In 37 BCE, after a long and protracted siege, Herod, with the help of auxiliary troops from Antony, captured Jerusalem and deposed Antigonus II, effectively ending Hasmonean rule in Judea. Antony later beheaded Antignous at Antioch, and Herod killed several members of the aristocracy who were allied with Antigonus in Jerusalem. Instead of reinstating Hyrcanus II, however, Herod assumed the throne himself. Relations between Herod and the Hasmonean family into which he had married quickly deteriorated. Concerned for threats to his legitimacy, Herod began systematically killing off rival Hasmoneans, and even drowned Mairamme's brother Aristobulus III, who was the last of the Hasmonean high priests.[112] Thus began the Herodian era.

During the reign of Herod the Great, the high priesthood "was no longer a hereditary office, only an appointive one."[113] Herod had control over the priestly vestments and gave them to the priest of his choosing. A few examples highlight Herod's transactional approach to the priesthood. The first high priest Herod selected was a priest from Babylon named Ananelus, around 35 BCE. Herod thus removed the high priesthood from the Hasmonean line and gave it to a person who was unthreatening, being disconnected from Jerusalem and from his political rivals.[114] Later, in 24 BCE, Herod deposed Jesus ben Phiabi and appointed Simon ben Boethus, an Alexandrian Jew, as high priest so that he could marry Simon's daughter who was widely regarded for her beauty.[115] Finally, near the end of his life, Herod, in response to a group of Jewish youths who had removed the golden statue of an eagle which he had installed atop of the temple entrance, deposed the high priest Matthias ben Theophilus and appointed Joazar ben Boethus, a relative of his former wife.[116] Herod then burned alive the young men who had defaced the statue, and Joazar was widely viewed as complicit in the act.[117]

Herod used the high priesthood in ways that he saw as personally and politically advantageous. Thus, his management of the high priesthood resembled how foreign rulers occupying Judea had always treated it. After Herod's death in 4 BCE, his son Archelaus was appointed ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. However, just two years later he was deposed by Caesar Augustus because his cruelty had led to civil unrest in Jerusalem. From that point forward, Roman procurators like Pontius Pilate took possession of the high priestly vestments and awarded them to candidates whom they believed could be trusted to maintain the *status quo* in Jerusalem. At this point, the high priests no longer had the political clout they once did under the Hasmoneans. However, high priests of this era were still the religious powerbrokers of Jerusalem as they were the ones who oversaw the administration of the temple and its sacrifices. It was also still widely believed that the high priest was the rightful mediator between Israel and God, and that the priest spoke the words of God to the people (e.g., John 11:49–51).

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[112] Josephus, *War* 1:437. See also VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 398–405.

[113] VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 398.

[114] See Josephus, *Ant.* 15:22.

[115] Josephus, *Ant.* 15:320–322.

[116] E.g., contra Horsley "High Priests," 32 who avers that Joazar was Matthias's brother-in-law. Cf. VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 413–14.

[117] Josephus, *Ant.* 17:164–167. See also VanderKam, *Joshua to Caiaphas*, 414–15.

The high priests were also the aristocratic heads of the religious establishment and wielded considerable influence via the Sanhedrin to govern local matters, especially regarding issues of the temple. Additionally, they served as proxies for their Roman overlords and often worked on their behalf to keep the peace and prevent civil unrest in Jerusalem, sometimes by neutralizing perceived religious threats to Roman power. The most prominent examples of this, of course, are Caiaphas who played a significant role with Pontius Pilate in the trial and execution of Jesus of Nazareth,[118] and the high priest Ananus who was later responsible for the execution of Jesus's brother James the Just.[119] It is no wonder, then, that the Gospels' portrayal of the Jerusalem high priests is overwhelmingly negative.

The civic and military roles of the high priest diminished following the decline and cessation of the Hasmonean dynasty and the rise of Herod the Great, but the high priests would continue to serve an important political function for the Jewish people, in addition to their profound religious responsibilities. This continued throughout the Roman era until the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, an event which radically changed Jewish religion and effectively meant the end of the centrality of the high priestly office for Judaism.

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[118] Matt 26:3ff; Mark 14:53ff; Luke 22:54; John 18:13ff.

[119] Josephus, *Ant.* 20:197–203.

The High Priesthood in Second Temple Judaism: A Summary

The history of the high priests in the Second Temple era is largely marked by their evolution from being members of liturgical caste to being the socio-political and religious power-brokers in Jerusalem. From the Persian period onward, the high priests gradually became the leaders of the Jewish people returning to Judea from exile. In the absence of any continuing Davidic dynasty following Zerubbabel, the people looked to the high priests for leadership in religious, civic, diplomatic, and even military affairs. During the Hellenistic era, the high priesthood became an office which was awarded by Greek rulers to the person who they felt could keep the people in line, or to whoever was the highest bidder (e.g., the high priests Jason and Menelaus). The high priesthood eventually was taken over by the sons of Mattathias the Hasmonean, with Simon beginning the high priestly line of succession; and starting with Aristobulus I, the priestly office was also combined with kingship. However, the Hasmoneans governed in much the same manner as the Ptolemies and Seleucids before them. The rise of Herod the Great meant a return to control by foreign overlords, the Romans, and the high priesthood was again turned into an appointive office that often served the political purposes of the ruling class.

The preponderance of literary and historical evidence indicates that the high priesthood remained widely respected among Jews because of its responsibility for managing the temple and its sacrificial cult, which were fundamental to Jewish social and religious identity. However, the cozy relationship some high priests enjoyed with foreign overlords also, at times, fostered distrust between the people and the religious establishment as in the cases of Jason and Caiaphas. The high priests were even sometimes viewed as traitorous agents of exploitation, as was the case with Menelaus and Alcimus. Therefore, it is no wonder that certain Jewish groups like the Qumran community or the writers of the Gospels became so critical of the Jerusalem priesthood, and that some even hoped for a priestly messiah who would eventually restore proper worship in Israel as they envisioned it.

Hebrews and the Temple

Now that we have examined the significance of the temple and its priesthood for common Judaism, we will now turn our attention to Hebrews. As will be shown in the pages to follow, the temple and priesthood were of great importance for the writer of Hebrews and his congregation. However, we will also argue that the writer's treatment of themes related to the temple and the priesthood provide evidence that the community, for reasons that are not entirely known, are likely becoming estranged from the temple system, and that this is a significant aspect of the crisis the writer is addressing.

Sacred Space in Hebrews

In considering how the writer of Hebrews treats the concept of sacred space, we will examine the author's references to sanctuary space, furnishings, artifacts, and other relevant terminology. Surprisingly, the Louw-Nida semantic domains "Space" and

"Spacial Dimensions" (Domains 80 and 81) do not feature prominently at all in Hebrews. However, the writer does use seven different terms categorized under the domain "Artifacts" (LN 6.1–225), including: *κιβωτός* ("ark" [of the covenant]) (LN 6.44),[120] *χερουβίμ* ("cherubim" [statues]) (LN 6.99),[121] *λυχνία* ("lampstand") (LN 6.105),[122] *τράπεζα* ("table" [of the presented bread]) (LN 6.113),[123] *θυσιαστήριον* ("altar") (LN 6.114),[124] *θυμιατήριον* ("altar of incense") (LN 6.116),[125] and *καταπέτασμα* ("veil") (LN 6.160).[126] The domain "Constructions, Buildings" (LN 7.1–25) is also significant for our author as he describes sacred space. Four words from within this semantic domain are significant in Hebrews: *οἶκος* ("house" [as metaphor for the sanctuary]) (LN 7.2),[127] *σκηνή* ("tent" or "tabernacle") (LN 7.9, 17),[128] derivatives of *ἅγιος* ("sanctuary" [e.g., "the holy place" or "Most Holy place"]) (LN 7.18),[129] and *παρεμβολή* ("camp" [referring to a sacred space "outside the camp"]) (LN 7.22).[130] A composite sketch of Hebrews's treatment of sacred space will be offered based on passages where these words occur. Most occurrences of lexical items found in these semantic domains are concentrated in chapters 8 and 9, which is where we find an extended discourse concerning the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. These chapters will also, therefore, feature significantly in our examination of how the concept of sacred space is treated in Hebrews. However, there is also a significant cluster of these terms which occurs in chapter 13 as well, and so relevant passages from that chapter will be taken into consideration also.

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[120] Heb 9:4.
[121] Heb 9:5.
[122] Heb 9:2.
[123] Heb 9:2.
[124] Heb 13:10.
[125] Heb 9:4.
[126] Heb 6:19; 9:3; 10:20.
[127] Heb 10:21.
[128] Heb 8:2, 5; 9:2–3, 6, 8, 11, 21; 11:9; 13:10.
[129] Heb 8:2; 9:1–3, 8, 12, 24–25; 10:19; 13:11.
[130] Heb 13:11, 13.

Hebrews spends a lot of time focusing on issues of sacred space. Interestingly, however, traditional terminology like ναός and ἱερόν, which usually refer to the "temple" or "sanctuary" respectively, are words not found anywhere in Hebrews.[131] Instead, the author resorts to using the term σκηνή which refers to the "tent" or "tabernacle" (e.g., Heb 8:2, 5; 9:2–21; 13:10). Hebrews's decision to focus on the tabernacle has led a number of scholars to conclude that the writer is not concerned for issues pertaining to the Jerusalem temple, and that he was perhaps wholly unfamiliar with it and its rituals.[132] However, this is likely an overreading of Hebrews, especially given the author's expressed concerns for issues of priesthood and sacrifice (to be covered later in this chapter). What can be said is that the author is interested to explain the significance of Jesus's heavenly ministry for his community, and this requires going back to the scriptural foundation of Israelite worship. That foundation, for Hebrews, is the Exodus account of the building of the tabernacle.

In Heb 8–9, the writer refers to two tabernacles: the heavenly one which is "the true tent that the Lord pitched" (Heb 8:2),[133] and the earthly one built by Moses as a "model and shadow" [ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ] of the real one in heaven (Heb 8:5), referring, of course, to the tabernacle which had served as the first main sanctuary for Israelite worship in the pre-monarchial period (cf. Exod 25:8; 36:1). Much of the discourse in chapter 9 thus centers on the relationship between these two "tents" in heaven and on earth.

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[131] Koester, *Hebrews*, 375.

[132] E.g., see Eisenbaum, "Locating Hebrews," 225.

[133] The clauses τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς ("the true tent") and ἣν ἔπηξεν ὁ κύριος οὐκ ἄνθρωπος ("which the Lord pitched and not humans") refer back to the same τῶν ἁγίων ("sanctuary") mentioned at the beginning of Heb 8:2.

The earthly tabernacle is described as it is in the LXX, being divided between the "holy place" [ἅγια] and the "Most Holy place" [ἅγια ἁγίων], with these chambers separated by a "veil" [καταπέτασμα] (Heb 9:2–3). The holy place is described with its furnishings: the "lampstand" [λυχνία] and "the table and the presented bread" [ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων] (Heb 9:2; cf. Exod 25:23–40). In Heb 9:3–4 the author, moving farther into the tabernacle, describes the Most Holy place. The "ark of the covenant" [τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης] is depicted in Heb 9:4–5 with details that also follow the descriptions found in the LXX. The ark is overlaid with gold and is overshadowed by statues of "cherubim" [χερουβίν] who gaze upon the ark's golden lid, also known as "the mercy seat" [τὸ ἱλαστήριον]. The ark is said to contain the "golden jar of manna" [στάμνος χρυσῆ ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα], "Aaron's staff that budded" [ἡ ῥάβδος Ἀαρὼν ἡ βλαστήσασα], and "the tablets of the covenant" [αἱ πλάκες τῆς διαθήκης], details that reflect Second Temple tradition about the ark.[134] However, intriguingly, the Hebrews writer also places the "altar of incense" [θυμιατήριον] *inside* the Most Holy place even though the Hebrew Bible portrays this altar as being located within the *outer* sanctuary, just before the entrance to the Most Holy place. As Attridge notes, however, Hebrews's curious placement of the incense altar is likely due to the ambiguous nature of the LXX version of the Exodus account of the altar's placement, and should not be attributed to any supposed unfamiliarity with scriptural tradition on the part of the author.[135] The author then says that the priestly rituals being done in the "first tent," and the limited access to the Most Holy place, show that the way into "the sanctuary" had not "been revealed" so long as the earthly tabernacle remained standing (Heb 9:6–8). Jesus, as the high priest of a new order, however, is depicted by the Hebrews writer as entering the "more perfect" tabernacle that is in heaven and thus "not of this creation" (Heb 9:11).[136] While there, Jesus purifies the heavenly tabernacle and its furnishings with his own sprinkled blood, in a manner reminiscent of the Levitical priestly blood ritual (Heb 9:21–23; cf. Lev 1:5; 4:6; 16:14).[137]

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[134] See the discussion in Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:221.

It is important to note that many commentators have argued that Hebrews's understanding of the tabernacle was influenced by Platonic thought, possibly through the writings of Philo,[138] and that the writer's focus on the heavenly sanctuary implies that he has a negative view of the earthly sanctuary and of Judaism. According to this line of interpretation, the heavenly sanctuary represents what is perfect and incorruptible while the earthly sanctuary represents what is imperfect and corrupted. However, since the seminal work of Ronald Williamson, several scholars have argued that the supposed connections between Hebrews and Philo or Plato are tenuous at best, or perhaps non-existent.[139] Those opposed to the idea of a Platonic background for Hebrews have argued instead for an apocalyptic or eschatological context for Hebrews's portrayal of the heavenly tabernacle. For instance, Lincoln Hurst has, on the basis of his eschatological reading of Hebrews, interpreted Heb 8:5 as describing the earthly sanctuary as "foreshadowing" the heavenly sanctuary to come, and not as a "copy and shadow" as in several English translations.[140] Interpreters who adopt this approach have thus argued that the heavenly sanctuary represents the future hope of the community for which they must press on, while the earthly sanctuary represents the old order they must leave behind. Some others, like Kenneth Schenck, have argued that the tabernacle imagery is simply metaphorical.[141]

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[135] See Table 1 above. Also see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 234–38. There are four references to the altar of incense in the Exodus narrative: Exod 30:1–10; 37:25–28 (not in LXX); 40:5, 26–27. Attridge notes that there is some ambiguity within the Exodus tradition in the LXX about the placement of this altar. For instance, Exod 30:6 states that the altar was "before the veil by the ark of the testimony" [ἀπέναντι τοῦ καταπετάσματος τοῦ ὄντος ἐπὶ τῆς κιβωτοῦ τῶν μαρτυρίων]. Also, Exod 37:25–28 does not mention a location, and the references in Exod 40 simply indicate that it was placed "before the ark" [ἐναντίον τῆς κιβωτοῦ] and "before the veil" [ἀπέναντι τοῦ καταπετάσματος]. See also Camacho, "The Altar of Incense in Hebrews," 5–12.

[136] Cf. Vanhoye, "Par la tente plus grande," 1–28. Vanhoye argues for a distinction between the "tent" and "sanctuary" in Heb 9:11–12, averring that the "tent" that is "not of this creation" is a metaphor for Jesus's crucified body. However, nowhere else is the tent used this way (although the veil within the sanctuary is explicitly used as a metaphor for Christ's body in Heb 10:20). The description of the tent as being "not of this creation," however, is echoed later in Heb 9:24 when the writer similarly describes the heavenly sanctuary as "not made by human hands," suggesting the author in 9:11–12 is most likely contrasting the heavenly/earthly sanctuaries and not making a reference to Jesus's body.

[137] See the treatment of this theme in Moffitt, *Atonement*, 229–96.

[138] The classic expression of this position can be found in Spicq, *Hébreux*, 1:31–91 where Spicq argues that the author of Hebrews was probably a disciple of Philo and was influenced by Platonism. The Platonic interpretation has continued to find support among some scholars (e.g., see Attridge, "Temple, Tabernacle, Time," 261–74; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 15–21).

However, there are significant challenges to both the Platonic and eschatological interpretations of the tabernacle in Hebrews that stem from the issue of the author's views of sacred space. For instance, Craig Koester has observed that while the writer perhaps utilizes language about the tabernacle that seems to evoke Platonism or eschatology, Hebrews "fits neatly into neither category."[142] Koester instead argues that the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries should be taken at face value, namely that they represent real spaces for the author and, therefore, that these sanctuaries should be understood in spatial categories, not philosophical or futuristic categories.[143] Similar arguments have been advanced by Marie Isaacs,[144] David Moffitt,[145] Jody Barnard,[146] and most recently Cynthia Westfall.[147] The spatial interpretation argues that scholarship which understands the heaven-and-earth dichotomy in Hebrews as either a metaphor or as something futuristic betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of how sacred space was conceived within Second Temple Judaism and by the writer of Hebrews. Instead, these interpreters assert that the author of Hebrews views the earthly tabernacle (and by extension, the Jerusalem temple) as a mirror image or map of the real sanctuary in heaven. Additionally, even while the presence of eschatology in Hebrews is undeniable (e.g., Heb 1:2), scholars who argue for a spatial interpretation assert that the author's beliefs about the heavenly tabernacle are not simply future-oriented, but rather are also grounded in his understanding of *present* reality.[148] Therefore, instead of implying a negative view of the earthly tabernacle or of Judaism, this interpretation argues that the writer elevates the dignity of the earthly sanctuary by emphasizing its intimate connection to the sanctuary in heaven.[149] Thus, while the author fully acknowledges the limitations of the earthly system in comparison to the heavenly one, he does not treat the earthly system with suspicion or derision. Rather, the earthly sanctuary has served its purpose as a symbol pointing to the concrete reality of Jesus's ongoing ministry within the heavenly sanctuary and to the bold and unbridled access to God the community now enjoys through that heavenly ministry.[150]

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[139] Ronald Williamson, in his critique of Spicq, concludes that "the thoughts of Philo and the writer of Hebrews are poles apart" (Williamson, *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 577). Philip Church agrees with Williamson's criticism and adds that such a reading "does justice neither to Philo or to Hebrews" (Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 70). See also the discussion in Koester, *Hebrews*, 97–100.

[140] Hurst, *Hebrews*, 13–17. See also the discussion in Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 1–2.

[141] Schenck, "An Archaeology of Hebrews' Tabernacle Imagery," 238–58.

[142] Koester, *Hebrews*, 98.

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[143] For instance, Koester argues, "The 'true' is heavenly and abiding in contrast to what is earthly and transient. The opposite of 'true' can be 'false'. . . but in Hebrews the earthly sanctuary is not a false sanctuary, since God himself commanded that it be built (Heb 8:5). That sanctuary is the earthly and transient antitype of the true and abiding (9:24) sanctuary in heaven" (Koester, *Hebrews*, 376).

[144] Isaacs, *Sacred Space*, 67.

[145] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 220–29; Moffitt, "Serving in the Tabernacle in Heaven," 259–79.

[146] Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 88–94.

[147] Westfall, "Space and the Atonement," 1–33.

[148] Based on social-scientific studies of conceptions of temporality within Mediterranean cultures, Matthew Marohl likewise argues that the author of Hebrews writes from a "presentist" perspective (Marohl, *Faithfulness*, 152–80; cf. Malina, *The Social World of Jesus and the Gospels*, 179–214). See also the discussion in Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 171–212.

[149] This is consistent with the spatial heaven/earth cosmology expressed throughout Hebrews. See Adams, "Cosmology of Hebrews," 122–39, esp. 132–33.

The spatial interpretation of the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries of Heb 8–9 advanced by scholars like Koester, Isaacs, Moffitt, Barnard, and Westfall is compelling and resonates with the observations of other scholars who have pointed out the various problems with associating Hebrews with Platonic thought. This argument also accounts well for the author's portrayal of the earthly sanctuary and its relationship to the one in heaven, providing an alternative to the eschatological interpretation which struggles to locate the heavenly sanctuary in the future despite the author's insistence that it is a present reality. Indeed, the writer of Hebrews highlights the relationship between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries in Heb 8:5 where he quotes Exod 25:40 (LXX), where God instructs Moses to "make everything according to the pattern which was shown to you on the mountain" [ποιήσεις πάντα κατὰ τὸν τύπον τὸν δειχθέντα σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει].[151] Likewise, in the same passage, the Hebrews writer asserts that the earthly sanctuary was intended to be a "model and shadow" or even "a shadowy reflection"[152] of the real sanctuary in heaven. The author later drives the point home in Heb 9:11–12 where he emphasizes the present nature of this heavenly reality by saying that Jesus has "appeared as the high priest of the good things that have come through the greater and more perfect tabernacle." Thus, as Moffitt argues, the text of Hebrews invites the reader to "a spatial conception of Jesus's action" within the heavenly sanctuary rather than a philosophical, metaphorical, or even a futurist conception of the heavenly sacred space.[153]

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[150] E.g., see Gäbel, *Kulttheologie*, 320–466.

[151] The noun τὸν τύπον ("pattern") refers to the design of the real sanctuary in heaven while the antitype (e.g., Heb 9:24) is the earthly sanctuary itself (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:201). Also, the author's insertion of the word "everything" [πάντα] into the LXX text of Exod 25:40 further drives home the point that the Hebrews writer believed that there was a close relationship between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.

[152] This rendering of ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ is found in Schlier, "ὑπόδειγμα," *TDNT* 2:32–33. William Lane similarly translates the phrase as "shadowy suggestion" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:199), and Craig Koester renders the phrase as "representation and shadow" (Koester, *Hebrews*, 374). Esler, however, argues persuasively that in Hellenistic Greek the term ὑπόδειγμα was normally used to refer to something as an "example" or "model" and that the tabernacle is treated as "lower-level copy some other reality" (Esler, "Prototypes, Antitypes and Social Identity," 125–46, esp. 131–35).

Another, albeit less obvious, reference to sacred space in Hebrews appears in Heb 13:11–16. In 13:13, the writer admonishes his community that they should go to Jesus "outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore." As the author makes clear in vv. 11–12, the phrase "outside the camp" [ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς] refers to the practice of disposing the carcasses of sacrificed animals within a designated area outside the city gate (e.g., Exod 29:14; Lev 4:12; 9:11), and so the writer is further drawing an analogy between Jesus's death in Jerusalem and the Levitical sacrifices.[154] Attridge is surely correct in saying that nothing in the text identifies "the camp" with Judaism, and that this text cannot be used to support the relapse theory. Yet Ze'ev Safrai has shown evidence from Qumran that confirms that some Jews did equate the temple with the "tent of meeting" and Jerusalem with the Israelite "camp" in the wilderness, and this further suggests that Jerusalem is likely in view here when the Hebrews writer mentions "the camp."[155] However, in Heb 13:15–16, the author abruptly shifts from talking about Jesus's sacrifice "outside the camp" to talking about his community within the context of worship, presumably still in a place located outside the camp. Here in this place, Jesus the high priest is present (they go "to him" [πρὸς αὐτόν] in v. 13, and there they offer worship "through him" [δι' αὐτοῦ] in v. 15). Presumably, this is also where the community's sacred "altar" [θυσιαστήριον] is located, one from which even the servants of the earthly tabernacle are not privileged to partake (Heb 13:10).[156] Also, notably, the community's sacrifices are not blood sacrifices since Jesus has already provided the means of atonement through his own sacrificial death. Rather, theirs are sacrifices of praise, holy confession, thanksgiving, and sharing (Heb 13:15–16). The location "outside the camp," along with the presence of Jesus the high priest, the holy altar, and the unmistakable context of worship with bloodless sacrifices strongly suggests that the Hebrews writer is also making a clever allusion to the tent of meeting mentioned in Exod 33:7–11, the second tent of Moses that was closely connected to, and sometimes conflated with, the tabernacle.[157] The repeated references to God's promised "rest" throughout Heb 3–4 further reinforces the intertextual linguistic connections between Heb 13:11–16 and Exod 33, because in the same narrative from Exodus YHWH also promises Moses, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" [καὶ καταπαύσω σε] (Exod 33:14 LXX), the first such promise of "rest" in the land found anywhere in the Old Testament. Thus, by going "outside the camp," we find that the author of Hebrews and his community are experiencing what could be regarded as a type of status dissonance by embracing "a diametrically opposite status before God and before the world."[158] The place "outside the camp" is not solely the place for sacrificial victims, nor is it only a means of sharing in the social rejection and disgrace Jesus suffered. Rather, by going "outside the camp" the community is also going to the place of God's rest, the celestial tent of meeting where God's presence abides, where YHWH and his mediator speak face-to-face, and where all Israel worships God and receives his oracles.[159]

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[153] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 222, n. 10.

[154] Lane also avers that the reference to Jesus's death outside the city gate is an allusion to the Gospel tradition about Golgotha (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:543).

[155] For example, 4QMMT B 29–30, 60–61 says that Jerusalem is "the sacred camp," the temple is "the tent of meeting," and that ashes are to be taken "outside the camp" meaning outside of the city. See the discussion in Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 34–35. In contrast, Jewett's suggestion that the phrase "outside the camp" refers to "the secular realm of daily life" cannot possibly be correct (Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims*, 12).

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[156] As mentioned in the first chapter of the present work, some scholars have interpreted Heb 13:10 as a slight directed against the Jerusalem priests or against Judaism (e.g., Hanson, "The Reproach of the Messiah," 234; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 688–703). However, this reading is doubtful, especially because of the lack of evidence for a conflict with opponents being addressed anywhere else in Hebrews. Thus, I concur with Koester's statement that 13:10 "has more to do with literary contrast" than any supposed polemic. Also, this understanding of the "altar" in Heb 13:10 as referring to the heavenly altar within the heavenly sanctuary contrasts with other interpretations that view it as a metaphor for the Eucharist. See Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:538; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 396. Notably, while Marie Isaacs has argued for a real heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews, she has interpreted the altar as "a metonym for the sacrificial death of Jesus" rather than an actual heavenly altar (Isaacs, "Hebrews 13.9–16 Revisited," 280). However, such an interpretation is inconsistent with Hebrews's insistence that the heavenly sanctuary is reflected in its earthly counterpart, and that this presumably includes its chambers and artifacts as well (cf. Heb 8:5).

[157] Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:543–44; Gelardini, "Charting 'Outside the Camp'," 210–37, esp. 225–33.

Summary: Sacred Space in Hebrews

It is well-known that the author of Hebrews does not directly address issues concerning the Jerusalem temple, *per se*. Rather, his focus is squarely on the tabernacle as this was the first scriptural sanctuary designated for centralized worship in Israel. The writer shows that he is entirely familiar with the details from the biblical material concerning the tabernacle as his descriptions of its various chambers, furnishings, and artifacts generally follow the details preserved in the LXX. He freely acknowledges the limitations of the earthly tabernacle and its rituals as well. For the author, the earthly tabernacle was as temporary and limited as the sacrifices that were associated with it. However, the author also believes that the earthly sanctuary was intended to be a map or copy of the true sanctuary in heaven, God's actual dwelling place, and that the earthly sanctuary retains its intimate connection to the one in heaven. The earthly sanctuary with its priestly rites thus serves as a shadowy reflection of the eternal, heavenly sanctuary and its eternal, heavenly priest, Jesus Christ. The heavenly sanctuary and Jesus's priestly ministry are thus seen not simply as a future hope, nor as a metaphor, but as a concrete and present heavenly reality in which the author and his community participate through their worship.

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[158] Theissen, "Christology and Social Experience," 195. See also Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 22–23, 69–71.

[159] This reading thus bears some resemblance to that advanced in Thompson, "Outside the Camp," 53–63. Interestingly, Lane notes the attractiveness of this approach to the text, especially in how it "implies a call to leave earthly assurances and to pursue the heavenly world where Jesus completed his redemptive action at the heavenly altar" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:545). Yet ultimately Lane rejects this interpretation, saying only that Thompson's reading is "too rigorous" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:545). Attridge is equally dismissive when he asserts that the linguistic connections between in Heb 13:11–16 the narrative of Exod 33:7–14 are only "of marginal significance" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 399, n. 119).

The writer's observations about the tabernacle also have relevance for our understanding of his views of the Jerusalem temple, especially given the fact that the temple would likely have been a major point of concern for the author as it was for so many other Jews and Jewish Christians in the first century. Indeed, it was not uncommon for Jewish writers like Ben Sira or the writer of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, or the author of the *Testament of Moses* to sometimes talk about the tabernacle when they actually had the temple in mind (e.g., Sir 24:8–12; Wis. 9:8; *T. Mos*. 2:8). The fact that the writer also mentions Jesus's death "outside the city gate" in Heb 13:12, in addition to other references to Jerusalem, is further evidence that he has the temple in mind when he is describing the tabernacle and its rituals. Therefore, to insist that the author of Hebrews must not have been concerned for the Jerusalem temple simply because he does not mention it by name is to risk placing the author within a historical vacuum. If Hebrews was written close to the time of the destruction of the second temple, as most scholars believe, then this would have been a powerfully encouraging message for Jewish Christians who either were at risk of losing, or had just lost, the Jerusalem temple and who now "have no remaining city" to call home (Heb 13:14a). Even if the old order was passing away and the sanctuary was no more, it had already served its purpose by pointing the way to the coming ministry of Jesus. Jesus Christ, the resurrected and ascended Lord, had now become the great high priest serving in the real sanctuary in heaven, a sacred space that could never be lost or defiled, and where the community could always go for complete and unfettered access to God. While the community might endure shame and disgrace on earth, they nevertheless are able to go "outside the camp" to the place where Jesus is—to the true, cosmic sanctuary where God's presence abides, where his people find rest, and where they can hear God speaking living words that are fresh and new (e.g., Heb 4:11–16).

The Priesthood in Hebrews

The theme of priesthood is also a central focus for the writer of Hebrews. One of the most significant semantic domains for our author is "Religious Activities" (Domain 53), and especially its subdomain "Roles and Functions" (LN 53.66–95). From this subdomain, we find prominent use of words referring to the institution of the priesthood such as ἱερατεία ("priesthood"),[160] ἱερεύς ("priest"),[161] and ἀρχιερεύς ("high priest"),[162] with high concentrations of words from this subdomain occurring throughout chapters 5–10. Hebrews is also saturated with language categorized within the subdomain of "Offering and Sacrifice" (LN 53.16–27). From this domain, the writer uses words like προσφορά ("offering") (LN 53.16),[163] θυσία ("sacrifice") (LN 53.20),[164] and ὁλοκαύτωμα ("whole burnt offering") (LN 53.24).[165] This subdomain features prominently in chapters 9–10, though terms from this domain are also found in chapters 5, 7, 11, and 13 as well. In describing the priestly ministry as one of mediation and atonement, the Hebrews writer also uses language from the semantic domain "Reconciliation, Forgiveness" (Domain 40), such as terms like μεσίτης ("mediator") (LN 40.6)[166] and ἱλάσκομαι ("to expiate") (LN 40.9).[167] Additionally, the author refers back to Old Testament persons who were foundational to the priesthood such as Aaron [Ἀαρών] and Levi [Λευί], and even makes use of Second Temple-era priestly traditions about Abel [Ἄβελ] and Melchizedek [Μελχισέδεκ] as well. It is critical, therefore, to take these variegated priestly-related references into consideration. Here, we will examine how the writer of Hebrews conceives of the institution of the priesthood, especially the high priestly office, and how this understanding shapes, and is shaped by, his beliefs about Jesus.

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[160] Heb 7:5.

[161] Heb 5:6; 7:1, 3, 11, 14–15, 17, 20–21, 23; 8:4; 9:6; 10:11, 21.

[162] Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14–15; 5:1, 5, 10; 6:20; 7:26–28; 8:1, 3; 9:7, 11, 25; 13:11.

[163] Heb 10:5, 8, 10, 14, 18.

[164] Heb 5:1; 7:13, 27; 8:3; 9:9, 23, 26; 10:1, 5, 8, 11–12, 26; 11:4; 13:10, 15–16.

The Levitical priesthood—with its biblical origins, its ancient lineage, its moral character, and its cultic responsibilities—is sacred tradition for the writer of Hebrews. For him it is the basis for both Israel's covenantal tradition and the Jerusalem high priestly office (e.g., Heb 7:11). Genealogical descent from Aaron and Levi is seen as a fundamental requirement for serving in the priesthood (Heb 5:4; 7:5, 20). However, unlike so many high priests in the Second Temple era who bribed foreign rulers for the office (e.g., Jason and Menelaus), according to Hebrews the high priest must be "called by God, just as Aaron was" and that one should not "presume to take this honor" for himself (Heb 5:4).[168] The high priest must also demonstrate pastoral sensitivity by "dealing gently" with "the ignorant and those going astray" (5:2). The Hebrews writer also asserts that the Levitical priests are to subsist upon the charity of God's people through the collection of tithes, recalling the Torah's prohibitions against priests amassing personal wealth, and providing a further contrast with the real history of high priests in Jerusalem (Heb 7:5). The high priest also is expected to regularly offer "gifts and sacrifices" [δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας] to God on behalf of the people (Heb 5:1; 8:3; 9:9), which is the writer's shorthand for the numerous sacrifices and offerings prescribed in the Torah. In addition to the normal rites such as the daily offerings, sacrifices "of goats and bulls" [τράγων καὶ ταύρων] and purification rituals (Heb 9:13; 10:11), the primary responsibility of the high priest, according to Hebrews, is the Day of Atonement ritual whereby once a year the high priest offers a sacrifice to purify the sanctuary and the people "from sins committed in ignorance" (Heb 9:6–7). The writer thus follows the Levitical tradition as he conceives of the priestly ministry primarily in terms of mediation between the divine and human realms.

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[165] Heb 10:6, 8.

[166] Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24.

[167] Heb 2:17.

The Hebrews writer is also conversant with some of the variegated priestly traditions found in Second Temple Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament. For instance, he portrays Abel as the primordial priest of God who "offered a better sacrifice than Cain," and who was declared righteous as a martyr.[169] He also is aware of speculative traditions about Melchizedek and makes creative use of this material in his midrash on Ps 110 in Heb 7.

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[168] Dyer, "One Does Not Presume to Take This Honor," 125–46.

[169] Cf. Gen 4:1–10. Regarding Second Temple era tradition, the writer of *Jubilees* portrays Abel as a priest offering sacrifices during the Feast of Tabernacles (*Jub* 4:1). In the *LAE* 40:1–5, God commands his angels to give proper burial to the bodies of Adam and Abel as priests, covering them with garments of linen and anointing them with oil. The fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* also preserves a fragment from a Hellenistic Jewish synagogue prayer that mentions Abel first in a list of priests which also includes Seth, Enos, Enoch, Noah, and Melchizedek (*Const. Ap.* 8.5.3).

What makes Hebrews especially unique among the writings of the New Testament, however, is that the writer spends an extensive amount of discourse claiming that Jesus Christ is the community's "great high priest" [ἀρχιερέα μέγαν] (Heb 4:14; 10:21). Interestingly, while the author clothes Jesus in the garb of the Levitical priesthood through Jesus's fulfillment of the Day of Atonement ritual, he also makes it clear that Jesus is a completely different kind of priest than the priests of the Levitical order. For example, well-aware of the tradition that Jesus is a "Son of David" and not from the tribe of Levi, the writer candidly states in Heb 7:4, "For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe about which Moses said nothing about priests," and later in 8:4 that "if he were on earth he would not be a priest." Instead, Jesus is repeatedly said to be "a priest after the order of Melchizedek" and not from "the order of Aaron" (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 17). Using the material from Gen 14:18–20 as a point of departure, our author describes Melchizedek as both the "king of Salem" and "priest of God Most High" (7:1) who remains "a priest forever" because he was "without father, without mother, and without genealogy" (Heb 7:3–8). Many scholars believe that this resembles other Second Temple traditions about Melchizedek as an exalted, heavenly priest, such as that found in texts from Qumran or in some of the Enoch material.[170] The Melchizedek material in Hebrews 7 is so important for understanding the writer's conception of Jesus's priestly ministry that it merits extended discussion in the paragraphs to follow.

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[170] E.g., see de Jonge and van der Woude, "11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," 301–26; Yadin, "A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," 152–54; Mason, *You Are a Priest Forever*; Gieschen, "Melchizedek Tradition in 2 Enoch," 364–79.

The mysterious, priestly "order of Melchizedek" [τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ] is explained in Heb 7 where the author engages in some of the most clever and creative midrashic exegesis found anywhere in Second Temple literature.[171] While Buchanan overstates the case by saying that all of Hebrews is a midrash on Ps 110, the royal psalm comes to the fore at this point in the Epistle.[172] The author's previous allusions to Ps 110:4 (cf. Heb 5:5–10; 6:19–20) have foreshadowed his lengthy discussion of Melchizedek[173] and prompted his use of *gezera shawa*, the use of one text to illuminate another.[174] He therefore introduces the material from Gen 14:18–20 into his argument to explain more clearly the "order of Melchizedek"[175] and provide the necessary Old Testament justification for the legitimacy of Jesus's unique high priesthood.[176] Just as he asserts that the earthly sanctuary served as a shadowy reflection of the heavenly sanctuary, so the writer also establishes the similarities between Melchizedek and Jesus when he says Melchizedek is "like the Son of God" (Heb 7:3).[177] In Heb 7:1–3,[178] the writer bases his exegesis mostly on inferences from the Genesis material, and as Lane notes, the language the writer uses is designed to prompt the reader to see similarities between Jesus and the biblical material about Melchizedek.[179] Melchizedek is both king of Jerusalem and high priest, as Jesus is; and he is "king of righteousness and peace" as Jesus is.[180] His priesthood was not based on lineage, and neither is that of Jesus; and his lack of recorded death means he remains a priest forever, as Jesus does.[181]

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[171] Our author's concern for his audience's lack of understanding (Heb 5:11–6:3) appears to be the reason he waits until chapter 7 to engage in his high-level exegesis of Ps 110.

[172] Buchanan, *Hebrews*, xxi–xxii. Cf. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 14, 23. See also Kistemaker, *Psalm Citations*, 116–24.

[173] Lane observes that in Hebrews, topics are often "foreshadowed and repeated" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:xc).

[174] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 187; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:159.

[175] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 191.

[176] Guthrie, "Hebrews," 967–68.

[177] See Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 105; Neyrey, "Topos for a True Deity," 439–55.

[178] The poetic language in vv. 1–3 has led some to theorize that it was originally part of a pre-Christian hymn. See Ellingworth, "Like the Son of God," 260–61.

[179] Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:165.

Next, the author is interested to compare the priestly orders of Melchizedek and Levi. Rather than compare Melchizedek with Levi directly, however, in Heb 7:4–10 the author uses the Gen 14 narrative and compares the priest-king with Abraham, the father of the Hebrew nation. The argument is one from lesser-to-greater: if Melchizedek is found to be greater than the patriarch, such greatness is multiplied if he is then compared with Abraham's descendants. This argument is thus designed to leave no room for doubt as to the greatness of Melchizedek, or even more, of the Son of God to whom he is likened (cf. 7:3). The first thing weighing in favor of Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham is that the patriarch paid him a tithe. This is no small matter for our author, and his astonishment is shown by the emphatic ὁ πατριάρχης which he tacks onto the end of v. 4 ("see how great this Melchizedek was, to whom even Abraham paid a tenth from the spoils—the Patriarch!").[182] He then compares the tithes collected by Melchizedek and the Levitical priests (vv. 5–6): those collected by the descendants of Levi are commanded by the Law [ἐντολὴν . . . κατὰ τὸν νόμον] and are taken from among their brothers and sisters [τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτῶν]; those received by Melchizedek were given by Abraham himself. Not only did the priest-king collect tithes, however, he also blessed the patriarch who had received God's promises (cf. Gen 12:1–3). Therefore, if the tithe was not convincing-enough proof of Melchizedek's superiority, the author notes that the lesser person is "indisputably" [χωρὶς δὲ πάσης ἀντιλογίας] blessed by the person of greater standing (v. 7). The author pushes his argument still further in v. 8 by contrasting Melchizedek's eternal priesthood with the mortality of the Levitical priests.[183] In v. 9, he engages in some especially "playful exegesis."[184] The phrase "it might even be said" [καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν] shows that the author knows that he is stretching the argument as far as it can possibly go when he says the tithes received by the descendants of Levi were somehow paid backwards through Abraham to Melchizedek (!). How could anything like this be possible? In v. 10 the writer notes that Levi was still in Abraham's loins [τῇ ὀσφύϊ] at the time the patriarch was met by Melchizedek. Therefore, not only did Abraham pay Melchizedek a tithe, so did Levi and his descendants. Furthermore, if this logic is followed, then one must conclude that not only was Melchizedek superior to Abraham, but that he was especially superior to Levi and his descendants. Thus, Melchizedek's priestly order, and that of Jesus, is also superior as well.

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[180] Koester notes that righteousness and peace were well-known messianic qualities (Isa 9:6–7; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 9:9–10) (Koester, *Hebrews*, 342). Also, this kind of etymological exegesis was standard fare within Second Temple literature (cf. Philo, *Leg*. 3:77–84).

[181] The interpretive method known as *quod non in thora non in mundo* ("what is not in the Torah is not in the world") is discussed in Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 3:694–95. See also Philo, *Leg*. 2:55, 79; *Abr*. 31. This interpretation reflects our author's high view of Scripture since for him what the Gen 14 account did not say was just as important as what it did say (see Bruce, *Hebrews*, 137). Attridge notes that terms such as ἀπάτωρ and ἀμήτωρ have been used in primarily two ways: pejoratively (e.g., "bastard" or "orphan") and mythologically (i.e., in reference to deities) and believes the mythological use resembles how these terms are used in Hebrews (see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 190–91; Schrenk, "πατήρ, πατρῷος, πατριά, ἀπάτωρ, πατρικός," *TDNT* 5:945–1021). Similar language is used to describe God in *Apocalypse of Abraham* (17:8–10).

[182] See Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:157–58; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 361; Grässer, *An die Hebräer*, 2:25. That this should be considered an emphatic use of the nominative is supported by the fact that the author of Hebrews generally keeps components of such appositional constructions together (cf. Heb 2:14; 4:14; 7:1, 5, 9, 28; 11:10, 31). Here, however, he separates Ἀβραὰμ from ὁ πατριάρχης, relegating the latter

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nominative to the end of the sentence, though it is clearly in appositional relationship to the former (see a similar construction in Heb 3:1).

[183] Attridge rightly notes that "the contrast between mortal impermanence and eternal life is fundamental of the overall argument of this chapter" (Attridge, *Hebrews*, 196–97).

[184] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 197.

The Hebrews writer also spends a great deal of time comparing the ministries of Jesus's Melchizedekian priesthood with the Levitical priesthood.[185] Those from the "order of Aaron" inherit the priesthood by physical lineage as required by the Torah while Jesus, from the "order of Melchizedek," was appointed by God's solemn oath (Heb 7:20, 28; cf. Ps 110:4). The descendants of Aaron are many because they are mortal, while Jesus is immortal and remains "a priest forever" (Heb 7:3, 23–28).[186] The priests are subject to human "weakness" and must sacrifice for their own sins, while Jesus is described as a priest who is "perfect" and "without sin," needing no sacrifice (Heb 4:15; 7:28; 9:7). The Levitical priests serve in the earthly sanctuary while Jesus presides over the sanctuary in heaven (Heb 8:1–5; 9:11). The Levitical high priests "stand daily" [ἕστηκεν καθ' ἡμέραν] offering multiple "gifts and sacrifices," while Jesus is "seated" [ἐκάθισεν] at God's right hand because he has offered a sacrifice that is "once and for all" [ἐφάπαξ] (Heb 5:1; 8:1; 9:9, 26; 10:10–11). The Levitical sacrifices cleanse people ritually and serve as a continual reminder of sins, while Jesus's sacrifice cleanses the people ritually *and* spiritually, and completely atones for Israel's sins committed under the first covenant (9:13–15; 10:1–8, 19–23). Their sacrifices are "the blood of bulls and goats" while Jesus has offered "his own blood" [τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος] by sacrificing himself as a martyr for the people, thereby assuming the role of both high priest and sacrificial victim (Heb 9:12–14; 13:12). The superior nature of Jesus's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood is especially emphasized in Heb 8:6 where the writer declares that Jesus has "a more excellent ministry" [διαφορωτέρας τέτυχεν λειτουργίας] and that he is the "mediator of a better covenant" [κρείττονός ἐστιν διαθήκης μεσίτης] founded on "better promises" [κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις].

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[185] See Lehne, *New Covenant*, 97–99.

[186] Moffitt argues that Jesus's assumption of the Melchizedekian priesthood required death and thus presumes his resurrection as the priest in Heb 7:15–16 who "arises" [ἀνίσταται] and possesses "the power of an indestructible life" [δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου] (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 202–3).

Jesus's administration of the heavenly cult is, likewise, a major emphasis for Hebrews.[187] He is described as the community's high priest who is "seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven" where he ministers in "the true tabernacle" (Heb 8:1–2). Jesus has "gone through the heavens" [διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανούς] and has entered "behind the veil" [εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος] into God's dwelling inside the Most Holy place (Heb 4:14; 6:19–20). He obtains redemption by offering his own body and blood, and his sacrifice forever cleanses the heavenly sanctuary from the people's defilement (Heb 9:12, 23). By his definitive sacrifice, therefore, Jesus the high priest has opened the veil and the sanctified community is invited to follow him past the zones of holiness, directly into the presence of God within the Most Holy place (Heb 10:19–23).[188] Moffitt also makes a compelling argument that it is precisely the life of Jesus through his resurrection that makes atonement possible for the people as he presents himself in the fullness of his perfected humanity in the heavenly sanctuary.[189]

The author also comments extensively on the ethical quality of Jesus's priestly character. Jesus is the one by whom God speaks prophetic words to his people (Heb 1:2). He is a high priest from among the people and is "merciful" and "faithful" as he makes atonement for them (Heb 2:17). Jesus "did not glorify himself" but was properly appointed to the office by God (Heb 5:5). Jesus also "offered prayers and supplications" [δεήσεις τε καὶ ἱκετηρίας] to God and was heard because he lived a life of "piety" [εὐλαβείας] (Heb 5:7). Jesus the priest was also a martyr who "learned obedience through what he suffered," and his blood offers a testimony even better than the blood of righteous Abel (Heb 5:8; 12:24).[190] Jesus is even described in Heb 7:26 as a high priest who is "holy, blameless, undefiled, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens," the strongest assertion of Jesus's purity anywhere in the New Testament. For Hebrews, Jesus is the quintessential high priest *par excellence*, and the embodiment of purity and piety within Israel.

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[187] See the treatment in Moffitt, *Atonement*, 220–29.

[188] Moffitt avers that the crucifixion and death of Jesus are a *sine qua non* for his priestly ministry and sacrificial offering, but differs notably from traditional interpreters by arguing that the writer depicts the act of atonement as being completed only when Jesus enters into the heavenly sanctuary after his resurrection to present himself in the presence of God (e.g., Moffitt, *Atonement*, 294–95).

[189] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 229-32.

Finally, the writer of Hebrews calls his people to follow Jesus and become priests themselves. They are encouraged to enter the heavenly sanctuary where they can partake of an altar which even the Levites could not access (10:19–22; 13:10–13). They are further encouraged to offer "continual sacrifices" to God as well (13:15–16). However, unlike the daily Levitical offerings, these sacrifices are not animal sacrifices. Instead they are spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, good works, and generosity towards one another. Therefore, while the author of Hebrews does not specifically call his people "priests" as do the author 1 Peter and the writer of Revelation (cf. 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; 20:6), he nevertheless describes their worship as a priestly act, and his community as a priestly people.[191]

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[190] Notably, *Apoc. Abr.* 3:1 portrays Abel, the martyr, as the heavenly, apocalyptic judge who will judge all humankind at the end of the age.

[191] Paul similarly describes worship as a spiritual form of "sacrifice" [θυσίαν] in Rom 12:1.

Summary: The Priesthood in Hebrews

Contrary to the assertions of commentators who say that Hebrews presents a negative view of the Levitical priesthood, the writer actually demonstrates a remarkable reverence for the priesthood and the high priestly office. He believes that its scriptural traditions, lineage, ministry, and sacrifices make it an institution that was essential for the nation of Israel and foundational to their covenant with YHWH. Indeed, the Hebrews writer treats the Pentateuch's prescriptions for the priesthood as *the* representative ideal of how the priesthood was supposed to be, providing a stark contrast with much of the actual history of the high priesthood in the Second Temple era, a history he was likely familiar with though he does not directly discuss it. The priestly traditions are thus authoritative for the author as they are required by the Torah, which for him is sacred scripture. The writer, of course, clearly believes there were limitations to the Levitical sacrificial system. Yet he never speaks in derogatory terms about the Levitical priesthood or its legitimacy, nor does he criticize the priests administration of the earthly sanctuary and its rituals. In fact, the writer goes to great lengths to legitimize Jesus's priesthood in light of the Levitical requirements for priestly ministry (i.e., that he is able to be a priest by way of the "order of Melchizedek").

As great as the Levitical priesthood was, however, the writer regards Jesus Christ as the great high priest *par excellence*, and as greater than the Levitical priests in every way. The author goes to extraordinary exegetical lengths to highlight this point, especially over the course of chapters 7–10. He asserts that Jesus is of a better priestly order (the order of Melchizedek), has inherited a better ministry (in the heavenly sanctuary), has offered a better sacrifice (his body and blood), and presides as mediator of a better covenant (the new covenant). For the Hebrews writer, Jesus's ministry provides a kind of cleansing and access to God that the Levitical ministry could only dream of. However, even though Jesus's priesthood is portrayed as different from, and superior to, that of Aaron, the Levitical priesthood nevertheless provides vital conceptual categories for the writer's understanding of Jesus's heavenly ministry. This is evidenced by the author's frequent comparison of Jesus's priesthood to that of the Levites, as well as the juxtaposition of the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries, and the author's portrayal of Jesus's sacrifice in terms of fulfilling the Day of Atonement ritual.

The author also is very interested to describe the moral character of Jesus's high priesthood. For instance, the writer describes Jesus as a high priest who was from among the people, and who is compassionate and deeply sympathetic to the community's concerns. Jesus is not exploitative in any way. Instead, he has given his life for the people as a sacrificial martyr. His priesthood also is completely legitimate because it was given by God and was not something that Jesus took for himself. Jesus is also holy—holier than any priest who has ever lived, including righteous Abel—and makes his people completely holy as he is completely holy.

Though the writer never explicitly discusses it, the history of the high priesthood is relevant for our discussion of Hebrews's treatment of priestly matters. For instance, it is notable that while the writer of Hebrews discusses the issue of priestly descent from Levi and Aaron, he does not mention Zadok. Perhaps this implies that the author sees the Zadokite line as defunct or as simply unnecessary for his purposes. However, the fact that he devotes so much of his discourse to addressing the issue of priestly lineage from Levi and Aaron is nevertheless remarkable and implies that this was an issue of serious concern for his community. The legitimacy of the high priests, a concept which was so important to the institution of the priesthood in the Old Testament, had been in question at least since the Hellenistic era when the Oniad priests fled Jerusalem for Egypt and the temple was no longer in Zadokite hands. Also, except for the brief period of independence during Hasmonean rule, throughout much of the Second Temple era the high priestly vestments were controlled by foreign overlords who simply appointed candidates who either paid enough money for the office or to whomever represented their political interests. The writer's focus on priestly legitimacy, and his allusions to the Maccabean martyrdom traditions in Heb 11, makes it probable that he and his community were aware of at least some of this history.[192] It also seems likely that the author and his audience were aware of the Gospel tradition that Jesus, their messiah, had suffered crucifixion at the hands of the Romans and a complicit high priest in Jerusalem.[193] Yet, for our author, Jesus's ignominious death was transformed into an atoning sacrifice because of his resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God.[194] Thus, the writer asserts that Jesus has obtained a high priesthood far greater than the one in Jerusalem and presides over a sanctuary far greater than the earthly sanctuary.

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[192] In Heb 11:35–36 the author alludes to the death of Eleazar and other martyrdom stories in 2 Maccabees (esp. 2 Macc 6:18–7:42), showing that he was familiar with at least some of the Maccabean historical and literary tradition. See the discussions in Attridge, *Hebrews*, 346–52; Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:388–90; Croy, *Endurance in Suffering*, 37–38.

[193] Various statements in Hebrews also make it seem likely that the writer and his audience were also familiar with early Gospel traditions about Jesus's execution, and perhaps even of the high priest's role in that event (e.g., Heb 2:3; 13:12). See Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:543.

[194] Because the author makes only one explicit reference to the resurrection (Heb 13:20), there has been much debate over the role of the resurrection in Hebrews and its relationship to Jesus's atonement in the heavenly sanctuary. Several interpreters have contended that the resurrection is not mentioned by the author either because it is simply assumed or because it is not the focus of his argument (e.g., Bruce, *Hebrews*, 32–33; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:16; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 603). Others have argued either that Jesus's resurrection and exaltation are combined in Hebrews (e.g., Schenck, *Understanding Hebrews*, 14–15) or that it is impossible to ascertain the writer's understanding of the relationship between the resurrection and exaltation (e.g., Koester, *Hebrews*, 305–6). Some have even argued for a more mystical interpretation which sees Jesus's spirit ascending into heaven after the crucifixion and later rejoining his body before his resurrection and subsequent exaltation (e.g., Hofius, *Katapausis*, 181, n. 359). See the thorough and accessible discussion of these and other positions in Moffitt, *Atonement*, 1–41. Moffitt's own position, however, is that Jesus's bodily resurrection is absolutely central for the writer's understanding of Jesus's priestly ministry and atonement and that it "*unifies and drives the high-priestly Christology and the soteriology of this homily*" (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 299, italics original).

Conclusions: Hebrews and the Temple

Our examination of Temple-related themes of sacred space and priesthood within Hebrews has proven to be informative about our author's views of the Temple. For the writer of Hebrews, the biblical foundations of both Israel's sanctuary and priesthood are authoritative, and thus represent the ideal basis for Israelite worship in Jerusalem. The writer shows reverence for the biblical traditions about the founding of Israelite worship at the tabernacle, including the Pentateuch's descriptions of its chambers, furnishings, and sacred artifacts. He also reveres the Levitical priesthood and believes that its scriptural traditions, lineage, ministry, and sacrifices make it an essential institution for the nation of Israel. The writer also believes that the earthly sanctuary, with its rituals, serves as a reflection or map of God's heavenly temple, thus elevating the importance of the earthly sanctuary by linking it to the one in heaven. As our research has also shown, the writer's views of the priesthood and the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries are beliefs very much at home within the milieu of Second Temple Judaism.

The writer also makes clear, however, that he believes the earthly sanctuary and the Levitical sacrifices were temporary and limited in their effectiveness, thus pointing the way to a new covenant mediated by an even better high priest and priestly ministry. As great as the Levitical priests are, our author believes that Jesus Christ, the Son of David and priest "after the order of Melchizedek," is the great high priest *par excellence* and is greater than the Levitical priests in every way. Jesus's once-for-all sacrifice and heavenly ministry are thus said to provide a kind of cleansing and heavenly access to God that is unprecedented and definitive for both Israel and the writer's community. The writer thus invites his community to become priests as well by following Jesus into the presence of God within the heavenly sanctuary and presenting their spiritual sacrifices of worship and good deeds.

In light of our analysis, what kinds of social realities might have provided a basis for making sense of Hebrews's treatment of Jewish traditions about the temple? Without resorting to overly speculative guesswork about Hebrews's author or recipients, the significant Temple-related themes in the text suggest some intriguing interpretive implications. For instance, the repeated references to the tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood imply that the biblical traditions about the Jerusalem sanctuary, priesthood, and sacrifices—and especially the Day of Atonement ritual—were highly influential for both the writer's and his community's understanding of ritual concepts of sacred space, priestly ministry, and sacrifice. The writer's demonstrated reverence for the Levitical priesthood, and his concerns to legitimize Jesus's priesthood in relation to it, further suggest that both the writer and his community were people who considered the Levitical tradition to be authoritative, even if they viewed the institution as limited in what it could accomplish. The writer's emphasis on Jesus as a compassionate, ethical, and legitimately appointed high priest would have especially resonated with people who lived in a context where at least some high priests were perhaps believed to be unsympathetic, unethical, and illegitimate. Hebrews's focus on the present reality of the heavenly sanctuary and Jesus's heavenly priesthood further implies that the community felt a real need for a sanctuary and sacrifice by which they could access God's presence, concerns that would have resonated with people living in the ancient Mediterranean world where purity concerns dominated daily life. The writer's sustained argument for the legitimacy of Jesus's priesthood in light of the specific Levitical requirements, however, shows that he was concerned to demonstrate for his community *how* Jesus was able meet their need for purification despite being from the tribe of Judah and not Levi. This further suggests that both the writer and his community considered the Levitical tradition to be sacred and authoritative, even if it was limited in its effectiveness, a religious belief which would especially make sense within a situation where the community considered itself to be predominately Jewish-Christian in orientation and if they were a community living at a time near to the temple's destruction.[195] Along with this, it is notable that while the author describes his community's worship in terms of priestly service, he never describes them as a new temple community as we see in New Testament letters written to churches that were significantly Gentile.[196] For Hebrews, the temple is located in heaven where Jesus is. Indeed, the writer's message about Jesus's heavenly priesthood would have been welcome news for a Jewish-Christian audience with a deeply felt need for satisfying the biblical requirements of purity, atonement, and priestly mediation. Jesus's promise of atonement and access to God's presence in the heavenly temple—a sanctuary which could never be lost or defiled—would have made sense to people who identified closely with Israel's traditions of exile and the destruction of its sanctuary, and suggests the recipients themselves were likely people who at one time enjoyed access to God's sanctuary and sacrifices in Jerusalem, but for reasons that remain unknown to us, did so no longer. The cumulative weight of these various implications about the writer and his community drawn from the text, therefore, fit well within the broad social context of Second Temple Judaism, and especially make sense if Hebrews was written to a predominately Jewish-Christian community for whom access to God in the scripturally-sanctioned sanctuary was a vital component of their identity as a people.

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[195] As will be argued in the next chapter, the writer's treatment of the Israel's land traditions, and especially his treatment of Jerusalem, is also highly suggestive of a situation near the destruction of the Second Temple.

[196] Cf. 1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LAND IN SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM AND IN HEBREWS

In the previous chapters, we examined social-historical frameworks of the Law and the Temple in Second Temple Judaism and their thematic presentation in Hebrews. Thus far, our study has shown that the author of Hebrews treats issues related to the Law and Temple in a manner which situates Hebrews as a text belonging to a community with an emerging Jewish-Christian identity, and that the evidence suggests this community either has or is becoming disconnected from the temple and its ritual practices. It has also been shown that the writer addresses a constellation of themes that were significant for Jewish social and religious identity, including issues related to ethnicity (i.e., ancestry and kinship), worship (e.g., monotheism and sacred space), and religious practice (e.g., purity and priesthood). In this final chapter of analysis, we will turn our attention to the Promised Land. As with the previous chapters, we will first provide a socio-historical sketch of the land as it was broadly conceived in traditions central to the formation of common Judaism. Afterwards, we will examine how Hebrews thematically appropriates the cultural framework of the Promised Land, examining references in Hebrews to related geographical terminology, references to inheritance, promise and rest, references to Jerusalem/city, and references to sojourning or wandering. In this chapter, we will argue that Hebrews's appropriation of traditions about the Promised Land and Jerusalem also are suggestive of a situation where the writer and his community are becoming estranged from the city of Jerusalem. It will also be shown that the writer's treatment of Israel's Land tradition resembles treatments found in Jewish texts that were written near or after the events of the Jewish Revolt of 66–70 CE.

The Land in Second Temple Judaism

The Land in the Old Testament

The land of Israel is highly significant for Jewish history and identity. The land is where the biblical narratives are situated, and it serves as "a key integrating theological motif" in the Old Testament.[1] Originally named for its previous inhabitants, "the land of Canaan" [ארצה כנען] was given by YHWH as part of his original covenantal blessing to Abraham and his descendants forever (Gen 12:1–3, 7; 13:14–17). The land is frequently described as a verdant and Edenic paradise, a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Deut 6:3; 11:9; Josh 5:6; Jer 11:5; 32:32; Ezek 20:6, 15; Sir 46:8; Bar 1:20). The story of the Exodus, which was annually memorialized by Jews through the celebration of Passover, was a story of God freeing his people from slavery in the land of Egypt and leading them to the land of Canaan (Exod 12:1–28). However, the story of the Exodus also recalled the wilderness generation's tragic failure to enter the Promised Land, and especially the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea where the Israelites refused to go into Canaan and were cursed to die in the wilderness outside the Land (Num 14; cf. Ps 95).[2] The book of Joshua recounts the following generation's struggle to take possession of the land, and the book of Judges recounts the consequences of their failure to fully subdue it.[3] Eventually, by the monarchial period the land came to be known as "the land of Israel" [ארץ ישׂראל] (e.g., 1 Sam 13:9). The Historical books contain numerous references to the land, with the term ארץ ("land") alone being used over 530 times in that portion of the Hebrew Bible, almost always referring to geographical locations throughout the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah.[4] Indeed, the story of Israel is largely a story about the people's life in the Promised Land, their exile from it, and their restoration to it.[5]

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[1] Williamson, "Land," 639. Walter Brueggemann even argues that the land is "the central theme" of the Old Testament narratives (Brueggemann, *The Land*, 3). See also the discussion of the theme of land as traced throughout the Old Testament canon in Frankel, *The Land of Canaan*, 1–76. Norman Habel, in his important book *The Land Is Mine*, traces six ideologies connected to the theme of land in the Old Testament: (1) Land as a source of wealth (royal ideology); (2) Land as conditional grant (theological ideology); (3) Land as family lots (ancestral household ideology); (4) Land as YHWH's personal inheritance or possession (prophetic ideology); (5) Land as Sabbath bound (agrarian ideology); and (6) Land as host country (immigrant ideology).

The land was also formative for Israel's liturgical and priestly traditions. For example, several of the Psalms mention Zion as YHWH's dwelling place (e.g., Pss 9:4; 50:2), and look forward to the restoration of the land of Judah and Jerusalem's temple (e.g., Pss 51:18–19; 69:35–37; 102:14–23). In fact, the land is so prominent throughout the Psalms that David Frankel asserts, "The collective consciousness is so pervasive that even the most personal prayers are read, interpreted, and expanded in terms of communal experience in relation to the land."[6] The priestly material in the Old Testament also makes observance of the Torah largely dependent upon life in the land of Israel. For instance, laws regulating worship often limit the cultic practice to within Israel and Jerusalem in particular (Deut 12:2–3; cf. 2 Kgs 18:4). Agrarian laws, such as the law of the Jubilee year or the laws concerning inheritance, also could only be kept in the land of Israel.

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[2] The failure at Kadesh-Barnea was significant also for Jewish writers in the Second Temple era (e.g., Neh 9:15–17; Pss 78:40–42; 106:24–26; Jdt 5:13–14; *4 Ezra* 7:104–06; CD 3:6–9). As Lane rightly notes, "Kadesh became the symbol of Israel's disobedience, the place where God's past redemption was forgotten and where the divine promise no longer impelled people to obedience" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:85).

[3] For a balanced discussion of scholarly theories of Israelite settlement of the land, including relevant archaeological data, see Provan et al., *A Biblical History of Israel*, 138–92.

[4] Williamson, "Land," 639.

[5] Martin Noth has argued that the Deuteronomistic history was written as theodicy to explain and justify God's expulsion of Israel from the land for their disobedience (Noth, *Deuteronomistic History*, 89–99). See also the discussion in Frankel, *The Land of Canaan*, 4–10.

The land is also closely tied to themes of inheritance and covenant.[7] For instance, YHWH's promise of the land as an eternal inheritance to Abraham's descendants in Gen 12 is a refrain which recurs throughout the various strata of the Old Testament (e.g., Exod 32:13; Josh 24:3; 2 Chr 20:7; Ezek 33:24) and in Second Temple tradition (e.g., Tob 4:12; 14:7; Bar 2:34). Remarkably, YHWH even ties his majestic reputation to the fulfillment of his promise of bringing Israel into the land (e.g., Num 14:14–19). However, the Old Testament writers also make it clear that the land ultimately belongs to YHWH, and that Israel's continued tenancy of it requires fulfilling the obligation of covenantal obedience (e.g., Josh 22:19; 2 Chr 7:20; Jer 2:7).[8] While Israelites could claim portions of land for themselves, the Mosaic Law considered sales or transfers of land to be temporary since the land was God's possession and was to be an enduring inheritance for Israelite clans.[9] Israel is also depicted as being given the land because of the wickedness of the

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[6] Frankel, *The Land of Canaan*, 51–52.

[7] For instance, the land is frequently referred to in the Hebrew Bible as a נחלה ("inheritance" or "possession") (e.g., Num 26:53; 33:54; 34:2; Deut 19:10; 25:19; 26:1; Josh 11:23; 13:6–7; 1 Chr 16:18; Ps 105:11; Jer 16:18). See Wright, "נחל," *NIDOTTE*, 3.77–81; Christiansen, *The Covenant*, 37–46; Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 75–96.

[8] Frankel, *The Land of Canaan*, 23–24. Also, the Feast of Weeks was an agricultural celebration seven weeks after Passover which commemorated YHWH's ownership of the land and his provision of crops for Israel (Deut 16:9–12). See Sanders, *Judaism Practice and Belief*, 138–39.

[9] For instance, the commandment of the jubilee year required the return of lands to their original owners (Lev 25:23–31) and the laws prohibiting the moving of "boundary stones" were also designed to protect the claims of Israelites to the land (Deut 19:14). See Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 54–74; Bruggemann,

Canaanites and not because of their own righteousness (Deut 9:4). Israelites were thus expected to be faithful tenants of YHWH's land, ensuring that it would be kept pure from pagan practices (Lev 18:24–30; Deut 4:24–26) and that it would be given its proper rest from farming every seventh (sabbatical) year (Exod 23:10–11; Lev 25:3–5).[10] The land was also supposed to be a place of hospitality for the poor and for foreigners living among the various towns and villages of Israel (Deut 10:18–19; 15:7–11).[11] Deuteronomy sets forth blessings and curses that are conditioned upon Israel's faithfulness to the Mosaic law, with exile from the land being the ultimate consequence of disobedience (Deut 28).[12] The Torah thus establishes the idea that "YHWH, Israel, and Canaan are destined to belong together in a god-land-people symbiosis."[13] However, the ideal was far from ever being realized. The book of Judges establishes a tragic narrative cycle of Israel's covenant breaking, military occupation by foreign powers, repentance, and God's gracious deliverance. This narrative cycle is played out on a grander scale in the rest of the Old Testament with Israel's covenant breaking leading to the Babylonian exile (Kings and Chronicles), followed by the eventual return of a remnant of exiles to the land during the Persian era (Ezra-Nehemiah).

The land is also often portrayed in the Old Testament as a source of both unfulfilled promise and hopeful expectation of the future. For example, Abraham is

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The Land, 87–88; Frankel, *The Land of Canaan*, 61–63. However, as Williamson notes, the fact that kings accumulated so much land shows that the laws designed to protect inheritance rights for poor Israelites were often ignored (Williamson, "Land," 640).

[10] Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 97–114. Brueggemann notes that the expectations of stewardship of YHWH's land fell especially to the king who was to be immersed in Israel's covenantal tradition. "[T]he land must be managed by someone nurtured in the understandings and memories of Israel. If the land is not to be wrongly handled, the king must remember barrenness and birth, slavery and freedom, hunger and manna, and above all the speeches at the boundary" (Brueggemann, *The Land*, 76).

[11] Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 115–33.

[12] Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 36–53.

[13] Habel, *The Land Is Mine*, 76.

depicted as entering the land that God had promised (Gen 11:31; 12:1–3, 7), but he does not ultimately possess it in his lifetime.[14] In the latter patriarchal narratives, severe drought forces Jacob and his sons to leave the land of Canaan and seek asylum in the land of Egypt which promises relief from famine but eventually leads to Israel's enslavement (Gen 47:1–11; Exod 1). The Israelites eventually escape Egypt, but because of their rebellion those who experienced the Exodus, including Moses and Aaron, die in the wilderness, leaving it to the next generation to enter Canaan (Num 14). While the Israelites take possession of the land under Joshua, they fail to drive out its inhabitants completely, and their struggle to establish control over it continues until the monarchy becomes centralized in Jerusalem (Josh 15:63; 16:10; 17:13; 23:12–13). Soon after the conclusion of Solomon's reign, however, the kingdom is divided between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah in the South and the other ten tribes in the North (1 Kgs 12). Afterwards, the history of the divided kingdom is largely characterized by infighting among Jews and foreign powers invading Jewish lands, eventually culminating in the conquest of the northern tribes by the Assyrians (722 BCE) and of the southern tribes by the Babylonians (586 BCE). Even the return from exile is portrayed as a promise only partially fulfilled. Most Jews opted to remain in Babylon instead of going back to their ancestral homeland, while others who did return were disappointed at the sight of the newly built temple which paled in comparison to the grandeur of the former temple of Solomon (Ezra 3:12).

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[14] Christiansen, *The Covenant*, 37–38 observes that while the purchase of the cave at Machpelah in Gen 23 perhaps anticipates Abraham's descendants' eventual inheritance of the land, it does not show actual possession of it. Highlighting this point is the fact that Abraham refers to himself in the narrative as "one sojourning among you" when he requests a burial plot from Ephron the Hittite for his deceased wife, Sarah (Gen 23:4).

The Land nevertheless remained a powerful symbol for ancient Israelites as it was a tangible expression of YHWH's covenantal promises to Abraham and his descendants. Its boundaries also helped to provided Israel with a sense of concrete national identity. However, even while the Promised Land was so significant for Jews, ironically, much of their sacred tradition depicts them as a landless people. Walter Brueggemann traces this theme of landlessness throughout three strands of Jewish cultural memory.[15] First, the patriarchal narratives depict Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the ancestral representatives of Israel sojourning to and through a land they do not know. Brueggemann notes that in the Genesis narratives, the sojourning of the patriarchs represents an act of faithful reliance upon YHWH, with the promise of land guiding the journey. Second, in the Exodus narrative Israel wanders in the wilderness for forty years, and Jews are instructed to remember forever that they themselves were once wanderers from a foreign land (Exod 16–18; Num 10:8–10; Deut 26:5). The wandering narratives of the Exodus tradition differ starkly from the sojourning narratives of Genesis because unlike the faithful and hopeful sojourning of the patriarchs, "[t]he wanderer is different from the sojourner-pilgrim because he is not on the way anywhere . . . when faithlessness is linked to landlessness, Israel is lost. It is destined to die the long death of the desert, on the way to nowhere."[16] The third strand of tradition is Israel's memory of the Babylonian exile. With the exile, Jews were violently separated from their homeland and thus "alienated from the place which gave identity and security . . . alienated from all the shapes and forms which gave power to faith and life."[17] Indeed, landlessness and sojourning are literary refrains that recur again and again throughout the Old Testament. The exile in particular would have an especially large impact upon Israelite religion and identity. It also serves as a historical and literary bookend to the story of Israel in the Old Testament and begins the Second Temple era, to which we now turn.

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[15] The following is a summary of Brueggemann, *The Land*, 6–9.

[16] Brueggemann, *The Land*, 8.

[17] Brueggemann, *The Land*, 8.

The Land in the Second Temple Era

It is no exaggeration to say that the Babylonian exile was the most formative event for ancient Israelite history, culture, and religion.[18] The loss of the ancestral land, along with the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem, was so profound that for many Jews it meant the risk of losing their very identity as a people. Jews had to establish various traditions, institutions, and practices that would help them to preserve their identity while living in foreign lands with competing cultural and religious traditions, and surrounded at times by people hostile to their presence. For instance, the experience of the exile led to an unprecedented flowering in Jewish religious literature, especially regarding Old Testament wisdom (Ecclesiastes, Job), history (Chronicles), narrative (Esther), and apocalyptic literature (Ezekiel, Daniel). This period also saw the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek (the LXX) as well as the creation of an enormous body of extra-biblical literature (the Pseudepigrapha and the Apocrypha).[19] Most scholars also believe that the synagogue first came into existence as a means of giving Jews a place to worship and study the Torah while they were living in the Diaspora.[20] However, because so many were successful in adapting to life outside of Israel (e.g., Jer 29:4–7), most Jews opted not to return to the land even after the decree of Cyrus permitted them to do so (Ezra 1:1–3).[21]

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[18] While the biblical accounts are brief (2 Kgs 25:1–21; 2 Chr 36:15–21; Jer 39), the exile was an event that changed Israel indelibly. See Provan et al., *A Biblical History of Israel*, 278–303.

[19] Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 91–94, 120–30.

N. T. Wright has famously argued that, despite the return of some Jews to their ancestral homeland starting in the Persian era, most Jewish people in the Second Temple era believed that they still lived in a perpetual state of exile, punished by God whose promises remained unfulfilled. For example, in his book *The New Testament and the People of God*, Wright asserts:

> Most Jews of this period, it seems, would have answered the question "where are we?" in language which, reduced to its simplest form, meant: we are still in exile. They believed that, in all the senses which mattered, Israel's exile was still in progress. Although she had come back from Babylon, the glorious message of the prophets remained unfulfilled. Israel still remained in thrall to foreigners; worse, Israel's god had not returned to Zion . . . The exile, then, has continued long after the "return", long after the work of Ezra and Nehemiah . . .[22]

Wright's position on the exile has elicited various critiques and questions from other scholars.[23] For instance, how does this explain the fact that most Jews chose to remain *outside* the land rather than return to it? Yet even though Wright's conclusions regarding what most Jews believed about their state of exile might perhaps be overdrawn, and while most Jews indeed resided in the Diaspora and remained there by choice, it is nevertheless undeniable that a sincere hope for a return to the Land is repeatedly and passionately expressed throughout a wide array of texts from the sacred literature of Second Temple Judaism.[24] That the connection with the Promised Land remained highly significant for Jews outside of Israel is also evidenced by the fact that during the Hellenistic and Roman periods Jews were often referred to collectively as 'Ιουδαῖοι ("Jews" or "Judeans") and their religion as 'Ιουδαϊσμός ("Judaism"), terms that associated them closely with their ancestral homeland, 'Ιουδαία ("Judea").[25] Additionally, common religious practice provides further evidence of a strong connection between Jews and the land as many Jews continued to make pilgrimage three times a year to Jerusalem for the great sacrificial festivals of Passover, Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement (e.g., Exod 34:23–24). As Barclay also notes, Jewish writers frequently express a deep emotional connection to the land, referring to Jerusalem as their "mother city" [μητρόπολις] and Judea as their "homeland" or "fatherland" [πατρίς].[26] The writer of the *Wisdom of Solomon* poignantly captures this sentiment when he calls the land of Judea "the most precious of all" lands (Wis 12:7). Indeed, the ancestral land was sacred to Jews, even if most did not inhabit it.[27]

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[20] Evidence for the synagogue in the Babylonian period is lacking, however. Instead, most now believe that the synagogue has its origins sometime in the Persian and Hellenistic eras. See the discussion in Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue*, 110–36.

[21] See the balanced discussions in Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 418–24; Gruen, *The Construct of Identity*, 283–312. However, Daniel Smith-Christopher also documents well the difficulties faced by Jews living in exile (Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile*, 27–74, esp. 65–66).

[22] Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 268–70. Wright articulates this view elsewhere in his works (e.g., Wright, "Romans and the Theology of Paul," 30–67; idem, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1.139–63). It is curious, however, that in his recent work on Paul, Wright says his position on the exile was inspired by E. P. Sanders's work on Judaism even though Sanders makes no claim (to my knowledge) regarding first-century Jews commonly believing themselves to be living in a perpetual state of exile (Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1.140).

[23] Cf. Mason, "Wright on Paul and Jews in Exile," 432–52.

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[24] E.g., Deut 30:1–5; Isa 10:21–22; 11:6; 37:31–32; Jer 23:3; 29:14; 32:37; Ps 126:1–4; Ezek 11:15–17; 34:13; Zech 8:11–13. The hope of return and restoration is also expressed in other Jewish literature from the period: Bar 2:30–34; Tob 13:16; 14:5; *T. Levi* 10:3–4; 17:10; *T. Naph* 4:3; *T. Judah* 23:3–5; Philo, *Conf.* 77–78.

[25] E.g., 1 Macc 10:23; 2 Macc 1:1; Gal 1:13–14; Dio, *Hist. Rom.* 37:17.1. See Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 421–22; Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 457–512.

[26] Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 422. E.g., see Philo, *Flacc*, 45–46; Josephus, *Ant.* 3:245; 4 Macc 18:4.

[27] The modern city of Mecca perhaps serves as a helpful analogy here for the situation of Jews and Jerusalem in the first century. Most Muslims do not live anywhere near Mecca (e.g., Indonesia is the most populous Muslim country in the world), and consequently most are not able to make pilgrimage to that city even though it is prescribed in the Quran (2:196–197). Yet, for Muslims, Mecca remains the most sacred of

The city of Jerusalem gained a renewed prominence following the rebuilding efforts of Nehemiah,[28] and the temple mount came to be considered central to the land of Israel. In fact, the city of Jerusalem and the land were viewed by many Jewish writers as an extension of the temple itself.[29] For instance, the temple mount in Jerusalem was so important that writer of *Jubilees* describes it as "the navel of the earth" (*Jub* 8:19). The land is often mentioned in conjunction with temple, because participating in the temple rituals required pilgrimage to Jerusalem (e.g., Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1:68–69). The land and Jerusalem were also considered holy just as God's sanctuary was holy,[30] and like the temple both the land and the city were also subject to defilement and in need of purification as well.[31] Because of the sanctity of the holy city and the temple in its midst, Jerusalem became the center of religious authority for Jews living in both Judea and the Diaspora who looked to the priesthood and the Sanhedrin for leadership in the Second Temple era.[32]

Regarding the land in other Second Temple literature, W. D. Davies argues that in collections of texts like the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha "the awareness of the land—its holiness, its possible pollution by sin, and consequent need for purification—is

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cities and is central to their faith. For most Jews in antiquity living in scattered communities throughout the Greco-Roman world, their relationship to Jerusalem was not so different.

[28] Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:53.

[29] Safrai avers, "In general Jewish thought, the Temple, Jerusalem, and the Land of Israel are like three concentric circles" (Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 225–26). Interestingly, Peter Walker has argued that the writer of Hebrews has structured his message based on a similar concentric pattern of Land (chapters 3–4), Temple (chapters 5–10), and Jerusalem (chapters 11–13) (Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 213–14). However, his approach to Hebrews's structure seems forced as each of these themes overlap in various chapters and it ignores other themes that are prevalent throughout Hebrews as well.

[30] E.g., Isa 48:2; 52:1; 64:10; Zech 2:12; Wis 12:3; Tob 13:9; 1 Macc 2:7; 2 Macc 1:7. See also Dietrich, "Der heilige Ort," 219–35, 220.

[31] E.g., Lev 18:24–30; Num 35:34; Deut 21:23; 32:43; 2 Chr 34:8; Ezek 39:12–14; 4 Macc 1:11. Scholars who have drawn attention to the effect of sin defiling the land include Büchler, *Studies*, ix; Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 1.1055; and Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 26–27.

[32] See the section on priesthood in the previous chapter of this dissertation. Also, see Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 215–19.

unmistakably clear. The connection of Israel with the land is an assumption."[33] Davies lists several examples, some of which we will mention here as well.[34] The ancestral land is frequently referred to as "the holy land" (Wis 12:3; 2 Macc 1:7; *2 Bar* 65:9–10; *Sib. Or.* 3:266–267), "the good land" (Tob 14:4–5; *Jub* 13:2, 6; *1 En* 89:40), and "the blessed land" (*1 En* 27:1). The land is also quite significant in the writings from Qumran.[35] For example, the Dead Sea community believed that they existed in order to "maintain faithfulness in the land" (1QS 1:5), and their actions as a community were intended "to make atonement for the land" as well (1QS 8:10). The *Temple Scroll* likewise evinces a belief in the sanctity of Jerusalem and Mount Zion even as its author looks forward to a new temple (11QT 47:3–6). Reverence for the land is also shown in the scroll of the *Songs of the Luminaries*, where in section 2 colophon 4 we find a prayer for Jerusalem, "[the city which was chos]en from all lands to have Your [name] in it forever," and which calls Jerusalem "Zion, Your holy city and beautiful house."[36] By contrast, non-Jewish lands were often considered to be ritually impure, especially because of the presence of idolatry.[37] This concept first finds expression in the Old Testament. For example, in Josh 22:19 the Israelites living in the Transjordan region are told, "If the land you possess is unclean [טמאה], cross over into YHWH's land where YHWH's tabernacle stands." The prophet Amos warns Amaziah that the people would go into exile and that he would die "in an unclean [טמאה] land" (Amos 7:17). This idea continued into the Second Temple era as well. For instance, the Jewish *Sibyl* refers to the city of Rome as an "unclean city [ἀκάθαρτε πόλι] of Latin land" (*Sib. Or.* 5:168). It was also believed that this type of impurity could defile the land of Israel as well, such as when the writer of 1 Esdras laments the pollution of the land of Judah by the presence of gentile idolaters (1 Esd 8:80). Archaeological and historical evidence from the Second Temple era also shows that the importing of products, and especially pottery vessels, from lands outside of Judea was sometimes prevented due to concerns for impurity as well.[38]

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[33] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 49.

[34] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 49–74.

[35] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 52–54. See also the more comprehensive discussion in Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 31–42.

[36] Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 33.

[37] Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 135.

The Maccabean literature also provides evidence that the Promised Land gained heightened significance as a symbol of Jewish identity following the Hellenistic era. For example, the writer of 1 Maccabees derides the Seleucid-inspired reforms as "customs foreign to the land" [νομίμων ἀλλοτρίων τῆς γῆς] (1 Macc 1:44). Further, the writer asserts that Antiochus's prohibitions against Torah observance caused "division and harm . . . in the land" [διχοστασίας καὶ πληγῆς . . . ἐν τῇ γῇ] (1 Macc 3:29). Apostate Jews who were viewed as complicit in going along with the reforms are described as perpetuating "evil in the land" [κακὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ] (1 Macc 1:52). Antiochus even tried to eradicate Jewish ties to their ancestral homeland when he "settled foreigners throughout all their territories and redistributed their land" (1 Macc 3:36). In fact, the story of Mattathias and his sons focuses almost entirely on the heroic campaign to deliver "the land of Judah" from Seleucid occupation (e.g., 1 Macc 5:45, 53, 68; 7:50). It is also significant that the Maccabean era saw a massive expansion of Jewish territorial gains. For instance, under the rule of John Hyrcanus, the Hasmoneans reasserted control over Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, as well as lands in the Transjordan region and even the region of Idumea to the

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[38] Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:52–53; Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 80.

South. The reasserting of political and military control over historic Jewish lands (and some non-Jewish lands), and especially the retaking of the city of Jerusalem, was effectively a reclamation of ancestral heritage and geographical boundaries that were considered vital to Jewish national and socio-religious identity. While Jewish independence under Hasmonean rule was short-lived, being brought to an end by the Romans under Pompey, many Jews nevertheless remembered the stories of the Maccabees and how they took back the ancestral lands and the holy city, and these powerful stories, memorialized in sacred texts and in traditions like Hanukkah, would continue to inspire a deeply felt longing for a return to independence within the land of Judea.

The land of Israel was also highly significant for the early Jewish followers of Jesus. For instance, the Gospel narratives about Jesus's life are situated within various towns and villages throughout Galilee and Judea, and the Gospel of John especially focuses on events taking place in the city of Jerusalem. Locales such as the Sea of Galilee, the Jordan River, and the Mount of Olives serve as the backdrop for several of the most pivotal moments in the ministry of Jesus. In Matthew's rendition of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that the meek will be blessed as those who "inherit the land" (Matt 5:5). Jesus's parables, such as the Parable of the Sower, also reflect the earthy, agrarian realities of daily life in the land. Thus, the canonical Gospels vividly and indelibly tie the earliest memories of Jesus to the Promised Land. The book of Acts also recounts the history of the early church in Jerusalem and provides evidence that before the events of the first Jewish Revolt the Jerusalem church remained the mother church for the rest of formative Christianity as the Jesus movement continued to expand throughout the Roman Empire. Even long after the destruction of the second temple, Jerusalem remains significant in early Jewish-Christian thought as attested by the writer of Revelation who depicts the world to come as a new Jerusalem and a restored Mount Zion (Rev 21).

Davies, however, observes that the theme of the land is not mentioned as frequently in Second Temple-era apocalyptic texts as it is in the Old Testament.[39] The trend of Jewish authors not mentioning the land as often in extra-biblical literature, Davies argues, coincides with a shift towards a more eschatological worldview within Second Temple Judaism more broadly,[40] and some studies on Jewish apocalypses have concluded that the shift towards apocalypticism suggests that Jews did not ascribe as much importance to the land after the exile.[41] However, in her important work on *2 Baruch*, Liv Lied has argued that while the turn towards eschatology is clearly evident in various Second Temple texts, scholars are wrong to assume that this implies that Jews cared less for their ancestral homeland.[42] Instead of rejecting the land, or exhibiting feelings of ambivalence towards it, Lied demonstrates that apocalyptic writers like the writer of *2 Baruch* are still very much influenced by the Promised Land even as they reimagine it.[43] Utilizing critical spatial theory, Lied argues that *2 Baruch*'s treatment of the land indicates that while the text does not evince a focus on the physical aspects of the land *per se*, the writer is deeply concerned for its significance for Israel's identity as a covenant people.[44] The writer, therefore, reimagines the holy land as a pristine, heavenly space that awaits those who are faithful to the covenant (e.g., *2 Bar* 4:2–7). Indeed, Lied's observations are consonant with evidence from other apocalyptic texts. For example, *1 Enoch* portrays the land in terms that are at times "cosmic and supraterrestrial," nevertheless, it is clearly the land of Israel where YHWH finally establishes his throne forever at the end of days (e.g., *1 En* 90:20).[45] The *War Scroll* depicts a final cosmic battle spanning forty years being fought around the city of Jerusalem, an example of how the holy city filled that community's apocalyptic imagination (1QM 1.4–10).[46] The writer of Revelation likewise paints a picture of a great battle between the forces of God and Satan taking place within the land of Judea (Rev 16:16) and promises the coming of a "new Jerusalem" down from heaven to earth, lighted with the presence of God and his messiah dwelling among the people (Rev 3:12; 21:10–22:7). In the apocalyptic text of *4 Ezra*, a text also written after the destruction of the second temple, God gives Ezra a vision of the new Jerusalem and the Promised Land in heaven which are "hidden" but "shall appear" at the coming of the messiah (*4 Ezra* 7:26–45). Yet, while the writer of *4 Ezra* looks ahead to the coming of a new Jerusalem, he also reflects upon Israel's experience in exile and writes in poetic language about the significance of God's special choosing of the land:

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[39] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 49.
[40] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 75–158.
[41] E.g., see Whitters, *The Epistle of Second Baruch*, 124, 138–39.
[42] Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel*.
[43] Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel*, 1–19.
[44] Lied, *The Other Lands of Israel*, 311–14.

> I said, "O sovereign Lord, from every forest of the earth and from all its trees you have chosen one vine, and from all the lands of the world you have chosen for yourself one region, and from all the flowers of the world you have chosen for yourself one lily, and from all the depths of the sea you have filled for yourself one river, and from all the cities that have been built you have consecrated Zion for yourself . . ."[47]

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[45] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 52.
[46] Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 166–71.
[47] *4 Ezra* 5:23–25, NRSV.

The Jewish War of 66–70 CE drastically altered the connection between Jews and the land. After the second temple was destroyed, Jerusalem's importance as a religious center diminished and Jews began looking to the Pharisaic rabbis of Yavneh (=Jamnia [Ἰάμνια]) for leadership.[48] While Jews still made pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the fact that the holy city did not draw the masses of people from all over the Roman world as it once did when the temple was standing suggests a further loosening of ties between the Diaspora and the land of Judea.[49] The religious life of Jews also changed in relation to the land as well as Jews were forced to begin reimagining Judaism as a religion without the temple, and began emphasizing a piety that focused on personal adherence to the Torah and its commandments (e.g., synagogue, Torah study, ritual purity, giving to the poor, prayer).[50] The situation was similar for much of Jewish Christianity at this time as well. There is evidence within the New Testament suggesting that while Jewish-Christian communities had participated in the Temple and its rituals prior to the Jewish War,[51] in the years leading to and following the temple's destruction, the early Jesus movement was also forced to begin imagining life without the temple as well.[52] Along with the flight of Jews from the city in the early stages of the Jewish Revolt mentioned by Josephus,[53] it is likely that some Jewish Christians from the Jerusalem church fled the city as well, possibly even migrating to the Transjordan city of Pella.[54] Additionally, although the Jerusalem church would continue after 70 as Eusebius's list of bishops shows,[55] it did not remain the center of the Jesus movement. While Jerusalem had been the epicenter of the early church before 70,[56] by the end of the first century the Jesus movement had spread throughout the Mediterranean world and had established other major centers for Jewish Christianity in cities such as Antioch, Ephesus, and Rome.[57]

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[48] E.g., Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1.174–75; Goodman, *A History of Judaism*, 266–68. However, as Schiffman notes, there is a certain mythology that has grown around the rabbis at Yavneh, including the idea that the Hebrew canon was formalized there by a council (Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 58).

[49] Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 219.

[50] Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 219; Schiffman, *From Text to Tradition*, 161–66.

[51] E.g., Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42; 20:16; 21:26; 22:17.

[52] E.g., Matt 24:1–2; Mark 13:1–2; Luke 21:5–6.

[53] See Josephus, *War* 2:538; 4:378–379, 410; 5:420–423; Josephus, *Ant*. 20:256.

[54] Eusebius records the tradition that several from the Jerusalem church fled to the city of Pella (Eusebius, *Hist. ecc*. 3:5.1–5). Some scholars have questioned the veracity of various details of Eusebius's

Yet even after the loss of the second temple, the land remained sacred for many Jews. As Davies notes, even in Tannaitic sources the theme of the land remains largely significant. This is especially remarkable since so much of early rabbinic tradition was shaped by the loss of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. This perspective becomes evident particularly in the structuring of the Mishnah. Davies elaborates:

> There is a kind of "umbilical cord" between Israel and the land. It is no accident that one-third of the Mishnah, the Pharisaic legal code, is connected with the land. Nine-tenths of the first order of the Mishnah, *Zeraim* (Seeds), of the fifth order, *Kodashim* (Hallowed Things), and of the sixth order, *Tohoroth* (Cleannesses), deal with laws concerning the land, and there is much of the same in other parts of the Mishnah. This is no accident, because the connection between Israel and the

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account, arguing either that flight from Jerusalem to Pella was made impossible by the Romans or that Eusebius's account was simply a theologically motivated fabrication (e.g., Lüdemann, "The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem," 1.161–73). However, Josephus's own testimony confirms that Jews were not prevented from escaping the city at various points during the war, and the argument for the tradition being a fabrication has proven unconvincing to most scholars as well, especially since another version of the Pella tradition is preserved by Epiphanius of Salamis (Epiphanius, *Weights*, 14–15). See the discussion in van Houwelingen, "Fleeing Forward," 181–200; Koester, "Flight to Pella Tradition," 90–106.

[55] Eusebius, *Hist. ecc.* 4:5–6.

[56] Bruce, *New Testament History*, 265–78. While Antioch, too, features significantly early on as a major hub for early Jewish Christianity, this is probably because, since the Maccabean era, Syria was considered to have an especially close relationship to Judea and was widely regarded as a "semi-Jewish region" (Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 349). The church in Antioch was under the jurisdiction of Jerusalem. For instance, it is notable that the church in Jerusalem sent emissaries to Antioch to validate the practices of the church there, and emissaries from Antioch deferred to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22–23, 27; 15:1–29).

[57] Safrai also argues that prior to the destruction of the temple, Paul begins to de-emphasize the importance of the land by using Old Testament narratives about Abraham and Moses as allegorical symbols (Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 240). While this might be true, it should not be missed that Paul's arguments such as in Gal 3 and 1 Cor 10 are being directed to mixed congregations, presumably with significant Gentile populations. Also, even while Paul's missionary activity was set in the Diaspora, he spent much of his life in Jerusalem and evidently was a supporter of the temple (Acts 21:18–26; 22:3).

> land was not fortuitous, but part of the divine purpose or guidance, as was the Law itself.[58]

In addition to the Mishnaic emphasis on commandments that could only be kept in the land, the central religious authority for Judaism remained located in Judea, but at Yavneh, not Jerusalem. However, in the years following the events of 70 CE, there was still wide-spread expectation among Jewish groups in Judea and the Diaspora that the temple would be rebuilt, and that Jerusalem would be restored along with it.[59] The land also remained significant for some Jewish-Christian groups after 70 CE as writings like the Gospel of John and Revelation can attest, and this would apparently continue into the second century as well.[60] Even as the Jesus movement continued to spread farther into the Diaspora, and as it became more ethnically Gentile following the close of the first century, Christian churches and pilgrimage sites proliferated throughout Judea, and continued to do so until the seventh-century CE when Jerusalem was conquered by the Rashidun Caliphate and Islam was introduced to the region.[61]

The Land in the Epistle to the Hebrews

Israel's cultural memory of the Promised Land is realized in several ways throughout the text of Hebrews. For example, the writer repeatedly uses terminology categorized within the semantic domain "Geographical Objects and Features" (LN 1.1–105), including words like πόλις ("city" [in reference to the earthly and heavenly city of Jerusalem]),[62] γῆ ("land"),[63] ὄρος ("mountain" [in reference to both Sinai and Zion]),[64] and πατρίς ("homeland" or "fatherland").[65] The writer also mentions Jerusalem by name [Σαλήμ / Ἰερουσαλήμ][66] as well as Zion [Σιών].[67] Interestingly, however, most references to the land in Hebrews highlight the Old Testament's traditions about Israel as a sojourning people looking for the Promised Land. For instance, the writer recalls the Pentateuch's narratives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their sojourning to and through the land (e.g., Heb 11:8–9).[68] He also recalls the wilderness wandering narratives (e.g., Heb 3:7–11; 4:5–6) and makes reference to "Egypt" [Αἴγυπτος],[69] the "wilderness" [ἔρημος][70] and even the "exodus" [ἔξοδος].[71] The writer also alludes to the conquest narratives of Joshua [Ἰησοῦς] and Israel's inability to secure rest in the Promised Land (Heb 4:8).[72] Hebrews additionally uses language within the semantic domain "Possess, Transfer, Exchange" (LN 57.1–248) and follows the LXX in describing the land as a promised "inheritance" or "possession" [κληρονομία].[73]

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[58] Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 56. See also the comprehensive treatment of the Promised Land in the rabbinic literature in Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 76–203. The sheer number of commandments pertaining to the land in both the Torah and in the Mishnah attest to its holiness, since the more sacred something was the more it was regulated. Martin Goodman likewise notes, "The Temple might no longer be standing, but the rabbis still imagined a world in which the most sacred place on earth was the Holy of Holies. The rest of the land of Israel might be less holy than the Temple or the city of Jerusalem, but the land of Israel nonetheless far exceeded the rest of the world in sanctity" (Goodman, *A History of Judaism*, 266).

[59] This, of course, led to the Bar Kochba revolt.

[60] Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 244–45.

[61] Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 255–56, 262–63.

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[62] Heb 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14.

[63] Heb 1:10; 6:7; 8:4, 9; 11:9, 13, 29, 38; 12:25–26.

[64] Heb 8:5; 11:38; 12:20, 22.

[65] Heb 11:14.

[66] Heb 7:2; 12:22. Concerning the reference to "Salem" in Heb 7:2, the meaning of the place-name is extrapolated slightly beyond the original Genesis context to mean "peace." However, Salem is explicitly identified as Jerusalem in Ps 76:2 and has a long history of being interpreted as an archaic name for the city of Jerusalem as attested in the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Josephus (*Ant.* 1.180) and the Targums.

[67] Heb 7:1; 12:22.

[68] See also Heb 2:16; 6:13; 7:1–2, 4–6, 9; 11:17–18, 20–21.

[69] Heb 3:16; 8:9; 11:26–27.

[70] Heb 3:8, 17.

[71] Heb 11:22. This is the only occurrence of this word in the New Testament.

[72] See the treatment of this neglected theme in Ounsworth, *Joshua Typology*.

[73] Heb 11:8. The concept of inheritance is expanded and repeatedly referenced Hebrews as well (Heb 1:2, 4; 14; 6:12, 17; 9:15; 11:7–9; 12:17). Regarding the decision to translate κληρονομία as either "inheritance" or "possession" see Herrmann and Foerster, "κληρονομία," *TDNT* 3:758–85.

Related themes of sojourning and wandering are also made evident by the fact that the writer frequently uses language within the semantic domain "Linear Movement" (LN 15.1–249), including verbs like ἔρχομαι ("to come or go") (LN 15.7),[74] περιέρχομαι ("to wander about from place to place") (LN 15.23),[75] πλανάω ("to wander") (LN 15.24),[76] and εἰσέρχομαι ("to enter") (LN 15.93).[77] He also uses related language in the subdomain "Leave, Depart, Flee, Escape, Send" (LN 15.34–74), including verbs like ἐκβαίνω ("to depart or leave") (LN 15.40),[78] καταλείπω ("to depart or leave") (LN 15.57),[79] φεύγω ("to escape") (LN 15.61),[80] and καταφεύγω ("to flee for safety") (LN 15.62).[81] Significant clusters of terms from within these and other semantic domains mentioned above occur in chapters 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, and 13, and so relevant passages from these chapters of Hebrews will be the primary focus of our analysis of the writer's treatment of the Promised Land and its related themes.

The first section of Hebrews where the land comes into view is Heb 3:7–4:13 which contains the longest single exposition of an Old Testament passage anywhere in Hebrews.[82] For the writer, reflection on Moses (3:1–6) naturally leads to reflection upon the liturgical tradition surrounding the Exodus. The writer's exposition focuses on one of the primary traditions of Israel as a landless people, that of the wandering in the wilderness. This section also introduces what Ernst Käsemann believed to be the central motif of Hebrews, the "wandering people of God."[83] In Heb 3:7–19, the author focuses on the events surrounding the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea in Num 14 as memorialized in Ps 95.[84] In Heb 3:7–11, the writer quotes Ps 95:7b–11 (94:7b–11 LXX):

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[74] Heb 6:7; 8:8; 10:37; 11:8; 13:23.

[75] Heb 11:37.

[76] Heb 11:38.

[77] Heb 3:11, 18–19; 4:1, 3, 5–6, 10–11.

[78] Heb 11:15.

[79] Heb 4:1; 11:27.

[80] Heb 11:34.

[81] Heb 6:18.

[82] See the discussions in Attridge, *Hebrews*, 113–36; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:80–103; Koester, *Hebrews*, 262–81.

> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the day of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me and for forty years saw my works. Therefore, I was angry with this generation and said, 'Their hearts are always straying from me and they have not known my ways.' So, in my anger I swore an oath, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

Throughout most of this quotation of Ps 95, Hebrews essentially follows the LXX text, though with a few stylistic changes that could either be original to our author or derived from the particular manuscript he was familiar with.[85] In the original context of the psalm, the mention of "rest" [κατάπαυσις] refers to the Israelites taking possession of the Promised Land.[86] The writer mentions the Promised Land elsewhere in Heb 11:8–9 when he refers to the Genesis tradition of Abraham sojourning to the land God had promised as his "possession" / "inheritance" [κληρονομίαν] and that Isaac and Jacob were "co-heirs" [συγκληρονόμων] with him of this promise. George Buchanan has argued in his commentary that the writer of Hebrews "had basically one hope or aspiration: receiving the promised land in its full glory and prosperity, free from foreign rule or threat from enemies."[87] Indeed, terms referring to "land," "possession" / "inheritance," and "rest" are frequently collocated in the Greek Old Testament, especially in Deuteronomy and the conquest narratives of Joshua, and undoubtedly this has influenced how our author conceptualizes both inheritance and rest:[88]

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[83] See Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 17–96. While it is certainly legitimate to argue that Käsemann has overstated his case and that the connections he alleges between Hebrews and Gnosticism are dubious (cf. Hofius on this issue), the theme of wandering/journeying is significant for Hebrews.

[84] The MT version of the psalm includes the references to "Massah" and "Meribah" while the LXX replaces these names with "rebellion" [τῷ παραπικρασμῷ] and "the day of testing" [τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ], obscuring the original allusion to Exod 17:1–7 and suggesting a connection with Num 14 instead (Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:85; deSilva, *Perseverance*, 142–43). Hofius, *Katapausis*, 117–31 also argues convincingly that the author of Hebrews in 3:7–4:13 is associating Ps 95 with Num 14 as well. He notes the allusions to the people's refusal to hear the voice of God, the repeated references to "testing," and God's oath that the people would not enter his rest. All of this points to the incident at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 14:22–38; 32:11–13; Deut 1:19–38). Our author later alludes again to Num 14 when he mentions in Heb 3:17 that their "bodies fell in the desert" [τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ] (cf. Num 14:33 LXX).

[85] For example, the Hebrews writer substitutes εἶδον for εἴδοσαν and εἶπον for εἶπα (cf. Ps 94:9–10 LXX).

[86] Koester, *Hebrews*, 257–58.

> Deut 3:20 LXX: Until the Lord your God gives rest [καταπαύσῃ] to your brothers and sisters, just as he has to you, and they will take possession [κατακληρονομήσουσιν] also of this land [οὗτοι τὴν γῆν] which the Lord our God will give to them beyond the Jordan, then each may return . . .
>
> Deut 12:10 LXX: And when you cross the Jordan you will dwell in the land [τῆς γῆς] which the Lord our God is giving to you as a possession [κατακληρονομεῖ], and he will give you rest [καταπαύσει] from all your enemies surrounding you, and you will dwell in safety.
>
> Josh 1:13, 15 LXX: Remember the word of the Lord which Moses his servant commanded you, saying "The Lord your God has given you rest [κατέπαυσεν] and has given you this land [τὴν γῆν ταύτην] . . . Until the Lord your God gives your brothers and sisters rest [καταπαύσῃ], as he gives you, and they take possession [κληρονομήσωσιν] of this land [οὗτοι τὴν γῆν] which the Lord our God is giving to them . . ."
>
> Josh 11:23 LXX: And Joshua took possession of all the land [τὴν γῆν] just as the Lord had commanded through Moses, and Joshua gave it as a possession [κληρονομίᾳ] to Israel, apportioning it according to their tribes. And the land rested [ἡ γῆ κατέπαυσεν] from war.

However, there are some interesting changes which the Hebrews writer introduces to Ps 95 that evince an extension of that psalm beyond the boundaries of its original context. For instance, while the author echoes Jewish tradition by attributing the psalm to

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[87] Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 64–65, 194.

[88] David Allen further highlights the importance of the Deuteronomy-Joshua tradition for Hebrews when he observes: "Both texts appeal to past events/history as grounds for action in the present. Both invest the land motif with a soteriological character, and define apostasy in terms of the failure to enter that land. Both are sermonic or homiletic in character and appeal for attention to the spoken word. Both climax in discourses focused around two mountains, with cursing and blessing motifs prominent in each montage. Likewise, each one explicates a covenant that marks the end of the Mosaic era and a consequent change in leadership to a figure named Ἰησοῦς" (Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews*, 5).

David (Heb 4:7), here he portrays these words as now being spoken afresh to his community by the Holy Spirit (Heb 3:7).[89] In Heb 3:9–10, instead of reading "for forty years I became angry" [τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη προσώχθισα] as is said in Ps 95:10a, our author alters the text to say "for forty years; therefore I became angry" [τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη· διὸ προσώχθισα]. While the difference is subtle, the break in the sentence created by the insertion of διό effectively changes the meaning of Ps 95:10a as quoted in Hebrews by making the forty years correspond to Israel's disobedience and not to God's anger.[90] Additionally, the Hebrews writer changes the emphasis from "that people" [τῇ γενεᾷ ἐκείνῃ] to "this people" [τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ], likely reflecting a calculated homiletic strategy of bringing the Old Testament to bear on his audience and their contemporary situation.[91] The writer thus establishes a connection between the people of God, past and present—God's word for the community of the first covenant is also God's word for the community of the new covenant.[92] In Heb 3:11, our author concludes his citation of Ps 95 and picks up on the allusion to Num 14:21–23 where YHWH, in spite of Moses's pleading, swears an oath that those who had been rebellious and unfaithful in the incident at Kadesh-Barnea would die in the wilderness and would not enter the Promised Land. The reference to "my resting place" [τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου] prepares for the warning passage of Heb 3:12–19 and begins the "rest" motif which drives the remainder of the midrash, continuing through 4:13.[93] The history of Israel comes alive for Hebrews's community as a solemn warning from God that they should likewise be wary of faithlessness and hard-heartedness lest they meet the same fate as the wilderness generation. The implication, driven home by the catena of rhetorical questions in Heb 3:16–19, is that just as unbelief [ἀπιστίαν] kept the wilderness generation out of Canaan, unbelief is what could also keep this community from entering God's resting place now. The writer also reminds them that even with great leaders like Moses (3:16) and Joshua (4:8) those who were stubborn and disobedient were not able to find rest in the land.

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[89] The author of Hebrews regularly depicts Old Testament passages as coming directly from the mouth of God (e.g., Heb 1:8–9; 5:6; 10:15). The attribution of the words of Scripture to the Holy Spirit also reflects early Christian tradition (cf. Acts 13:2; 20:23; 28:25; 1 Clem 13:1; 16:2). That this message is for Hebrews's community is highlighted by the repeated references to "today" [σήμερον] in 3:7, 13, 15; and 4:7.

[90] Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:86.

[91] Enns, "Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3.1–4.13," 352–63, *contra* Attridge, *Hebrews*, 115 who avers that the change in demonstrative pronouns is only a "minor deviation" with no real significance.

[92] This is also confirmed by the writer's assertions of kinship between Israel and his community. See the discussion in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews stresses for his community the importance of "entering" the rest that God has prepared for them (3:18–19; 4:1, 3, 5–6, 10–11).[94] As those who follow Jesus Christ, their "originator," "apostle," "pioneer," and "high priest" (cf. 2:10; 3:1; 4:14; 6:20), they are urged in Heb 3:13–14 to "encourage each other" [παρακαλεῖτε ἑαυτοὺς] and to "hold fast" to their faith until "the end" [τέλους βεβαίαν κατάσχωμεν]. The "rest" the community seeks is also linked by the author in Heb 4 to the promised "Sabbath rest" that "remains for the people of God" (4:9), a proleptic promise said to be available "today" (4:7).[95] The writer of Hebrews, in a fashion similar to other Jewish writers from the Second Temple era, expands the concept of rest beyond the original context of rest in the Promised Land or on the Sabbath and refers to a divine rest that is available to the community in some sense now and realized even more in the eschatological world to come.[96]

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[93] See Vanhoye, *Structure*, 92–104.

[94] DeSilva, *Perseverance*, 152–53. For broader discussions of the theme of "entering" in its various facets throughout Hebrews see Scholer, *Proleptic Priests*, 91–184; Moore, "Heaven's Revolving Door?"

[95] See the section on "Hebrews and the Sabbath" in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

Another section of Hebrews where the author deals significantly with the land is Heb 6:12–20 where the writer similarly transforms the concept of land by offering a more expansive interpretation of the related themes of "promise" and "possession" / "inheritance." The writer begins articulating his understanding of promise and inheritance when he refers back to the promises given to Abraham in Genesis 12. In Heb 6:12 he exhorts his community to imitate those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises" [κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας]. Like Abraham, the community also has a secure "promise" and "hope" for which they "have fled to take hold" [οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος] (Heb 6:18).[97] However, for the writer and his community, the promised inheritance is not simply the land, but it is the fact that Jesus their high priest has gone ahead of them as a "pioneer" [πρόδρομος][98] into the heavenly sanctuary to make atonement on their behalf, and that they too may now enter and "draw near to God" (Heb 6:19–20; cf. 10:19–22).[99] The promise which was given to Abraham is now ultimately a promise to the community of access to God in the heavenly sanctuary.[100] Elsewhere, the writer says of "promise" and "inheritance" in Heb 9:15:

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[96] Attridge, *Hebrews*, 126–28; Laansma, *I Will Give You Rest*, 102–13, 304–14; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 151–52. Cf. *1 En* 39:4–9; 45:3–6; *T. Abr.* 7:9–16; *T. Dan* 5:12; *4 Ezra* 8:52; *2 Bar* 73:1–7.

[97] The writer highlights the secure nature of their hope by comparing it in Heb 6:19 to "an anchor for the soul, safe and secure." Regarding the nautical metaphor, see Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:153.

[98] See Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:154; Koester, *Hebrews*, 330.

[99] Käsemann has argued that the portrayal of Jesus as a pioneer or forerunner is based on the so-called Gnostic redeemer myth (Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 152–55). As mentioned, this approach has been heavily criticized and virtually no current scholars advocate for it. See Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:150. For larger discussions of the problems with this theory and its impact on New Testament studies, see Talbert, "The Myth," 418–40; Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 13–56, 163–86.

[100] As argued persuasively in Isaacs, *Sacred Space*.

> And for this reason [Jesus] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that having died to provide redemption for the transgressions committed under the first covenant, those who are called might receive the promise [τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν] of an eternal inheritance [τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας].

The writer first hints at this expansive view of promise and inheritance in Heb 1:14 where he refers to his community as those who are "to inherit salvation" [κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν]. For Hebrews, therefore, the promised inheritance is no longer only about the "land" [γῆ] *per se*, but "salvation" [σωτηρία] for "Abraham's descendants" (cf. 2:16).

Even though the author of Hebrews expands the concept of inheritance, the land of Israel is still significant for him. While the writer is perhaps not concerned to discuss the topography of Judea, he provides geographical references that are nevertheless worth noting. As mentioned above, the writer uses the terms γῆ, οἰκουμένη, and κόσμος referring to the earth as a dwelling place (LN 1.39). The latter two terms, οἰκουμένη and κόσμος, are used in reference to either the physical world (1:6; 10:5), the world to come (2:5), or inhabitants of the world at large (11:7, 38). The term γῆ, however, refers in Hebrews to the physical world (1:10, 8:4; 12:25–26), the soil (6:7, 11:29, 11:38), and geographical land regions (8:9 ["land of Egypt"]) including the Promised Land (11:9, 11:13). The term ὄρος ("mountain") is used to refer to the tradition about Mount Sinai (8:5; 12:20) but also to "Mount Zion" (12:22). The terms ἐρημία / ἔρημος ("wilderness") occur in Heb 3:8 and 3:17 referring to the wilderness wanderings of Exodus, but in 11:38 the writer also refers to Israel's heroes like Elijah who wandered "in the wilderness" of Judah (cf. 1 Kgs 19:1–9). Indeed, as Buchanan has observed, the Promised Land and Israel's traditions about it are of paramount importance for the writer of Hebrews.[101]

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[101] Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 8–9.

The most intriguing geographical references the writer makes concern his use of the terms πόλις ("city"), πατρίς ("homeland" / "fatherland") and ’Ιερουσαλήμ ("Jerusalem"). While the writer certainly has a concrete view of the Promised Land, this is also expanded and reimagined in eschatological terms.[102] This especially becomes evident in various references throughout Heb 11–13. For example, he says that in sojourning to the Promised Land, Abraham was not merely headed to the land of Canaan, but that he was looking "for a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10). He also asserts that Abraham and the patriarchs lived as "strangers and sojourners in the land" [ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς] who died "not having received the promises," but that they looked forward in the future to a "heavenly homeland" [πατρίδα . . . ἐπουρανίου] and "city" [πόλιν] that God would prepare for them (11:13–16). The community is also said to have been brought to "Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" [πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος . . . ’Ιερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ] (12:22). The author further notes in Heb 13:14 that he and his community have "no remaining city" [οὐ . . . μένουσαν πόλιν] on earth but are "seeking the one to come" [τὴν μέλλουσαν]. Following James Moffatt, some scholars have interpreted this language to imply that the writer and his community have abandoned the notion of inheriting the Promised Land on earth and are instead looking forward to a spiritual life with God in heaven.[103] Others like William Lane take a more ambiguous position regarding the heavenly city in Hebrews, and seem reluctant to associate it with the

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[102] Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 211–12.

[103] E.g., Moffatt, *Hebrews*, 174.

Promised Land or earthly geography.[104] However, in his own extensive review of Second Temple texts related to this issue, David Moffitt makes a compelling argument that Jews often associated their hope in the "world to come" [ἡ οἰκουμένη ἡ μέλλουσα] (cf. Heb 2:5) with fulfillment of the promise of receiving Israel's inheritance, and that "the fundamental hope expressed in these texts is that of the inheritance of a renewed, incorruptible world."[105] Indeed, while the writer of Hebrews depicts the new Jerusalem as an eschatological reality, it is never portrayed as a spiritual or idealistic reality in the Platonic sense.[106] Rather, he describes the new Jerusalem in a manner similar to how he describes the heavenly sanctuary, namely as a concrete, spatial reality that exists in heaven. The city is "built" by God in heaven (11:10, 16) and with "foundations" (11:10). It is kingdom that is "unshakable," not built with human hands or as part of the original creation (12:27–28). This city does not remain in heaven either, but will be brought to earth at the end of days as the geographical centerpiece of the coming οἰκουμένη to be ruled by Jesus the Messiah (2:5; 13:14). Indeed, the writer of Hebrews asserts that, in addition to the access to God they already enjoy through their worship in the heavenly sanctuary, the inheritance of God's people is a restored or new Jerusalem from heaven which will become a reality on earth.[107] This places the writer of Hebrews in the same theological company as the author of *4 Ezra* who depicts the new Jerusalem as a hidden city that would one day be revealed on earth (*4 Ezra* 7:26–45), or the writer of Revelation who likewise describes the city of God in spatial categories as something that is constructed in heaven and brought down to earth at the end of the age (Rev 21:1–3). Buchanan is correct, therefore, when he asserts that the promised inheritance in Hebrews is, in its ultimate expression, the geographical realization of the coming world and new Jerusalem—a new Promised Land.[108] As difficult as it might be for modern readers to imagine such a thing as a city being sent down from heaven to earth, this idea was at home within the popular apocalyptic cosmology of Second Temple Judaism and early Jewish Christianity.[109]

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[104] For instance, Lane avers, "The call of God is directed toward an inheritance" yet "the content of the inheritance in Hebrews is not the land of Canaan (4:8; cf. 9:15) but the city that God has prepared for his people" (Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:349).

[105] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 81–118, 82.

[106] Contra Barrett who contends that Hebrews's heavenly temple and city are influenced by Platonism (Barrett, "Eschatology," 363–93, esp. 385–86, 393). Cf. Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 1–16; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 157–68. Also, Moffitt observes that most Second Temple texts regarding life in the world to come "did not appear to envision a spiritual/material dichotomy" (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 82).

[107] Moffitt adds further that, in Hebrews, the writer's eschatological hope is that "humanity will one day inherit the οἰκουμένη and will be led into the glory of that realm by Jesus, the first human to be given dominion in that realm . . ." (Moffitt, *Atonement*, 137). See also Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 220.

The vision of the heavenly Jerusalem in Heb 11–12, however, provides a stark contrast to other references to Jerusalem the writer makes in chapter 13. In Heb 13:11–12, the city of Jerusalem is compared to the Israelite encampment in the wilderness, and is remembered as the city where Jesus sacrificially suffered "outside the gate" [ἔξω τῆς πύλης ἔπαθεν] just as sacrificial carcasses had been disposed outside the boundaries of the Israelite camp.[110] This passage clearly is a reference to the Gospel tradition about Jesus being crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem.[111] The suffering of Jesus as a crucified messiah in Jerusalem brought with it shame and disgrace, which the community also evidently shares in some way as they are described as those "bearing his disgrace" [τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες] in Heb 13:13. As a result, the writer in the same passage urges his community to leave Jerusalem behind and go "outside the camp" to the place where Jesus is—an allusion to the tent of meeting of Exodus 33 which also existed "outside the camp." The author then states his reason for exhorting his community to leave Jerusalem in 13:14 when he says it is "because we no longer have a remaining city here but are seeking the one to come" [οὐ . . . ἔχομεν ὧδε μένουσαν πόλιν . . . τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐπιζητοῦμεν]. Thus Jerusalem, the city which was so central to Jewish identity and ideology of the land, is treated in Hebrews as a city that is hostile to the presence of Jesus and the community of those who follow him. It is also portrayed as a city that is transitory, and that it no longer remains a city which the community can viably inhabit. In Hebrews, the earthly city of Jerusalem, therefore, is not the ultimate destination for the community, just as it was not the ultimate destination for the patriarchs. Their destination is the new Jerusalem that is coming from heaven to earth, the heavenly homeland that God has promised to Abraham and his descendants forever. Indeed, Moffitt comments well on this aspect of the writer's treatment of the patriarchal sojourning narratives and its implications for the community when he says:

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[108] See esp. Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 192–94. Elsewhere, Buchanan relates this teaching in Hebrews to early traditions recorded in the Gospels: "After the death of Christ, early Christians believed that Jesus had himself been raised, taken into heaven, and that he would return to the promised land. At that time the ones who had "died in Christ" (i.e. as Christians) would be raised to be with him on the promised land . . . Jesus promised that, at the end of the age (Matt 24:3), the Son of Man would enter into his glory, which would be his position as king over the promised land. Then all nations would be gathered before him to learn how he would treat them . . . Belief in this doctrine was elementary to the Christians to whom the author of Hebrews wrote" (Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 104–05).

[109] Adams, "The Cosmology of Hebrews," 122–39. Similar references to a heavenly Jerusalem can also be found in *2 Bar* 4:2–7; *4 Ezra* 2:34–37; *T. Dan* 5:12–13; *2 En* 55:3; Gal 4:26. Also, as discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation, several Jewish writers similarly believed in the existence of a temple in heaven which was represented in some way by God's temple on earth.

[110] As mentioned in the previous chapter, the text of 4QMMT provides evidence that some other Jewish writers compared the city of Jerusalem with the Israelite wilderness encampment, and the temple with the "tent of meeting" (4QMMT B 29–30, 60–61). See Safrai, *Seeking Out the Land*, 34–35.

> All the individuals mentioned are portrayed as people who acted in accord with their faith that God would give them both life beyond death and an incorruptible inheritance—a heavenly city and land (11:10, 16). The point of the chapter, in

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[111] Cf. Matt 27:33–37; Mark 15:22–26; Luke 23:33; John 19:17–20. John notes that Golgotha was a hill located "near the city" (John 19:20). Ecclesiastical tradition situates Golgotha with the location of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, located within the Old City of Jerusalem. Multiple archaeological excavations of the site have bolstered confidence in its identification as the actual site where Jesus was crucified. See Green "Death of Jesus," 146–63, 150; Mare, "Golgotha," 217–18.

> other words, is that one of the central aspects of faith is the ability to comprehend that, in spite of the experiences of death, corruption, and loss, God will make good on his promises. The limited attainment of God's promises (e.g., dwelling in the land of Canaan, birthing Isaac) pales in comparison to the fulness of the eternal inheritance.[112]

As mentioned above, themes of sojourning, travel, and pilgrimage are also made evident by the fact that the writer frequently uses language within the semantic domain "Linear Movement" (LN 15.1–249).[113] He warns his community in Heb 3–4 not to be like the wilderness generation who failed "to enter" [οὐκ . . . εἰσελθεῖν] God's rest, and insists that they should persevere in faithfulness because the community still has a chance "to enter" [εἰσελθεῖν] the promised rest if they listen and obey (3:19, 4:6). The writer also encourages his community to follow Jesus their pioneer priest by "entering" [εἰσέρχομαι] the heavenly sanctuary (6:19–20; 9:12, 24–25, 10:19) and "approaching" [προσέρχομαι] the presence of God (4:16, 10:22). The writer mentions how the patriarchs "left behind" [ἐξέβησαν] their former country, and while they had the opportunity "to return" [ἀνακάμψαι] they chose not to because they desired a better, heavenly country instead (11:15–16). The writer describes how Moses, who "counted reproach for the sake of Christ as greater than the riches of Egypt" (11:26), "left" [κατέλιπεν] Egypt behind, and how he and the people of Israel "passed through" [διέβησαν] the Red Sea (11:27, 29). Hebrews also uses the language of flight or escape when talking about the heroes of faith who "escaped" [ἔφυγον] the sword of persecution (11:34), and uses similar language when he says that he and his community "have fled" [καταφυγόντες] to take hold of the hope offered in Jesus (6:18).

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[112] Moffitt, *Atonement*, 185.

[113] Koester rightly notes that "sojourning in the desert is one of the three great cycles of images in Hebrews, along with entering the sanctuary and journeying to Zion" (Koester, *Hebrews* 262). See also Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 19–23.

The motif of sojourning, so prominent in Hebrews, gives the impression that the community was also likely dealing with a deeply felt sense of social displacement. This theme becomes especially prominent in the author's treatment of Abraham. The writer in Heb 11:9–16 describes Abraham as sojourning to the land and living as a foreigner within it. There, the writer depicts Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as living "in tents" [ἐν σκηναῖς] and as "strangers" [ξένοι] and "pilgrims" [παρεπίδημοι] who have not settled anywhere, but are on a journey looking ahead to a heavenly homeland, a promise they only "saw and welcomed from distance" [τὰς ἐπαγγελίας . . . πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ἰδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι].[114] In confronting this sense of displacement, the author goes to great lengths to reassure his community that like their ancestors they, too, are on a journey of faith. But as they sojourn, they can enjoy access to the presence of God through the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly tent and take comfort in knowing that their journey will end with the arrival of the promised new Jerusalem from heaven. While the community has been warned of the gravity of their current situation and the need for faithful perseverance, the writer reminds his faithful pilgrim community that they have not "approached" [προσεληλύθατε] the fiery and terrifying Mount Sinai, but instead have "approached" [προσεληλύθατε] the joyous hope of Mount Zion (12:18, 22).

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[114] See the discussion in Lane, *Hebrews*, 2:349–60.

Summary of the Land in Hebrews

The Promised Land is a symbol of great significance for the writer of Hebrews. However, instead of focusing on the physical land of Israel itself, for the purposes of his exhortation he appropriates the Old Testament's narratives about the sojourning of the patriarchs, the wilderness wanderings of Exodus, and the conquests of Joshua, all traditions about Israel as a people looking for land and of the land as a promise awaiting fulfillment. The writer also reimagines the land as an eschatological promise of a heavenly homeland for the faithful people of God sojourning through this life and looking forward to the world to come. Hebrews thus portrays Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as other heroes of Israel's past, as strangers living in a foreign land hostile to their presence. Yet they sojourn towards the heavenly homeland and city that God has specially prepared for them, a land where they can find rest from toil and persecution. The writer thus reminds his community that as descendants of Abraham they are likewise sojourning as strangers in a land hostile to their presence, and that they too are on a journey to the same heavenly homeland as Israel's ancestors, the promised new Jerusalem which is being prepared in heaven and will come to earth at the end of the age. The holy city and holy land are thus reimagined as an eschatological reality near to them, and soon to be fully realized.

The presentation of the heavenly Jerusalem contrasts with Jerusalem as presented in Heb 13:11–14, where the earthly city is liminal and transitory, and primarily remembered as the place where Jesus suffered and died a shameful death outside the city gate. Yet the writer urges his people to go "outside the camp" of the earthly Jerusalem because a messianic new Jerusalem and a new world are coming, and in that land the community, along with Israel's ancestors, will finally experience God's promised rest. Also, our survey agrees with the observations of George Eldon Ladd who argued that the writer of Hebrews provides his audience with a semi-realized eschatological perspective on the land and often emphasizes the "already" over the "not yet" of their experience as followers of Jesus.[115] Indeed, while the community does not yet fully see the results of all things being subjected to the rule of Christ (2:8) they nevertheless have already "tasted . . . the powers of the coming age" (6:5). The author portrays the heavenly Jerusalem as a real space that is now being constructed in heaven and will one day come to earth. He also asserts that Jesus has already come "in these last days" (1:2) and has made atonement for the community in the heavenly sanctuary, by which they can now enter through the context of their worship into the presence of God within the Most Holy place. He goes on to encourage them further in Heb 12:22–23 by saying:

> But you have come to [προσεληλύθατε] Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to ten thousand angels, to joyous feasting, to the church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven, to God who is the judge of all, and to the spirits of saints made perfect.

However, the Hebrews writer also uses the example of the wilderness generation in chapters 3 and 4 as a stark reminder of the perils of failure and as a means of urging his community on to perseverance and faithfulness in the face of trial. Hebrews thus reminds his community of the fact that even Moses and Joshua were not able to lead a stubborn and disobedient people to find rest in the land. Yet, if the community perseveres in faith by maintaining their confession and following Jesus, their pioneer priest will bring them to the promised rest in the heavenly homeland, the new Jerusalem in the world to come.

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[115] Ladd, *Theology*, 622–23.

Conclusions on Hebrews and the Land

Now that we have reviewed the treatment of traditions regarding the Promised Land in Hebrews, we can consider the writer's presentation of the land-theme and what it might tell us about the situation he and his community are facing. The Promised Land and the city of Jerusalem are vital symbols of identity for the Hebrews writer and his community who view themselves as "descendants of Abraham" and as the "house of Israel and the house Judah" (Heb 2:16; 8:8–10). Thus, contrary to Käsemann's characterization of the sojourning and land themes in Hebrews, the writer does not portray the land as something esoteric, metaphorical, or abstract either in its earthly or heavenly/eschatological presentations.[116] Rather, for the writer it is clear that his people, as members of Israel, *must* have the land, and in a very real sense.[117] In this way, Hebrews's treatment of the land resembles that of other Jewish writers from the Second Temple era.

However, the community faces a dilemma that the writer must address. They no longer have a city remaining on earth to call home (Heb 13:14). Jerusalem is also memorialized in Hebrews as the place where Jesus suffered shame and disgrace as he died sacrificially for the community. The community, as those who follow Jesus and share in the shame that he endured, are also told to go "outside the camp," the "camp" being a reference to the city of Jerusalem (though certainly not Judaism as this would be an anachronism) (Heb 13:11–13). Throughout Hebrews, and especially in chapter 11, the writer also portrays his community as pilgrims who are sojourning through a land hostile to their presence. Indeed, the themes of sojourning and landlessness repeated throughout Hebrews, and especially in the retelling of the patriarchal narratives, are evocative of a situation where the people have, in some way, become estranged from the holy city and its temple system. The writer's call to his community to find hope in the heavenly temple and in the coming new Jerusalem, therefore, makes the most sense within this social context.

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[116] In reacting so strongly against the relapse theory, Käsemann has arguably gone to a different extreme in the other direction by removing Hebrews from the realm of Jewish issues altogether, instead positing a Gnostic background and interpreting the theme of sojourning to the land as a metaphor symbolizing "the Christian struggle of faith in every age" (Käsemann, *Wandering People*, 25).

[117] So argues Buchanan, *To the Hebrews*, 194. Contrast this with Filtvedt who asserts that the writer of Hebrews "appears to deny that the audience should belong to any earthly city or any earthly piece of land" (Filtvedt, *Paradox of Hebrews*, 20).

Since it is impossible to know with any degree of certainty where the community was living at the time Hebrews was written, it is likewise impossible to know whether the writer's exhortation for them to leave Jerusalem in chapter 13 was meant in a real or metaphorical sense (i.e., literally to leave the city *or* to leave it behind emotionally).[118] Regardless, however, it appears to be the case that social rejection has played a role in the community becoming disconnected from Jerusalem. This, along with the writer's exhortation to leave behind the earthly city and his persistent calls to participate in some mystical form of worship in the heavenly sanctuary[119] while sojourning towards the soon-coming new Jerusalem is a message that would especially have resonated with a Jewish-Christian community living close to the events of 66–70 CE, when the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was either imminent or had already occurred. Indeed, it has been shown that the writer's portrayal of the new Jerusalem from heaven resembles depictions of the new Jerusalem found elsewhere in other Jewish and Jewish-Christian apocalyptic texts written after the temple's destruction, especially *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, and Revelation.[120] Additional support for a situation close to the first Jewish Revolt can be found elsewhere in the oft-overlooked passage of Heb 8:13 where the writer talks about the Mosaic covenant and the earthly sanctuary. In that passage, the author describes the Levitical system and its covenant as being ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ, a phrase most English versions have translated as "soon to disappear" or something to that effect.[121] However, the noun ἀφανισμός is used often in the LXX and the Apocrypha, and virtually always refers to cataclysmic "destruction" or "desolation" as a result of violence or war, and in several texts is associated also with acts of divine judgment.[122] Gleason is correct, therefore, when he notes that the noun "is never used to denote a gradual disappearance as suggested by most English renderings of Hebrews."[123] In fact, the evidence for this reading of ἀφανισμός is so overwhelming that Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie in their Septuagint lexicon have translated the noun as "extermination" or "destruction."[124] Because of this, some scholars now argue (credibly, in my opinion) that the phrase ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ in Heb 8:13 is better translated as either "near to destruction" or, more idiomatically, "soon to be destroyed," suggesting that this is likely an allusion in

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[118] Indeed, the text of Heb 13:11–14 reads differently depending on whether one chooses to situate Hebrews within a Diaspora setting like Rome as most modern commentators do, or in Jerusalem as ancient commentators did.

[119] See Barnard, *The Mysticism of Hebrews*, 171–212. While aspects of Barnard's reconstruction of the community's worship are questionable (e.g., his depiction of mystical practices), he convincingly argues that the writer and his community believe they are participating in a very real way in the worship of God and Christ within the heavenly sanctuary, and that their worship was influenced by Jewish apocalypticism.

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[120] Cf. *4 Ezra* 7:26–45; 8:50–55; 10:27–59; *2 Bar* 4:2–7; *Apoc. Abr.* 29.57; Rev 21. See Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 194–232.

[121] See the various renditions in the AV, NIV, ESV, NRS, NAS. See also see Bruce, *Hebrews*, 195; Lane, *Hebrews*, 1:211; Grässer, *Hebräer*, 2:104, Attridge, *Hebrews*, 228–29.

[122] E.g., Deut 7:2; 1 Kgs 13:34; 2 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 36:19; Jer 9:10; 10:22; Hos 5:9; Mic 1:7; Joel 3:19; Zeph 1:13, 15. See also Jdt 2:27; 4:1, 12; 2 Macc 5:13; 3 Macc 5:20.

[123] Gleason, "The Eschatology of the Warning," 108.

[124] ἀφανισμός, LEH, 1509. It is likewise translated as "destruction" in the Bauer lexicon as well (ἀφανισμός, BDAG, 155). The translation of ἀφανισμός as "disappearance" or "vanishing" instead seems to reflect classical usage (ἀφανισμός, LSJ, 286–87).

Hebrews to the impending destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple system that was centralized there.[125]

Setting aside the issue of Heb 8:13, however, the writer's treatment of themes related to the Promised Land is by itself evocative of a situation near the destruction of the temple. The text strongly indicates Hebrews has as its basis a Jewish-Christian community who is experiencing estrangement from their beloved holy city, Jerusalem, and who are described as sojourning towards a soon-to-arrive new Jerusalem from heaven that is an "unshakeable" kingdom that is "built by God" with indestructible "foundations." These details, as mentioned, closely resemble other post-destruction Jewish apocalypses from the first century CE, and thus could be suggestive of a situation either close to, or in the aftermath of, the events of the first Jewish Revolt.

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[125] See the discussions in Gleason, "The Eschatology of the Warning," 108–9; Mackie, *Eschatology and Exhortation*, 78–80; Koester, *Hebrews*, 384; Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City*, 209. Gleason in particular is notable as he argues for Hebrews addressing issues surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem during the first Jewish Revolt.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS: HEBREWS AND SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM

Summary of the Argument

Hebrews and the Symbolic World of Common Judaism

The research in this dissertation has proceeded based on the conviction that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written within and for a living social context, and that the writer works to construct a symbolic world that is plausible and relevant for those who live within that context. In light of this stance, we have attempted to situate the text of Hebrews within the broad social context of Second Temple Judaism. Using social description, frameworks of Jewish identity, and thematic analysis based in semantic domain theory, our research has shown that Hebrews addresses themes related to the Law, the Temple, and the Land which were significant for Jewish social and religious identity in the first century CE. While addressing themes related to these vital institutional frameworks of belief and praxis from common Judaism, the writer of Hebrews textually constructs for himself and his audience an unmistakably *Jewish* identity. For example, in addressing issues of ethnicity, the writer repeatedly affirms that he and his community share kinship with Israel's ancestors. Regarding covenantalism, the community is portrayed as God's covenant people who identify with Israel's covenantal tradition, especially the Abrahamic covenant. Concerning worship, the author and his community adhere to the aniconic worship of YHWH, are devoted to Israel's liturgical tradition, and their worship is conceptually defined by Jewish traditions of sacred space (e.g., access to God in the tabernacle or temple) and religious practice (e.g., they are concerned for issues of ritual and moral purity, atonement, and priesthood). The writer also shows that his people have a longing for the Promised Land, even as they appear to be experiencing estrangement from Jerusalem. This data poses a significant challenge for some scholars who have argued that Hebrews does not address concerns over Jewish identity.

However, we have also observed that Hebrews evinces patterns of both tradition and innovation in how the writer appropriates various identity-related facets of the symbolic world of common Judaism. For example, while the writer and his community are committed to the aniconic worship of YHWH, they also practice Christ devotion, believing Jesus Christ shares exalted status and co-regency with God as his divine Son. While the Hebrews writer clearly believes the Mosaic Law and the Levitical priestly tradition are imbued with divine authority, he also believes that in the messianic age they are being succeeded by Jesus's heavenly priestly ministry and new covenant. The writer's apocalyptic emphasis also highlights the transient nature of Jerusalem and the priestly system it represents as he exhorts his community to participate in the heavenly temple and look ahead to the new Jerusalem that is soon to arrive from God. These facets of Hebrews's appropriation of traditions from common Judaism suggest the author and his community share an emerging sectarian Jewish-Christian identity. The tables in the pages to follow are intended to provide a visualized summary of our findings from the previous chapters.

Tables 4, 5, and 6: Comparative Analysis

THE LAW	
Common Judaism	**Hebrews**
Monotheism: aniconic, exclusivist worship of YHWH.	Hebrews appropriates Israel's liturgical tradition (especially the Psalms) in advocating aniconic worship of YHWH along with Christ devotion. He also evinces traditional Jewish belief in angels and the devil.
Purity: observance of Laws governing ritual purity (e.g., *kashrut*, ritual washings, corpse impurity, marriage) and moral purity (ethical monotheism).	The writer mentions some ritual purity concerns (e.g., ritual washings and marital purity) but Mosaic ritual purity regulations are no longer applicable in the messianic age. His focus is mostly on moral purity and ethical monotheism.
The Sabbath: ceasing from work, debates over observance, worship in the synagogue.	The writer recognizes the Sabbath tradition of ceasing from work but does not address debates over Sabbath observance. He uses the concept of "Sabbath rest" as a means of pointing people to God's promised eschatological rest in the coming new Jerusalem and encouraging perseverance.
Ancestry and Kinship: Jews as descendants of Abraham and with a national identity.	Hebrews affirms the community's identity as "descendants of Abraham" and as the familial/national "house" of Israel and Judah. Israel's patriarchs are depicted as their ancestors and co-inheritors. The writer is also concerned to address Jesus's Judahite lineage as a potential barrier to priesthood.
Covenant and Election: covenants of Abraham and Moses are definitive for Israel. Israel are God's elect. Emphasis on covenantal nomism.	The community is portrayed as God's covenant people. The covenant of Abraham is still in effect and the people are members of that covenant. The covenant of Moses is seen as temporary ("obsolete" and "soon to be destroyed") and has been succeeded by the new covenant of Jesus which purifies from sins committed under the first covenant. The writer advocates for a *new* covenantal nomism.

THE TEMPLE	
Common Judaism	**Hebrews**
Sacred Space: Jewish conceptions of sanctuary space (tabernacle/temple), worship/access to God (zones of holiness), relation between earthly sanctuary and heaven, devotion to the Jerusalem temple.	The biblical foundations of Israel's sanctuary and priesthood are authoritative and represent the ideal basis for Israelite worship in Jerusalem. The earthly sanctuary is a reflection or map of God's heavenly temple. The earthly sanctuary is ordained by God, but like Jerusalem and the Mosaic covenant it is transient. The community is told to participate in the heavenly sanctuary and look for the arrival of a new Jerusalem to come from heaven. They are also depicted as sojourning on a pilgrimage towards the new Jerusalem and its temple and are said to be already participating in the reality of the heavenly temple through their worship.
Priesthood: devotion to Levitical priesthood, the high priest in Jerusalem, and the biblical sacrificial system.	Hebrews reveres the Levitical priesthood and believes that its scriptural traditions, lineage, ministry, and sacrifices were essential for the nation of Israel. Yet the Levitical sacrifices are temporary and limited in effectiveness, pointing to a new covenant mediated by an even better high priest and ministry. Jesus Christ, the Son of David and priest "after the order of Melchizedek," is the "great high priest." Jesus's priesthood is legitimized in relation to the Levitical priesthood. Jesus's once-for-all sacrifice and heavenly ministry fulfill the Day of Atonement ritual and provide definitive cleansing and access to God. The writer invites his community to become priests by following Jesus into the presence of God within the heavenly temple, offering their spiritual sacrifices of worship and good deeds.

THE LAND	
Common Judaism	**Hebrews**
The Promised Land: as expression of YHWH's covenant with Abraham, as Israel's inheritance/possession, traditional Jewish homeland ("Judea"), symbol of cultural heritage and promise awaiting fulfillment (e.g., Old Testament traditions of landlessness, sojourning/wandering, exile).	The Land is a symbol of great significance for the writer of Hebrews. He appropriates the Old Testament's narratives about the sojourning of the patriarchs, the wilderness wanderings of Exodus, and the conquests of Joshua, all traditions about Israel as a people looking for land and of the land as a promise awaiting fulfillment. The land is reimagined as an eschatological homeland coming down from heaven to earth for the people of God sojourning and looking forward to the world to come. Hebrews portrays Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as strangers living in a foreign land hostile to their presence yet sojourning to the heavenly homeland God has prepared for them, where they can find rest. The community is portrayed as descendants of Abraham likewise sojourning in a land hostile to their presence, and who are on a journey to the same heavenly homeland as Israel's ancestors.
Jerusalem: the center of Jewish religious authority and identity, site of pilgrimage, viewed as extension of the temple.	Hebrews looks forward to the promised new Jerusalem being prepared in heaven which will come to earth at the end of days. The holy city and holy land are thus reimagined as an eschatological reality near to them and soon to be fully realized on earth. The temple in heaven is also a concrete reality in which the community participates through their worship. By contrast, the earthly city of Jerusalem is transitory and remembered as the place where Jesus suffered death and disgrace. Yet the writer urges his people to go "outside the camp" of the old Jerusalem because a messianic new Jerusalem and a new land are coming, and in that land the community, along with Israel's ancestors, will finally experience the fullest expression of God's promised rest.

Hebrews's Social Situation

What can Hebrews's appropriation of these socio-religious identity frameworks from common Judaism tell us about the community's situation? Without resorting to overly speculative guesswork about Hebrews's author or recipients, we have seen that the text is suggestive of various circumstances facing the community. For instance, the writer's focus on legitimizing Jesus as a high priest according to biblical tradition (Melchizedek), and his ability to provide purity and access to God by a definitive sacrifice and ministry, would have been welcome news to people with a deeply-felt need for purity, atonement, and priestly mediation according to biblical tradition. The writer's emphasis on Jesus as a pure, compassionate, ethical, and legitimately-appointed high priest would have been profoundly encouraging for people who lived in a context where high priests were sometimes viewed as unsympathetic, unethical, and illegitimate, and especially to a community of Jesus-followers aware of the tradition of Jesus's death at the hands of the Romans and a complicit high priest in Jerusalem. The writer's affirmation of his community as "Abraham's descendants" and as the "house of Israel and the house Judah" who had received the promised new covenant would have reinforced their sense of legitimacy as God's covenant people, especially if they lived in a context where the symbols of the first covenant were now becoming "obsolete" and were "soon to be destroyed." Hebrews's exhortations to follow Jesus into the heavenly sanctuary and to sojourn as faithful pilgrims to the soon-coming, unshakable new Jerusalem would have resonated with a community who had once been connected to Jerusalem, but for some reason had become estranged from the holy city and its sanctuary. It has further been argued that these details about Hebrews fit well especially within a context of a Jewish-Christian community living near the tragic events of the first Jewish Revolt of 66–70 CE.

Considering the Context of Crisis in Hebrews

Hebrews was written at a volatile time in the first century CE when Jewish groups were contending for the future of Judaism and the boundaries between what would eventually become "Judaism" and "Christianity" were shifting and still being formed, but were becoming visible. In fact, the socio-religious boundaries of Jewish identity were already shifting for this group because of their devotion to Jesus. The impending destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the temple would also have forced the community to clarify even more what it meant for them to be the people of God now that the traditional symbols of Judaism were being lost—a struggle experienced by other Jewish groups as well, like the Pharisees. Additionally, the time immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem was especially difficult for Jewish followers of Jesus and resulted in mass migrations from the city and also the martyrdom of James the Just, the brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church. The arguments for associating Hebrews with a Jewish-Christian community living close to the events of 70 CE are bolstered by the fact that the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that he and his community are living within a very real context of crisis. This can be inferred from the author's specific references to violent oppression which had been experienced by the community at an earlier period in its brief history, an event which had involved public humiliation and even the confiscation of personal property (10:32–35). The writer's repeated references in Heb 11 to traditions of Old Testament saints persevering in the face of suffering and death also strongly suggest that suffering is still very much on the horizon for the community, and that even death looks to be imminent.[1] This crisis also has evidently resulted in the community enduring public shame and dishonor. Additionally, references in Hebrews to the liminality of Jerusalem and the fact that the community is said in Heb 13:14 to "no longer have a remaining city" on earth to call home almost certainly implies that they are a community formerly attached to the city of Jerusalem, but that for some reason they no longer have access to it. This is further supported by themes of sojourning and landlessness that feature prominently in Hebrews as well. This crisis has also instilled within some members feelings of fear, spiritual lethargy, and depression, and some have even ceased attending congregational gatherings altogether. The writer confronts their crisis with apocalyptic perspective, urging his community to follow Jesus into the heavenly sanctuary while looking forward to the new Jerusalem that is soon to arrive from heaven. Indeed, the context of crisis fits well with the social description and the language of the text, and so the writer's treatment of themes of Law, Temple, and Land should be understood in relation to this context of suffering that permeates so much of Hebrews. Whether the community is residing somewhere near Jerusalem, elsewhere in Judea, or somewhere in the Diaspora is a detail that remains unknown to us. However, a historical setting near the events of 66–70 provides a realistic context for explaining Hebrews's themes of suffering and death, its themes of wandering and landlessness, its portrayal of Jerusalem as a transient city that no longer remains, and the writer's innovative appropriation of traditions from common Judaism.

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[1] See especially the arguments in Dyer, *Suffering in the Face of Death*.

Implications

The research in this dissertation has shown that the traditional relapse theory interpretation of Hebrews is untenable, because it is anachronistic and without adequate support from the text. In fact, the writer goes to extraordinary lengths to affirm the Jewish identity of his community and does not take an adversarial stance towards Judaism, even if he reimagines certain aspects of the Jewish symbolic world for his community. However, this research has also shown that various "within Judaism" interpretations that have started to become more popular in recent scholarship on Hebrews are also somewhat simplistic and require further nuancing. While the writer of Hebrews and his congregation certainly think of themselves as Jews, and while they preserve much from the symbolic world of common Judaism, their version of Judaism is no longer simply some iteration of common Jewish belief and praxis. Rather, theirs is a form of Jewish religion distinctively centered on devotion to Jesus, and this profoundly shapes their belief and praxis (e.g., their monotheism is no longer staunchly exclusivist since they ascribe devotion to Jesus alongside YHWH; they no longer appear to emphasize Jewish purity laws but practice ethical monotheism; and they no longer practice blood sacrifice). As mentioned above, the text of Hebrews also strongly suggests that the community has likely become estranged from the temple and the city of Jerusalem as well, and that this is partly the crisis the author is confronting (e.g., Jerusalem is primarily remembered as the place where Jesus suffered and was publicly disgraced, a public disgrace the community evidently shares; the community is encouraged to leave the city and go "outside the camp"; Jerusalem is also depicted as transient as is the Levitical system). Thus, while the author of Hebrews affirms a Jewish identity for both himself and his community and undoubtedly views their faith as the true expression of Judaism, his appropriation of traditions from common Judaism nevertheless reflects the emergence of a sectarian identity that other competing Jewish groups would likely have viewed as deviant.

Prospects for Future Research

As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, this research does not in any way pretend to offer some sort of final word on Hebrews. Indeed, the recent explosion in scholarship on Hebrews shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. However, the research presented here also leads us to consider further potential avenues of exploration which might lead to new research. One suggestion would be that further work remains to be done to answer the question of Hebrews's relationship to Jewish identity. For example, to date, too few published monographs on Hebrews have drawn significantly on the ever-growing body of literature on Jewish identity and ethnicity in antiquity.[2] It would be interesting to see more recent approaches to Jewish identity and ethnicity incorporated more thoroughly into New Testament research, and further explorations of how different approaches to understanding ethnicity and identity formation in first-century Judaism and Jewish Christianity might lead to different ways of reading Hebrews or other writings from the New Testament. Greater attention to other sectarian forms of Judaism would perhaps be beneficial as well. Numerous previous studies have tended to focus on comparing Hebrews with the Essene writings from Qumran,[3] but other groups like the Pharisees merit consideration also, especially considering the recent advancements in social history on the Pharisees in particular.[4] Further work could also be done comparing Hebrews with other Jewish literature dating to after the destruction of the temple and situating Hebrews within a post-temple milieu as well.[5] These suggestions, of course, coincide with the general need for more socio-historical studies of the New Testament.

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[2] See the accessible review of various theoretical approaches in the forthcoming article VanMaaren, "Mapping Jewishness," 1–45. Aside from Sanders's work on Judaism, which featured prominently in this research, other important approaches to Jewish and Jewish-Christian identity include: Boyarin, *Border Lines*; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*; Cromhout, *Walking in their Sandals*; Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism*; Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*; and also the essays in Jackson-McCabe, *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered.*

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[3] E.g., Yadin, "A Note on Melchizedek and Qumran," 152–54; Kosmala, *Hebräer-Essener-Christen*; Fensham, "Hebrews and Qumran," 9–21; Longenecker, "The Melchizedek Argument in Hebrews," 161–85; Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition*; Aschim, "11QMelchizedek and the Epistle to the Hebrews," 129–47; Mason, *You Are a Priest Forever*.

[4] E.g., see Mason, *Josephus on the Pharisees*; Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees*; the essays in Neusner and Chilton, *Quest of the Historical Pharisees*.

[5] The work of Isaacs, *Sacred Space* remains the most significant contribution in this direction.

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6211